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An investigation of Teacher Social Media Usage with Parents at Preschool

by

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Abstract

The interaction between teachers and parents is a key factor within preschool education and its policy. Children's understanding of education and academic progress are influenced by their home settings since the development of a child takes place mainly within the family, and preschool is an important time to connect home learning to a formalised education setting. There are logistical, emotional, linguistic, cultural and time-related constraints that can act as barriers to this connection. Social media could offer an opportunity to improve links between the preschool and home environments and thereby increase parents' involvement in their children's education.

This qualitative case study offers an in-depth and comprehensive exploration of a teacher's and parents' interactions through social media in a preschool context and the extent of, and effects arising from, the interconnections within this limited context of social media use. The selected preschool is attended by five-/six-year-old children. Data were gathered through a single case and thematic analysis was used to interpret the data.

The main findings were that the teacher's and parents' social media interactions could be understood through an interpretative framework that extends the Epstein Model of Parental Involvement to reveal the interactions between home, school and the wider community, and that these interactions were considered by stakeholders to have a beneficial effect on parental involvement. Specifically, the use of social media helped to contextualise the content learnt about during preschool activities and personalised the conversations between stakeholders. Such interactive, multimodal and multidirectional interactions were possible with a teacher willing to make use of social media. Some parents, however, were concerned about the potential adverse effects on the children's social and emotional development; while the lack of a legal framework for social media use in the preschool classroom was another area of concern for both the teacher and parents. Overall, the study contributes to the prior literature on parent involvement with twenty-first-century interaction paradigms.

To my beloved parents...

Babam ve anneme...

Preface

Writing a thesis is a difficult and lonely effort. Thankfully, I was so lucky to be surrounded by wonderful people.

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Abbreviations

BECTA: British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (UK)

BERA: British Educational Research Association (UK)

F@TIH: Movement to Increase Opportunities and Technology (in public school)

MoNE: Ministry of National Education (Turkey)

NAEYC: National Association for the Education of Young Children (USA)

OBADER: Family Support Guidebook Integrated with Preschool Education Curriculum (Turkey)

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

TDK: Turkish Language Association

TUBITAK: Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey

TUIK: Turkish Statistical Institute

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

The learning and academic success of a child are influenced by their closest social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978; Epstein, 2001). Previous studies have also emphasised the importance of parental involvement in early years education and it has been enthusiastically expressed that parents play a key role, especially in the development and academic success of students (Epstein, 2001; Borgonovi & Montt, 2012). Such research has been extended, to argue that preschool educational settings have the most impact when the connections between school, home and community settings are strong (Waanders et al., 2007; Sandberg & Vuorinen, 2008; Kluczniok et al., 2013).

Broader interaction between preschool stakeholders and settings (teacher, parents, community) has regularly been mentioned as an important factor in a child's learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Epstein, 2001). Curriculum and education regulations have therefore gradually been revised to encourage parental involvement in preschool settings. One example of this is the New Zealand preschool childhood curriculum, also known as Te Whāriki, which is based on a wide-ranging conceptualisation of the interactions among stakeholders (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), while the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (2009) also highlights the child's immediate community. Educators continue to struggle with approaches to achieve effective combined interaction between schools, teachers, parents and the society (Karlie, 2009). Studies have indicated that student success decreases when there is limited effective interaction between these educational stakeholders (Epstein, 2001; Fan et al., 2012).

In the Turkish context that is the focus of this research, the preschool education curriculum has undergone a series of updates and changes over the past two decades (in 2002, 2006

and 2013). These developments have been linked by a desire to emphasise the role of family involvement in ensuring a higher-quality preschool education for children (Dilek, 2016). In the 2013 revision, for example, greater importance was placed on family involvement, and family involvement activities were set out in a separate guidebook called 'Family Support Guidebook Integrated with Preschool Education Programme (OBADER)' (Dilek, 2016). As Dilek (2016) stated in a comparative document analysis of the preschool education curricula, while family involvement has been emphasised in each curriculum, the 2013 curriculum and OBADER were developed with the specific aim of ensuring that children who are attending preschool education institutions receive rich learning experiences that will support them to achieve healthy growth, acquire self-care skills and reach the highest level across all developmental areas with various types of parental involvement. With this new curriculum and the guidebook, therefore, preschool education in Turkey is increasingly seeking to involve other community members in the functioning of the institution so that the input of families and the immediate society are harnessed in tandem to support the goal of improved early years education.

In this context of ongoing reform, studies that have evaluated the conditions and the quality of preschool parental involvement in Turkey have described several issues and concerns (Gunay-Bilaloglu, 2014; Tekin, 2011). In practice, it is known that teacher–parent interaction is often limited to parent–teacher meetings, typically held only once or twice in an academic year (Demirbulak, 2000; Basaran & Koç, 2001; Celik, 2005; Akbaslı & Kavak, 2008). However, the OBADER envisages more wide-ranging parent–teacher interaction efforts than just this limited number of meetings. The continued heavy reliance on these meetings as the prime forum for interaction means that the system is not operating as desired in Turkey. Researchers have therefore called for more attention to be paid to the need to increase the quality of preschool parental involvement and accordingly the need to design and organise a suitable setting and events for involvement, thus highlighting the potential of alternative approaches to parent–teacher interaction (Sahin & Kalburan, 2009; Tekin, 2011).

A considerable amount of research has identified that Web 2.0 platforms can be a powerful platform for high-quality communication since it enables effective visualisation, interaction, cooperation and relatively quick feedback (Bouffard, 2008; Grujanac, 2011; Yost & Fan, 2014). Social media has enhanced communication between people and has transformed relationship and information management (Palts & Kalmus, 2015). In today's society, social media is replacing modes of communication that were once commonplace in communities (Passey & Samways, 2016). This transformation is very clear to see in education, where interaction between teachers, parents and the wider society appears dissimilar to that of even a few years ago in terms of its quality and quantity. Knauf (2016) claims that social media has increased the amount of communication between stakeholders because it is not limited in either time or space, in contrast to traditional modes of communication. With regard to the quality of the communication, she added that communication is no longer one-way because anyone can respond to messages or begin a discussion themselves. These new multimodal types of connection can influence the forms of communication that exist (Kress, 2009). For example, innovative forms of social media can create space and time for users and are able to encourage more productive collaboration between teachers and families (Knauf, 2016). Additionally, communication technologies influence the behaviour of families in terms of promoting their involvement in children's development (Oyetade & Obono, 2015). According to Ertmer et al. (2012), users now have numerous and varied opportunities to influence the nature and extent of the content being posted/shared, and in some cases apply real-time control over it. Social media interactions therefore have the potential to bridge the gap between teachers and parents (Pan & Franklin, 2011), even to the extent that home–school meetings could be conducted via the Internet using free social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Over the last ten years, the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) has invested heavily in improving its websites, social media pages, portals and online curricula to connect with wider educational stakeholders (Akinci et al., 2012). However, there is currently a lack of information regarding the implementation of social media with respect

to the involvement of family and society in a Turkish preschool setting (Balcı & Tezel-Şahin, 2016; Sapsaglam & Engin, 2017). Relatively little research has been undertaken thus far into how the use of social media tools affects this communication. Specifically in Turkey, where this study is focused, it appears that although teachers use social media and communication technologies in their daily lives, they are not yet ready to integrate these facilities into their classrooms (Balcı & Tezel-Şahin, 2016; Sapsaglam & Engin, 2017). Teachers' and parents' use of technology is influenced by many factors and rationales, such as their own motivation, the surrounding community, the behaviour of educational partners, national values, policies, and so on (Sadaf et al., 2012). Thus, studies have reported that the insufficient involvement of family and society in school continues to be a problem and that educators continue to struggle with approaches to fostering such educational involvement (Balcı & Tezel-Şahin, 2016; Sapsaglam & Engin, 2017). Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap.

1.1 The Aim of the Study, Research Questions and Objectives

From this basis, the purpose of the study is to explore how social media could build a bridge between the preschool setting and the home environment so as to increase the involvement of parents in their young child's learning journey. This research study aims to explore the impact of social media interactions in the context of a preschool in Turkey. Thus, the study will consider how social media interactions help to form connections between teachers and parents for parental involvement in preschool. To this end, the study will address the following research questions:

RQ1: In what ways do parents' and a preschool teacher's social media use shape/influence parental involvement in an urban preschool?

RQ2: From the viewpoint of parents and teachers, in what ways do their social media interactions impact upon the preschool children?

The research sets out to achieve the following objective:

To explore the experiences of teacher(s) and parents regarding the use of social media for a preschool education process.

1.2 Significance of the Study

Kress (2009) highlights that emerging technologies have the potential to affect individual communication modes, including those used for education. Indeed, he argues that, within the educational context, different types of media facilitate deep and rich interaction. Specifically, social media serves to build a new medium for connection, collaboration and contribution for stakeholders in education. These stakeholders can interact through various social media platforms and take active roles at both a personal and institutional level (Internet Society, 2015). The development of devices with Internet connectivity has revolutionised access to information (Jeng et al., 2010), and these devices have become an indispensable part of daily life (Kalinic et al., 2011). Sharples et al. (2009) note that individuals find themselves in an era of ubiquitous Internet connectivity which can support personal and technical causes.

According to Cakir and Aydın (2005), the Turkish education system has been described as authoritarian and traditional. For example, teachers and headteachers have limited authority over curriculum, and they need to follow the national curriculum. However, as a result of the social transformation that has resulted from digitalisation and globalisation, this is changing rapidly (Tekin, 2011). Such change has been particularly rapid over the last decade and has contributed to improvements in teacher–parent cooperation and the relevant communication channels (MoNE, 2013a). The importance of parents' involvement in the school life of children is increasingly being recognised by MoNE. Thus, MoNE now views parents as co-experts in the education of their children, and social media interactions are regarded as important tools for both students' education and parental involvement (Tekin, 2011). Currently, the ministry allows schools to purchase software at

special prices and provides educational media clips, web pages and courseware snippets for multimedia-based learning (Uluyol, 2013; Tekin & Polat, 2014).

Drawing together the above, although a few scholars have explored the place of digital platforms in student educational improvement over the last ten years and have recognised its capacity to increase learning (Yelland, 2016), there is currently a lack of research into the reasons behind the existing use of social media interactions among different educational stakeholder groups (e.g. preschool teachers and parents). In addition, there are as yet few studies on methods for improving the existing experiences of social media interactions at preschool (Kim, 2012), particularly in Turkey (Balcı & Tezel-Şahin, 2016; Sapsaglam & Engin, 2017). Additionally, although it is reasonable to assume that many traditional types of family involvement can be enhanced through the facilities provided by social media, this has not been argued broadly in the literature (Aycicek, 2016). It is therefore necessary to investigate how social media interactions are actually used by teachers and parents in Turkish preschools. An understanding of these issues should then help educational stakeholders to select and use appropriate forms of social media to connect their parental/community involvement practices, as well as identifying potential pitfalls and concerns that would need to be addressed for the wider adoption of social media in preschools to be successful.

Furthermore, the educational outcomes/developments are defined as the knowledge, skills and competencies that children need to learn at preschool (MoNE, 2013a), and a child's educational outcomes are seen as being supported by a social setting, which forms a network created by interaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Epstein (2005a; 2005b) argues that specific uses of communication are linked to positive educational developments during childhood. Indeed, a child's educational development can be improved as a consequence of ongoing mutual and spiralling interactions between the child's characteristics and the use of social media between teacher and parent (Zywica, 2014; Alazemi, 2017). Theoretically, therefore, the incorporation of social media between preschool stakeholders (e.g. teacher and parent) has the capacity to affect children's learning experiences positively.

The research findings here may: (1) improve the knowledge and understanding among the preschool community of social media interactions in preschool; (2) contribute meaningfully to the rather limited study of this subject within Turkey, thus inspiring additional research that supports the preschool community towards a richer understanding of the experience of social media interactions, and (3) present preschool policy and decision-makers with a deeper vision of social media interactions and the problems faced by educators and parents in preschools in using social media interactions. This may enlighten contemporary and potential educational policies and support the incorporation of explicit guidance in curriculum guidelines regarding how social media interactions can be carried out in a preschool context.

1.3 Positionality

My studies are affected by my views, personality, culture, experiences and background (Sikes, 2004). Thus, I offer a short introduction to myself and my background at this early juncture in the thesis.

The Turkish MoNE has been looking to improve its policies in preschool settings and was therefore seeking to initiate research on innovation (educational technologies) and preschool education. As a trained preschool teacher with a deep interest in the use of educational technologies in preschool settings, I was an ideal candidate and was accordingly awarded a full scholarship to pursue Master's and PhD degrees in the UK. Additionally, my curiosity in pursuing doctoral research in the field of social media use in preschool education in Turkey was influenced by my own personal background and views. Firstly, social media has had a considerable impact on my daily and professional life. Secondly, my educational background and experiences have had an important impact on this study. My previous academic experiences include a BA-level degree in preschool education and an MA-level degree in international education innovation and reform. Moreover, I have taught in a preschool in Istanbul, Turkey for three years. I worked as a

volunteer teacher in the Basic Education Programme for Family between 2007 and 2010. I organised seminars for three years on child development for families to support their children aged 0–5 years, where the partners in the project were UNICEF, the EU and MoNE. This background is relevant since conducting social science research entails reflecting on your own experience and making connections with that of others (Cohen et al., 2011).

During my time spent teaching at a preschool (2007–2010), I interacted with parents using social media (e.g. Facebook), but social media has changed since then. New channels have emerged while others have become obsolete. Following my teaching experience, I was able to experience social media as a student during my MA and PhD, during which time different channels were used to those that I had used as a teacher (e.g. blogs, Twitter, LinkedIn). This left me with the impression that the type of social media used depends on the type of information being shared, the setting and the targeted population. I subsequently began to imagine the applicability and benefit of social media in terms of what it could bring to teachers and parents for the purpose of improving child outcomes in Turkish preschools. I began to explore how social media contributed to my daily life, realising that the various forms of social media create user-centred environments. Looking at the various social media designs, I was curious to find a way to determine what types of social media were better for teacher–parent cooperation and how the different stakeholders perceive social media using these various platforms.

Since teacher–parent interaction is key at the preschool level, and since their respective experiences of communication play a role in positive student outcomes, I considered that research was needed to explore the experiences of both teachers and parents on the use of social media interactions. My study therefore focuses on interactions in a preschool educational setting, specifically where a degree of the interaction between teachers and parents takes place via social media, and the associated impact on children's educational outcomes.

The next section presents contextual information on the early years education structure in Turkey and the system of social media interactions in preschool. It also briefly outlines social media interaction in the preschool parental involvement environment.

1.4 Overview of the Research Context

This section contains a brief introduction to the context of this research in Turkey, including an overview of the preschool system and its curriculum. Then, parental involvement at preschool is outlined in order to create a basis for understanding the ensuing research about the issues surrounding social media and social media interactions in the Turkish preschool education system.

The Preschool System in Turkey. In Turkey, all types of formal education (preschool, primary school, elementary school, high school) are shaped by the national education basic law (No: 1739) and are centrally organised based on educational policy and a unified national curriculum developed by the MoNE for each education phase.

Preschools are places where children are prepared for primary school and thus, they teach children basic skills (social and emotional, language/literacy, cognitive, motor skills and self-care skills). The curriculum is implemented in several parts: daily, monthly and annual. Each of these parts has its own outcomes and indicators. The outcomes are child-centred and indicate the level that the children should reach. The official aims of Turkish preschool education are stated as providing children with physical, mental and emotional development and enabling them to gain good habits, preparing them for primary education, providing a common atmosphere for children from unfavourable conditions, and teaching them to speak Turkish correctly (MoNE, 2013a). The latter is specifically for children who are from non-native Turkish families, such as for those from Kurdish backgrounds or more recently for refugees and asylum seekers from different countries (e.g. Syria, Iraq).

The preschool education national curriculum guidebook provides concrete information on how the curriculum should be applied. It shows how to teach children, the educational activities and methods that are supported, how the physical environment should be created, how families should be involved in the education process and how children should be evaluated so that they can attain the purposes of preschool education. Preschool education is defined as covering children in the age group 36–72 months who have yet to reach the age of compulsory primary education. Preschool education is optional and had an enrolment rate near 60 per cent within 5 years old children in the 2016–17 academic year (see Table 1.1). These figures are far behind those of OECD countries such as France, Belgium, Italy, Denmark, etc. (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012). Due to its non-compulsory nature, preschool education has to be paid for by parents. In addition, children are mostly cared for during the parents' working hours (MoNE, 2013a).

Table 1.1: Preschool Enrolment Rates

Academic Year	3-5 years	4-5 years	5 years
2012/13	26.63%	37.36%	39.72%
2013/14	27.71%	37.46%	42.54%
2014/15	32.68%	41.57%	53.78%
2015/16	33.26%	42.96%	55.48%
2016/17	35.52%	45.70%	58.79%

Resource: Egitim-Sen Report (2017; p.2)

Social Media in Preschool Education in Turkey. Since this study aims to explore the interrelations of Turkish preschool teachers and parents regarding their social media experience, one of the main indicators is the ratio of Internet users in the population. According to Turkey's official national statistical institute (TurkStat), there is a wide range of technological media in Turkish families: 94.2 per cent of people use the Internet more than once per week, 82 per cent do so daily and 70.1 per cent of households access the

Internet (TUIK, 2018). According to the same report, almost all households (96.8%) have mobile phones or smartphones, 74.4 per cent use the Internet on their phone and 80.9 per cent of Internet users have social media accounts. These statistics show that almost all Internet users in Turkey also actively use social media, suggesting that social media has the potential for use as an instrument in parental involvement. In addition, based on a survey conducted by Hootsuite and We are Social (2018), the use of these tools by different people continues to rise at extraordinary rates. Turkish people spend an average of two hours and 48 minutes a day on social media. The most active social media platforms are YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Google+ (We are Social, 2018).

In this context, the Turkish Government is making efforts to achieve 80 per cent digital literacy among its citizenry by 2023 (TUBITAK, 2011). The MoNE has increased opportunities and technology by introducing the F@TIH project. Also known as the 'smart class' project, the F@TIH project aims to increase access to the Internet (including social media) via technological devices for stakeholders at public schools. The government has spent USD 803 million on the project to ensure the use of the latest digital equipment and tools, promote the uptake of educational technologies in classroom activities and provide computers in each classroom and for each teacher, as well as ensuring the incorporation of technologies for social media interactions in school management (Inal & Akkaymak, 2012). The MoNE provides free Internet to all public educational institutions and, in theory, there are no infrastructure barriers to accessing social media technologies at public school. These developments are regarded as positive moves, and they serve to generate new interest among educational stakeholders as well as enhancing access to multiple means of communication among the triad of teachers, parents and community at both the personal and institutional levels (Aypay et al., 2012). These initiative funds are also interested in enhancements throughout the Turkish K-12 schooling setting and support the improvement of infrastructure for preschool education and for enhancing the involvement of parents.

To motivate educational stakeholders, the introduction of digital communication within the preschool environment was formally launched in 2013 in response to the recognition of

twenty-first century needs for preschool services (MoNE, 2013a). Besides encouraging digital interactions, the curriculum and OBADER also ensure a safe basis upon which educators can encourage digital communication and social media use to improve and help the progress and involvement of parents with society for preschool. They inform educational stakeholders on improvements to the possible uses of social media interactions for each of those engaged in the achievement of preschool education (MoNE, 2013a, 2013b; Gunay-Bilaloglu, 2014). The central perspective proposed is that the use of social media interactions is necessary in a world where parents and society are surrounded by social media in their daily lives. The aim is also to get parents and the community interacting both with and through social media.

1.5 Definitions and Terms

Before moving on to the social media used in this study, it will be useful here to provide brief descriptions of the general concepts regarding social media and parental involvement in Turkish education. In order to help the reader and to better acknowledge the purpose and focus of this study, the researcher has articulated definitions of social media and parental involvement that will apply throughout the study.

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2018) defines social media as types of digital interaction through which people generate virtual groups to spread information, opinions, individual posts and other content in multimodal ways. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), meanwhile, define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (p. 61). The technological progress made over the last 20 years – especially in the last decade – has made it possible to share very different and more powerful virtual content than was previously possible.

Social media is a platform created using Web 2.0 technologies. Whereas 'traditional websites' constitute collections of information that allow the user to partake in one-way

information-gathering, social media tools (Web 2.0 technologies) are designed to allow two-way communication that is viewed publicly or within a defined group. Web 2.0 is a technology that enables users to build platforms for interaction for use in contexts where feedback and change are essential (Klopfer et al, 2009; Alazemi, 2017). As a term, social media encompasses all the tools, services and applications that interact with users of networking technologies (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Thus, social media comprises the conversations and exchanges between individuals or organisations that take place on the Internet, and it is through the development of Web 2.0 technologies such as social networks, blogs, microblogs, chat sites, wikis and associated applications that social media has become such a significant enabler of content and information sharing in various dynamic and continually evolving ways. A Web 2.0 technology platform (hereinafter referred to Web 2.0) refers to an interactive, read-write Web interface where an attendee joins in an online dialogue with other members (Baltaci-Goktalay & Özdilek, 2010; Ertmer et al., 2011a). In this sense, social media has recently come to be seen as supplanting the role of traditional media (newspapers, radio, TV and other printed media), with the main difference lying in the element of mutual interaction (Telli-Yamamoto & Karamanli-Sekeroglu, 2014). Indeed, consumers of media in the pre-Web 2.0 era had little or no control over the media they consumed since the traditional forms offered only one, or a few, limited options to users (Kahraman, 2013).

In the current study, the term social media refers to the use of such technologies to interact, communicate, collaborate, learn, change, create and share information socially. The technologies provide the platform, tools and software to enable people to interact and communicate in a virtual environment (Lau, 2011). Users can also share text, audio, video and other digital media (Kiyici et al., 2013). In the case study that forms the focus of this research, however, the teacher uses two social media platforms: Facebook and Instagram. Since the study is designed to explore the use of any type of social media platform, however, rather than specifically 'social networking', the term social media platforms will replace the specific terms Facebook and Instagram. However, it should be borne in mind that social media platforms are an evolving technology, and while some features may be

developed further in the future, others may disappear (Hanna et al., 2011; Kietzmann et al., 2011).

When it comes to parental involvement, the Turkish Language Association (TDK, 2018) sees the family, where the first experiences and learning take place, as the primary environment in which children are afforded opportunities to meet their needs (physical, social, emotional and psychological). In addition, the family possesses the characteristics of society and reflects value judgements, traditions and customs, tastes, beliefs, prejudices and, in short, culture. This definition has been adopted by other national institutes, such as MoNE. MoNE (2006, 2013a, 2013b) describes parental involvement as that of a parent who, as a stakeholder, actively helps to create a cooperative preschool environment, and parental efforts as those that support education and educational activities in the sense of planning, becoming involved in, helping, observing and/or evaluating the learning practices of their children either at preschool or at home. Overall, parental involvement is used as a general inclusive phrase to refer to the efforts made by a child's family to adopt an effective position in their learning and development. In this respect, it relates to many practices ranging from parenting to communication to volunteering to collaborating with the community in preschool activities (Sad & Gürbüztürk, 2013; Koycegiz et al., 2016; Vural & Kocabaş, 2016). In this work, therefore, the term 'parental involvement' encompasses the various forms listed above in preschool settings. Thus, the concept of parental involvement involves a variety of parental behaviours that directly or indirectly affect the child's cognitive development and success at school (MoNE, 2013a). For the purpose of this study, preschool–home social media interactions refer to any contact made between the preschool and home via social media.

1.6 Social Media Used in This Study: Facebook and Instagram

The medium is the message (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967; p. 107).

This section will provide details of the specific social media platforms that are used in the case study that forms the focus of the current research, with a particular emphasis on the features that could be utilised to support preschool classroom education and parental involvement.

The direct messaging functions in social media platforms provide a real-time forum that allows participants to engage in both written and verbal communication. Ertmer et al. (2011b) showed how such facilities provide a high level of effective cooperation on Web 2.0 platforms, including at an international and cross-cultural level. Thus, social media is an option that many educators use to develop critical thinking and for working together with other educational stakeholders.

Within these social media platforms, members can create a group; the group can be given a name and new people can be added to it. The person who creates the group automatically becomes the group manager. The group manager can then edit the group's description, labels and settings, as well as the actions that all of the group's members can perform. Thus, a teacher who wants to engage in family involvement through social media automatically becomes the manager of the group that s/he is founding. This could allow them to control and manage the group as they wish in order for it to achieve its educational goals. Combined with this, educators can elicit feedback from parents by creating and distributing a questionnaire/survey on any subject via the group. Thus, social media enables all group members to see and comment on posts. Also, the video upload feature within social media allows educators to prepare educational videos on topics that parents need, and to conduct family education at home. Parents who cannot participate in face-to-face family involvement programmes for various reasons can repeatedly view these videos at a time convenient for themselves.

Moreover, activities can be created in the group, and group members can be invited to an event via social media. The teacher can create an activity timetable for an event (e.g. a field trip, theatre visit, cinema, picnic, etc.) that the family can take with them. They can also see who is planning to participate and not participate in the activity, provide feedback on the

event and share comments received from parents. Social media can also be used to disseminate contact information and media about the places visited, and the research trips undertaken with children (Balci & Tezel-Sahin, 2016). The file upload feature enables teachers to send/share prepared documents in different formats (image, PDF/Word, video, etc.) to the group by adding them to the group file. This feature is an important communication tool for informing parents about a certain topic and for providing brochures and informative articles (Aktas-Arnas, 2012) to the group in a way that enables them to easily share the information with the family.

Overall, social media can make it more straightforward for teachers to provide families with new information about child development and education, introductory content for the school and updates on the work being done by their children. In addition, children's development records, activities, progress reports, anecdotal records, checklists, information forms, etc. can be updated regularly, shared through direct messages and thereby stored permanently (Kildan & Cingi, 2014). This contrasts with the traditional practice of sending physical newsletters on a monthly or termly basis to communicate with family members, inform them of scheduled events and to help with the children's development and educational needs at home. The ability to more rapidly share detail about a child's growth and development, eating patterns, participation in-class activities, communication with friends, in addition to any problem or situation, etc., increases the level of school–family cooperation while also signalling to parents that the teacher is following the situation of each child (Tezel-Şahin & Özyürek, 2010). A further important benefit of social media groups is the potential for two-way communication, such as through live chat, which is the private correspondence area of social media. This makes the communication process even faster and easier, and, crucially, genuinely interactive, thus giving greater agency to parents with respect to communicating both theirs and their child's needs to the school.

Social media services based on multimedia sharing are particularly popular nowadays due to the proliferation of mobile devices photography and the rise of the visual network (Hayashi et al., 2011). The number of followers of an account is a sign of how popular it is

(although measurements can be manipulated). Users can interact with each other through likes and comments in a post. Likes and comments display the attractiveness of that share (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012), although users have a tendency to 'like' rather than comment on images on social media (Ferrara & Yang, 2015).

Facebook was founded in 2004. It allows people to communicate with their friends, family and colleagues every day. Users can follow friends, download unlimited multimedia (photos, links, videos), and learn more about the people they meet digitally (Kusay, 2013). Despite fierce competition among social media platforms, Facebook has maintained a significant and sustained advantage and continues to lead almost all over the world. According to statistics from Alexa (2018) (a web traffic analysis company), in Turkey, Facebook is the second most visited website after Google. This makes it inevitable that Facebook will come to be seen as an educational tool in different disciplines and age groups. Thus, Facebook can be an alternative way of transferring thoughts, both in class and outside. In addition, the level of Facebook-specific informality could help stakeholders express themselves and encourage more frequent home–school communication. Muñoz and Towner (2009) point out, however, that this informality may result in many educational stakeholders moving away from using Facebook for educational purposes.

Instagram, which was launched in 2010, is a multimedia sharing social media platform service that was acquired by Facebook Inc. in 2012. Instagram had more than 1 billion users in June 2018 (statista.com). The app allows users to edit photos and videos using different filters and edit them with labels and location information. An account can be public or with pre-approved fans. Followers can search other users' accounts by hashtags and locations, and they can view trending content. Followers may like media and follow other people to add their content to a post. The service has also added messaging features and the ability to add multiple videos or video postings. It also allows users to send photos and videos along with stories in a sequential feed, with each share open by others for one day. Users upload more than 95 million images to Instagram daily, with Instagram posts that contain hashtags found to engage more users than those without (hootsuite.com). Instagram is often used for marketing (De Veirman et al., 2017). It is also

important to understand that features within social media groups can be utilised not just for teacher–parent communication but also for communication between families involved in the group. This can again enhance knowledge-sharing and increase parental support (Olmstead, 2011).

1.7 Organisation of the Study

This study is organised into six chapters. This first chapter comprises an introduction to the research work. It has included the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, the rationale for the study and the definitions of key terms. It has also provided a brief overview of the research context. Chapter 2 critically analyses the important literature on social media interactions and preschool parental involvement. It discusses the Epstein Model of Parental Involvement towards the research of social media interactions in a preschool environment. This model is used critically in the study to assist with the organisation of study tools to gather the data, to organise and analyse the data and, lastly, to examine the involvement of social media interactions in preschool. Chapter 3 sets out the research design and methodology used in this research. It provides the single case study design used to gather the data as well as the features of the participants and how the observations, interviews and focus groups were conducted to gather the data, along with the analysis of that data. Chapter 4 presents the findings and analysis, exploring teachers' and parents' social media interactions for parental involvement in Turkey. Chapter 5 contains the discussion and interpretation of the findings and also emphasises the effective elements that appeared from the data analysis. Chapter 6 outlines the study's conclusions and revisits the research questions, in addition to presenting the contribution and limitations of the study. Moreover, it provides a number of recommendations for the successful involvement of social media in the preschool environment.

The next chapter is the literature review.

Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter focuses on research studies in the field of social media interactions in a preschool context aimed at enhancing parental involvement, with a focus on theories, models and factors related to social media interactions. The first section discusses the use of social media in preschool settings and the issues that emerge from the literature on the use of social media in preschool for parental involvement, including the possible benefits and difficulties. The second section reviews the parental involvement theories and models highlighting the factors that affect preschool social media interactions in order to understand how social media is experienced. This also provides a starting point and a structure for understanding the Epstein Model of Parental Involvement, which is to be adapted to help organise the data according to the different types of parental involvement. The literature review therefore aims to support the originality and relevance of the research by reviewing the main concepts covered by the study.

Type of study. This study has many features of a traditional (topical) literature review. Sources were initially identified in accordance with a specific list of search terms and parameters to limit the years of publication (considering the pace of change in social media technology, the works reviewed had to have been published since 2005). For example, a review of the literature that expressed and explained various social media interactions at preschool was found using the keyword social media interactions at preschool (kindergarten, nursery, early childhood education (ECE), playschool) and sub-keywords such as social media (communication technology) and family involvement, preschool–home communication. The effect of this exploration was to identify further

articles linked to the topic. The online databases available through the University of Sheffield Library, including major education databases such as EThOS, ProQuest, ERIC, Science Direct and JSTOR, were accessed for this research. Various journal articles on the subject of focus and many linked fields were obtained in this way. This chapter includes the research on family involvement, communication and the technology tools used to increase interaction. Academic articles, books and other sources that offered relevant information relating to the research were surveyed for the literature review. The identified works were compared using criteria including the subject and sample size. The initial list of works identified through the formal search was then greatly expanded by following the citations they contained. It should also be noted that this study identified a large number of doctoral theses. This reflects the fast-paced structure of social media interactions from an analytical, academic perspective.

The next section begins with a general overview of the use of social media in educational settings, before turning to focus specifically on the main topic of this research, which is social media interactions in preschool settings.

2.1 Social Media in Educational Settings

Technological advances are changing and influencing the educational environment across all levels of education, including preschool (Zhao, 2013; Arnott, 2016). Social media represents one such advance (Fan & Yost, 2018). In terms of its impact, social media platforms are creating new means of innovation in education practices (Tate et al., 2015) and thereby creating new possibilities for education (Fan & Yost, 2018). The literature identifies the main functionality of social media in educational settings as currently being within both communication and collaboration and information provision facilities (Zhao, 2013). With these capabilities, social media empowers individuals in terms of granting them much more convenient access to interact and collaborate (O'Reilly, 2007; Kaplan & Heinlein, 2010; Bates, 2011; Aghaei et al., 2012; Zhao, 2013).

In addition, while social media creates an interactive space where teachers can publish a description of a topic and share links, pictures, videos and other resources that may be valuable for others (O'Bannon & Britt, 2012), parents and the community are also able to write and edit content (Mitchell et al., 2009; Olmstead, 2013; Gunduz, 2018). It also allows educational stakeholders to express their ideas to each other in multimodal ways (Moody, 2010). Visual and multimodal content captures the attention of stakeholders, heightens interest in the subject and provides clarity, helping to remind users of information and lesson concepts, and enabling them to visualise real-world applications (Eick & King, 2012).

Different types of social media platforms can deliver the above functions in an educational context, such as blogs (WordPress, Medium), microblogs (Twitter), wikis (Wikipedia), social networking (Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn), online multiplayer/network games (cooperative and massively multiplayer options are available) and virtual worlds games – including some video games (Minecraft) – and picture sharing sites (Flickr and Picasa) (Akar & Topcu, 2011; O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011; Fan & Yost, 2018). Besides the importance of the use of social media within the education process, pedagogical curricula, educational instruction and facilities, another important factor of social media is the interactions that are core to it. The increasing popularity of social media has led to exponential growth in the amount of interaction between people over the Internet. It has been noted that the prime opportunity presented to people by social media sites is the ability to connect with each other (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Chau & Xu, 2012), which is the focus of this study. As such, the rest of this section will focus on social media interactions at preschool.

2.1.1 Social Media in Interaction Settings

Seeing comes before words (Berger et al., 1972; p. 7).

Since the 1960s, the importance of involving parents in their children's education has been meticulously and repeatedly asserted in the literature. Specifically, with respect to children's first experiences in school, parental involvement has been linked to greater success and positive outcomes in early childhood education (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Hayakawa et al., 2013). As Bouffard (2008) states, "communication is at the heart of the family-school relationship" (p. 1), and these interactions build a social environment as a system for promoting the child's developmental outcomes (Epstein, 2011). It has been indicated that interaction between parents, teachers and the community (extended society) plays a critical role in the academic development (outcome) of preschool children (Sad et al., 2016). Thus, preschool stakeholders seek to create successful school–family interactions by building a bridge between preschool and home life and thus ensuring continuity in education (Cagdas & Sahin-Seçer, 2011). In addition, effective teacher–family interaction helps to improve children's education and helps the school–family interaction to grow (Atabey & Tezel-Şahin, 2011). Thus, several different techniques are employed to maintain and improve the interaction between family and teachers, such as phone calls, booklets, tape and video recordings, photographs, bulletin boards, newsletters, portfolio files, meetings, school visits, interaction at drop-off and pick-up times, etc. (Aktas-Arnas, 2011; Cagdas & Sahin-Seçer, 2011; Tezel-Şahin & Özyürek, 2010).

More recently, social media has been found to be an effective means of interaction (Afshari, et al., 2012; Grujanac, 2011; Cox, 2012; Janicki & Chandler-Olcott, 2012; Olmstead, 2013). While studies have mostly focused on the elementary or high school level (Grujanac, 2011; Karlie, 2009), the last decade has seen increasing amounts of research into the role, risks and potential uses of social media in preschools (Nasanen, Oulasvirta & Lehmuskallio, 2009; Knauf, 2016; Ihmeideh & Alkhawaldeh, 2017; Fan & Yost, 2018).

A BECTA research report outlines four ways in which communication technologies can support parental involvement. They can provide an opportune way for a family to obtain the latest information about their child's education, enable the family to be more involved with their child's education, facilitate more adaptable working arrangements for staff, and

enable information to be provided more cost-effectively as part of education practices that use technology (Beasley, 2015). In this sense, "the communication and connection between children's home environments and their schools is a critical subject to consider if we wish to support children's learning in the widest sense" (Grant, 2011; p. 292). Thus, social media technology supports new forms of interaction between educators and parents (Beasley, 2015). In this regard, social media technological formats are promising avenues for disseminating information to parents and offer the potential to improve the interaction between school and home (Beasley, 2015).

The most frequently cited aspects of social media interactions which were highlighted as useful for the development of skills in an education context focus on its mutual communicative, participative and collaborative nature (Roblyer et al., 2010; Fewkes & McCabe, 2012; Balci & Tezel-Şahin, 2016). Stakeholders literally have at their fingertips the ability to facilitate interactions between parents and teachers (Grant, 2011; Olmstead, 2013; Bouffard, 2008). Nasanen et al. (2009) found that social media is a medium that offers practical, helpful and reliable cooperative interaction to stakeholders. A high level of involvement was highlighted by Martin (2014), who pointed out that many people rely on social media. In addition, since social media platforms enable multimedia content to be uploaded and then shared with the world, interaction is maintained at a very high level.

Powell and McCauley (2012) talked about preschool educators' use of a blog where the educators wrote short explanations of children's everyday educational routines. A study by Temel et al. (2010) concluded that social media was most commonly used for preschool instructional activities, curriculum description, teacher's self-introduction and other links for families, homework and examples of student work. In another study, Halcomb et al. (2007) assessed over 2,000 teacher social media accounts and found that course outline, schedule, educator information, email links, links to school, updates to dates and a visitor counter were the most commonly used elements on teachers' social media (at the primary school level). Parents responded to tasks, and a media-rich dialogue emerged among educators and parents to help close the communication gap, thus promoting deeper and

more cooperative involvement with families and improving the learning experience for educators, families and children (Powell & McCauley, 2012).

Balci and Sahin (2018) showed that a parental involvement programme through social media had a positive effect on teacher–parent interactions. Likewise, in 2013, with regard to increasing family involvement through the use of technology, Olmstead noted that both educators and parents found technology to be an efficient avenue to help family involvement. Ryan (2018) adds that family "seek something that is informative but simple, asynchronous but immediate, and personal but not face-to-face" (p. 7). Thus, social media helps parents become involved with their children's education, keep up to date with what is happening at preschool and, since classroom activities have undergone considerable transformation, how things are now taught (Goodall, 2016).

Fan and Yost (2018) demonstrated that preschool teachers and parents used social media tools to facilitate better interactions between each other. Although both groups revealed an interest in adopting social media, confidentiality and time constraints were expressed as concerns. Palts and Kalmus (2015) reached a similar conclusion. They revealed that despite the advantages of multimedia interaction, social media interactions between preschool stakeholders (teachers and parents) posed problems, such as misinterpretations and insufficient knowledge with regard to the use of social media. In terms of the significance of using social media at school, Williamson and Johnston (2012) state: "given the explosive growth of social media, and its tremendous potential to change the way we communicate, learn, and teach, many educators argue that we have a moral and ethical obligation to use this technology effectively, ethically, and for the greater good" (p. xxii).

Duggan et al. (2015) conducted a survey to investigate how parents turned to social media as a generally useful source of information and as a parenting tool. Their survey also took a broad look at the parents' social media habits. The study revealed that, among the parents who went online, three in four used Facebook. Relevant literature (Chairatchatakul et al., 2012; Olmstead, 2013; Hernandez-Cruz & Russell, 2016) has shown

that social media is often used to share information with parents. For example, Hernandez-Cruz and Russell (2016) conducted a survey of existing social media practices on Facebook and Twitter through a questionnaire distributed to schools, and a statistical analysis of community involvement and social media use. They revealed that the presence of a Facebook account increased parental involvement, that parents knew what was happening in the school, and that teachers provided parents with useful information about students' learning. Similarly, Chairatchatakul et al. (2012) studied how educators use Facebook to associate with preschool parents, encourage the increase of parental involvement and at the same time determine parents' preferences for the type of information they need from school to meet their needs. They found that Facebook is used in several ways; for example, school information, questions, interesting links, activities, visual content (photo and video albums) can be brought together in one place. In addition to showing student work, teachers allow parents to access all their children's activities (Chairatchatakul et al., 2012). Thus, social media improved the quality of teacher–parent relationships at preschool. It also helped in terms of notion creation, parent service, public relations and teacher–family interactions. Their survey also explored how social media affected parental involvement and found that the majority of educators agreed that the teacher can do more to build relationships with parents on social media platforms. Educators believe that the information most appropriate for sharing via social media relates to school activities, programme changes, student work, administrative change and extra-curricular activities.

Selwyn et al. (2011) explored how educators support family involvement with their children's learning through the use of up-to-date technologies. They noted that current technologies allow parents to be included in all aspects of children's schooling and thus the use of such technologies increases parental involvement in schools (Selwyn et al., 2011). Parents mostly described having a positive experience with social media learning platforms and they were given a chance to support their children's learning in such a way that they attained a new perspective on the information. Parents then felt more involved in the school life of their child (Selwyn et al., 2011). That is, social media offers individuals

the ability to instantly obtain the information they seek with respect to education, as well as opportunities for collaboration, participation and communication with all stakeholders (Fewkes & McCabe, 2012). Selwyn et al. (2011) added that social media interactions support parents' desire to know more about their child's educational experience and managed learning environments. In this sense, they described that, globally, educators are supported to advance and provide combined education avenues across the school to allow each stakeholder within the school society to interact, connect and cooperate on learning resources, as well as observe, evaluate and inform children's development (Selwyn et al., 2011). Thus, when teachers and parents engage in social media, it leads to a positive change in the child. Overall, teacher–parent social media interactions have been found to be positive. Parents and students shared resources and information on social media and benefited from this sharing (Ferriter et al., 2011; Schachter, 2011; Acar & Yenmis, 2014).

Moreover, social media interactions provide important opportunities for families to be aware of the preschool and what their children are doing in school (Sad et al., 2016). Social media has therefore become a tool through which parents learn about children, interact and share. Olmstead's (2013) research indicated that a third of families used social media (Facebook) to interact with educators or to learn about class activities. In this sense, the parents found accessing the Internet to be an easier and less disruptive means of communicating with teachers (Huang, 2017). Other traditional technologies such as telephones do not provide the same options as social media interactions. For example, social media permits asynchronous (nonsynchronous) communication, which enables users to gather more detail on a concept before deciding how to respond and thus might be provided with regard to thinking about an event. Besides, social media is mainly text-based, which serves as a kind of monitor in terms of concealing feelings or extreme responses (Huang, 2017). Therefore, social media might provide an ease for teachers and parents in terms of time while interacting on an individual basis. As social media interactions are influential in improving educational outcomes related to the ways in which parents become involved, they can be used as an effective resource in supporting

decision-making and promoting accountability/transparency between teachers and parents (Hamlin & Flessa, 2018).

Knauf (2016) explored the use of social media among preschool teachers, parents and children. She concluded that the interactions between teachers and family are strengthened through improved social media experiences. The position of children in this experience development is especially important. Parents welcomed the inclusion of such technologies in the preschool, and social media interactions contribute to children's education. Knauf particularly highlighted the role of the teacher in such practices. Thus, positive outcomes are only possible if the teacher is willing to invest a great deal of time in social media interactions. Nasanen et al. (2009) conducted research in a similar context and discovered that social media empowers the preschool community (teacher, parents, children). While presenting their findings in four clustered groups (children–families, children–children, children–educators, and educators–families' communications), they also emphasised the importance of the teacher's role in social media interactions. Without the teacher's help, the whole system was described as useless.

Blackwell et al. (2013), in their study, found that the majority of teachers reported using current technologies for interacting with parents and other stakeholders. This is consistent with recent studies demonstrating the strong will of parents to use technology for the purpose of maintaining community involvement with suppliers and other families (Love et al., 2013). Furthermore, parents' motivation and involvement are positively influenced by greater teacher self-disclosure via Facebook, and it plays a key role in those interactions (Mazer, Murphy & Simonds, 2007).

Alazemi (2017) showed that preschool teachers intend to use certain types of social media (e.g. YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter) to improve students' learning, communicate with parents and share classroom activities. One reason for this is their existing use of these popular Web 2.0 technologies in their own social environment. In addition, most of the participants in the study believed that Web 2.0 technologies could

improve the learning of preschool students. Thus, teachers will begin to rely on social media to meet students' growing educational needs. Furthermore, Ihmeideh and Alkhawaldeh (2017) examined the views of preschool teachers and parents regarding the use of technology and online media to support child development at preschool. Based on this examination of teachers' and parents' views, they concluded that social media technology and digital media make a significant contribution to children's learning. This is supported by Olmstead's (2013) analysis of communication regarding teachers' and parents' views of children's success when social media is used, where they found that social media tools enable better parent–teacher interaction and proactive parental involvement.

Besides this, Lieberman and Mace (2009) point out that social media interactions have created a community of online teachers which facilitates interaction. These communities have particularly positive impacts in terms of knowledge sharing and the exchange of ideas, practices and philosophies. Using social media interactions in this way makes professional development interactive and valuable, thus effectively addressing the particular needs of teachers and parents for interaction with each other. The researchers found that such interaction leads to better follow-up and the more sustainable use of ideas once new information has been gathered between preschool stakeholders (Lieberman & Mace, 2009).

Furthermore, social media leads to several outcomes connecting preschools with the wider community (Jackson, 2011; Porterfield & Carnes, 2012; Scott, 2013; Sheninger, 2014). Bravo and Young (2011) showed that the ability to edit within social media underpins a natural collaborative community. The collaborative nature of social media encourages a synergy that originates from the contributions made by the teacher to parents and society (O'Bannon & Britt, 2012). Educators encourage dialogue with community members by using social media interactions (Gunduz, 2018) and support interdependence and community involvement (Schachter, 2011; Hernandez-Cruz & Russell, 2016).

These aspects of social media interactions have opened up possibilities to facilitate interaction in ways that could not have been achieved previously (Fan, Radford & Brown 2013). Although social media has not previously been widely integrated into preschool settings (Parette et al., 2010), its adoption has started to increase in recent years. This growing interest in social media interactions calls for more exploration of preschool stakeholders' readiness to adopt these technologies as well as their potential use (Fan & Yost, 2018).

2.2 The Ongoing Debate

We can thus surmise that the literature views social media interactions as an instrument used by educators to involve children's parents and community members, to improve the educational environment and to improve student achievement (Unal, 2008; Afshari et al., 2012; Olmstead, 2013). Although such interactions offer positive opportunities and new alternatives for involvement, they are also contentious, and there is much debate about their shortcomings (Ahmed, 2011; Ihmeideh & Shawareb, 2014; Shechtman & Boucherian, 2015). The next section will explore this debate about the advantages and disadvantages of social media interactions.

2.2.1 The Advantages of Social Media Interactions

In recent years, a host of potential benefits and various outputs of social media interactions have been suggested in the literature in relation to improving the learning environment and involving parents. According to Huffman (2013), the greatest benefits of using social media interactions in education derive from the ease of distributing information, the convenience and cost and time efficiency they provide, and the way in which interaction is encouraged.

Ease and Convenience. Social media supports interconnections between stakeholders, individually or in groups (Grujanac, 2011). It enables the provision of consistent interactive, informative and useful communication to stakeholders. In this sense, the frequency and immediacy of social media has a definite impact on the involvement of parents. While families are often not sure of their role in their children's preschool education, the preschool teacher is also not aware of families' beliefs and settings (Temel et al., 2010; Kosaretskii & Chernyshov, 2013). Thus, the interaction between teachers and parents is often characterised by a lack of clarity and conflict. However, comfortable conversation encourages a reduction in social anxieties and supports positive feelings and the involvement of families in their children's preschool education. Various media types can thus facilitate such informal and efficient involvement, thereby enabling constant and effective mutual interaction. Furthermore, social media interactions allow educators and parents to send and stock information simply and fast, offering families more opportunities to be involved in their children's education (Goodall, 2016). The features of social media interactions, such as unlimited messages, photo-video and audio-recording, sharing and reading the information, and all the features of the group, open myriad communication possibilities for teachers and parents (Aburezeq & Ishtaiwa, 2013; Guler, 2017; Malhotra & Bansal, 2017). As scholars have repeatedly indicated, life has been changed by the adoption of new technologies (Cetinkaya, 2017). The dominance of smartphones in daily life means they have become a driving force in the use of social media interactions (Montag et al., 2015), while the significant role that social media plays in people's everyday lives has also made it increasingly essential for connecting the school community.

Cost and Time Efficiency. Traditional methods of interaction need time that both working educators and parents may lack (Decker & Decker, 2003). Social media interactions are user-friendly, require less time and can reach more people effectively. If parents have questions about their child, they can immediately connect with the teacher (Grujanac, 2011). The use of social media permits rapid and pertinent communication, enabling a parent to catch up rapidly with their child's educational activities. It also enables time-

efficient communication among educators and families and, if needed, can include both families and the society at large at the same time. Olmstead (2013) stated that both teachers and parents have optimised their interaction with social media, reduced the intervention time and thus increased parental involvement in preschool education and deeply influenced the success of students. In the same way, Martin (2014) stated that people rely on social media for almost everything, while Klososky (2012) added that social media interactions can build relationships in a way that no other element can. Parents are not required to be physically present at their children's school (Olmstead, 2013). Features such as the direct messaging functions in social media platforms provide a real-time forum that enables members to be involved in written/called to talk. Ertmer et al. (2011b) showed how such facilities provided a high level of effective cooperation in social media forums, compared to a related face-to-face control group. This also has the potential to create intercultural experiences without the associated burdens (financial or otherwise). Thus, in contexts where a lack of time or physical distance prevents authentic cooperation, social media interactions eliminate travel costs and enable time and resources to be used more effectively, simultaneously expanding the knowledge pools used in the collaboration process (Byington, 2011). In addition, with the increasing affordability of Internet packages, the use of social media has become more practical and widespread within society. Having plans and tools that are accessible to both educators and parents permits the almost instantaneous transfer of information via social media. An advantage of using social media tools, therefore, is the minimum cost for educational stakeholders of any size (Klososky, 2012; Abe & Jordan, 2013).

The next section focuses on the disadvantages of social media interactions.

2.2.2 The Disadvantages of Social Media Interactions

Social media interactions also pose disadvantages, dilemmas and challenges, both in terms of the setting and features of the media. Thus, there are some cautious voices among

academia and preschool stakeholders (Plowman, McPake & Stephen 2010; Daniels & Burnett, 2015; Kraft & Rogers, 2015; Knauf, 2016). For example, online communication lacks the eye contact, body language and voice tones that have always been, and continue to be, a vital part of human interactions. Thus, online communication is often characterised as lacking the richness of face-to-face interactions. Consequently, it is necessary to consider the need for educators and families to have additional face-to-face interaction to help build a familiar connection, and educators and parents should thus continue to meet in order to build trust and proficient working interactions (Wasserman & Zwebner, 2017). Moreover, social media interactions may raise the risk of educators and families misunderstanding posts and thus actually render their interaction more difficult. For example, families may perceive a post as annoying, irritating or unnecessary when in fact this is not the case (Wasserman & Zwebner, 2017).

Many social media sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest) are used for interactions; however, few are considered with pedagogy in mind, thus making confidentiality, safety and content a possible problem (Huffman, 2013). In addition, Web 2.0 has slightly become an omniopticon (the many watch the many) at the same time as being an ideal medium for social surveillance and participatory panopticism (consciousness of permanent visibility) (Mitrou et al., 2014). Thus, the use of social media in education may also come with interaction difficulties and worries. The datafication, surveillance, manipulation and duplication of published content might be concerns for users, such as concern regarding their online footprint in relation to communication recorded in online settings. This, in turn, raises the question of principles in online interaction. Concerns associated with online interaction may damage the connection among teachers and parents and hinder their performance within social media (Palts & Kalmus, 2015).

Furthermore, while social media technologies allow for continuous connection, this limits the borders between communal and personal life, and between work and entertainment (Agger, 2011). This blurring of boundaries might be exhibited in the sending of private communications to the community that contain personal and intimate information.

Indeed, Wasserman and Zwebner (2017) state that some families found that the use of social media (such as Facebook) raises the issue of boundaries. They also added that a group that aims to operate as a specialised avenue of interaction among teachers and parents can very simply become a mere social group. Thus, a negative aspect of social media is the possible blurring of relationships and communication between teachers and families, thus potentially undermining appropriate parental involvement in school (Wasserman & Zwebner, 2017).

Disadvantaged and minority groups may be excluded from social media interactions. There is a discrepancy among these groups in terms of their income and education level (Huang, 2017). Low-income families are less likely to have access to the relevant communication technologies (Bessell et al., 2003), while low education and ethnicity (race) may be associated with barriers to accessing the Internet and a lack of computer skills (Penuel et al., 2002; Sad et al., 2016). Thus, students appear to be at an advantage if their parents already engage in these kinds of interactions. Non-native parents often lack both the general technology and communication technology skills to take advantage of the benefits offered by social media interactions (Turnie & Kao, 2009; Chapman, Masters & Pedulla, 2010).

The current literature supports the idea of teacher–parent interactions via social media for parental involvement at preschool and explores its benefits and challenges. While potential benefits are often suggested, detailed in-depth experiences have not been established. Furthermore, the social media environment is both complex and rapidly evolving, and each platform and element within it may provoke a different set of considerations, while the actual experiences of platforms and elements might not be those that are desired by both teachers and parents.

2.3 Barriers to Involvement and Addressing the Gaps

There are many logistical, emotional, linguistic and cultural constraints that can limit the involvement of parents in education. Thus, despite the clear potential benefits of enhancing parental involvement, there remains a gap between ideal models of parental involvement and real experiences. Working with families is unavoidable when working in the preschool period, but nonetheless, several elements may prevent parental involvement, with lack of time being primary among these (Murphy, 2001; Sad & Gürbüztürk, 2013). Thus, although families play a significant role in the preschool, the goal of successful parental involvement remains a challenge in many schools (McNeal, 2014). In addition, various other common barriers have been identified. These include written policies, procedures and strategies (Elliott, 2003; Martin, 2003); teachers' and parents' attitudes (Shartrand et al., 1997); the trust and efficacy of teachers and parents (OECD, 2001; Urban, 2005); power inequalities (Bridge, 2001; Foot et al., 2002); leadership (Rodd, 2006; Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2008); the status of teachers (OECD, 2001; Ferguson, 2002); teacher turnover (Marsh, 1997; Cameron et al., 2002); and social class (Keyes, 2002; Weiss et al., 2006).

Regarding these barriers, the use of social media technology to support teacher–family interaction has gained noteworthy momentum in the last 15 years (Ho et al., 2013); indeed, when the pertinent literature was reviewed, a number of studies appeared to have considered the social media interactions between stakeholders in education (Unal, 2008; Mitchell, Fougler & Wetzel, 2009; Koenig, 2011; Shim et al., 2011; Steer, 2012; Abe & Jordan, 2013; Hampton, 2016). Most of these studies, however, focused on older age groups (primary and secondary school), while recent studies have shown that preschools do not always take advantage of the available technologies (European Commission, 2015; Deckers et al., 2015; Knauf, 2016).

Similarly, Kim et al. (2012) carried out an extensive review of the literature on the relationships between teachers and parents, involving 27,000 studies since 1979. They

identified gaps in the focus of study and the age group of children, which this study aims to address. While there has been an increase in universal preschool calls for specific research in preschool settings and to establish positive parental relationships for preschool education success, only 22.6 per cent of the studies on family involvement models focused on a preschool setting (Miller, Wanless & Weissberg, 2018).

Besides that, Koycegiz et al., (2016) say that families were willing to become more involved in their children's learning. Among the difficulties of involving families in their children's learning, teachers often report a lack of preparedness and confidence to involve families (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). Preschool programmes are based on a centralised approach, which is often carried out by educators, as opposed to being school and family built (LaRocque et al., 2011). A top-down (from teachers to parents) approach may lead to discrepancies in expectations and a detachment between educators and parents. As a result, parents may feel marginalised and reluctant, with the result that their role in their children's educational success is minimised (Knoche et al., 2012). As BECTA stated in 2010, communication technologies can support families in becoming involved with their children's education, enable them to follow the latest changes with what is happening at preschool and, since school activities have evolved significantly since they were at preschool, how subjects are taught nowadays (Goodall, 2016).

Specifically considering the busy lives of working people who struggle to be involved in children's preschool education, social media technology is seen as shaping the forms of conversation between educators and families, thus leading to greater parental involvement (Wasserman & Zwebner, 2017). It is possible that social media interactions allow preschool stakeholders to overcome some of the barriers to parental involvement. Social media interactions may develop in-depth parental involvement by increasing the sense of collaboration and communication between teachers and parents through the creation of healthy mutual interaction, documenting children's activities and increasing parental involvement with learning (Olmstead 2013). Olmstead (2013), however, added that even though teachers are willing to use social media for parental involvement, in

practice they often do not interact with parents through social media. Reasons for this may include a lack of research in the area, due to the relative novelty of using such technologies in the field of education. Thus, there is still a great deal of ambiguity regarding the immediate surroundings of child social media interactions. It is therefore no surprise that many teachers and parents remain cautious about the use of digital platforms (Plowman, McPake & Stephen, 2010; Daniels & Burnett, 2015).

2.3.1 Addressing the Gaps in Turkish Preschool Settings

Although the preschool curriculum suggests that communication with parents and the community can be conducted via meetings (group, individual), conferences and with printed instruments such as articles, leaflets, guidebooks and educational panels (MoNE, 2013a, 2013b), this was not the necessarily the intention. The majority of these methods require parents to come to school. Busy work lives, problems obtaining permission from employers and transportation issues all make it difficult for parents to become involved in educational activities at schools. Also, studies have shown that such communication is hindered by a lack of meetings with parents (Akbasli & Kavak, 2008), the distance from school and a lack of adequate parking space and places where parents can sit at the institution (Tezel-Sahin & Özyürek, 2010).

Besides this, in the Turkish setting, social media is both sanctioned by officials and integrated into the preschool curriculum and is seen as a valued medium for involvement for the twenty-first century (MoNE, 2013a, 2013b). There has been a radical increase in Internet use and the number of hours spent online per week has grown over the last ten years (TUIK, 2018). Ozdamlı and Yıldız (2014) found that Turkish families have the technical competence to improve teacher–parent interactions and parental involvement and that they are mostly positive about involvement in their children's learning via digital technology. Although a majority of preschool stakeholders in Turkey have the requisite devices and Internet access to use social media (TUIK, 2018; TUBITAK, 2011), there

remains a lack of a developed pedagogy for the practice of social media in these environments. With attempts to encourage the use of social media in preschool and among stakeholders (policymakers, teachers and researchers), researchers are increasingly becoming involved in ways to incorporate communication technologies within the parental involvement process (Temel et al., 2010). However, issues persist regarding its involvement in the preschool context, and the use of social media in preschool remains largely unexplored in Turkey.

International research studies from North America, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand provide a picture of social media involvement in preschool, but there is a lack of research into the results of employing such technology in preschools in Turkey. Furthermore, no detailed study has been undertaken on preschool teachers' and parents' social media experiences, although the various social media that can be used in family involvement and education have been examined (Ozcinar & Ekizoglu, 2013; Ozdamli & Yildiz, 2014; Balci & Tezel-Sahin, 2016; Sapsaglam & Engin 2017). This study therefore attempts to explore the detail of their practices in-depth.

In bringing together the national and international gaps in knowledge on the use of social media and digital technologies in preschool settings (European Commission, 2015; Arnott, Palaiologou, & Gray, 2018), social media interactions might be considered to be an alternative technique to provide involvement opportunities for the stakeholders. Just as the Internet plays a very important role in bringing people together through social networks, as has been widely documented in recent years (Erbaslar, 2013), social media might be a useful tool for family involvement and communication in the preschool environment. It is in this context that the growing significance and potential of social media interactions in preschool educational contexts is being increasingly recognised (Ozcinar & Ekizoglu, 2013). Furthermore, the use of social media in preschool contexts is strongly influenced by prevailing individual, institutional, local, national and international factors, and studies have exposed different barriers to the employment of such media (Yelland, 2016).

Summary

Social media provides rich information and interactive content to parents about their children's educational experiences. Parents use these new types of communication, although the technology has provoked questions and concerns. Overall, however, social media opens up a new forum in which parents can communicate with both each other and others. Teachers and parents can engage in dialogue about the classroom on social media sites. Without social media, such communications among concerned individuals are limited to face-to-face contact either as individuals or in a group (Karno & Bilodeau, 2016). In this respect, a first stage is often the use of social media platforms to reduce timing barriers within the more traditional home–school communication patterns, thus enabling the transfer of multiple pieces of information to families at the same time and the cost-effective sharing and storing of information on children's education, school rules and tasks, plus tips for parental involvement.

It is now possible to reach parents through social media in ways that were not possible with the old-style ways of interaction. Social media may also be used directly for family involvement. It can remove the most important barriers to family involvement in preschool education and can also be used to educate parents on child development needs. This, combined with the ease of use and access to well-known social media sites, means that group features are a very useful tool for family involvement and education.

To conclude, this first part of the literature review has focused on introducing social media use in a preschool family involvement and educational context. The second part of the review explores the parental involvement model of the study, namely Epstein's (2001) model of parental involvement, along with the rationale for using it. This section also demonstrates how Epstein's (2001) model offers a valid system of organisation within which to explore social media interactions at preschool. This structure underpins the analysis of the existing body of literature, the data analysis and the subsequent discussion.

2.4 Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is a key factor in preschool education and policy, and preschool is an important time for connecting home learning to a formalised education setting (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012). Children's understanding of education and their academic progress is influenced by their home settings since a child's development takes place mainly within the family (Juang & Silbereisen, 2002). Therefore, the family and teacher do not operate separately for the benefit of children but rather interact with each other as well as with other community members who influence the development of a child (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Eccles at al., 1993).

It is not only researchers who emphasise the importance of parental involvement for pre-schoolers. Many countries have also focused on the issue, as seen in Turkey, for example, in terms of how the curricula and OBADER guidelines emphasise effective practice in promoting parental involvement. Likewise, in the US, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) states that educators need to "know about, understand, and value the importance and complex characteristics of children's families and communities. They use this understanding to create respectful, reciprocal relationships that support and empower families and to involve all families in their children's development and learning" (Doe, 2015; p. 18). The Australian Early Childhood Association's code of ethics suggests that preschool education should "develop positive relationships with families which are based on mutual trust and open communication; involve shared decision-making with families; and encourage families to share their knowledge of their child so that there is mutual growth and understanding in ways which benefit the child" (McDermott, 2010; p. 42). Meanwhile, one of the four basic values of Te Whāriki (family and society), which is the name of the early childhood curriculum issued by the Education Ministry of New Zealand (1996), states that the extended family and society is a fundamental part of the preschool education programme.

The next section provides a brief introduction to parental involvement models and a discussion of the chosen model (Epstein), which is an analytical tool to help organise the data according to parental involvement types.

2.4.1 Models and Practices of Parental Involvement

A number of models were taken into consideration and reflected upon in order to make sense. A decision was then made on which to use as an analytical framework that fitted, made sense and reflected the researcher's own view. The model perspective is intently linked to the methodology, methods and analyses (Mertens, 2014). This is also true in the field of family involvement. Therefore, the research process includes a parental involvement model.

Many models of parental involvement have been developed in a bid to understand the involvement of parents in education, some of which are more widespread and useful than others. For example, Hoover-Dempsey and Epstein are the two main models that apply to the topic (Tekin, 2011). After a brief discussion of the other models, these two models are presented with respect to parental involvement.

Pugh and De'Ath (1989) developed a model to illustrate the different ways in which parents can interact with preschool services. They argue that the involvement should not be seen as a straight development, since parents can be engaged in different types of involvement at the same time. Dale (2008) offered three types of involvement at preschool: consumer, empowerment and negotiating models, although she recognises that the models may be hypothetical in that they suggest a comparatively new type of connection between educators and parents. Edwards and Knight (1994) developed a model of the involvement activities that can take place during the preschool period. These activities demonstrate progress in the relationship between parents and pre-schoolers in terms of the levels and types of involvement activities. The inclusion of families in these ways

depends not only on the increasing skills and trust of some families, however, but also on the motivation of educators to blur the borders between their work and families (McDermott, 2010). In an outline of parental involvement in preschool in selected member countries, the OECD established that while there were rules considering family involvement in each selected country, the forms of involvement were diverse, such as marginal (low) involvement, formal involvement (Portugal), informal-organised involvement, participatory involvement (Finland) and managerial involvement (Norway, Netherlands, United States) (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012).

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model of Parental Involvement. This model focuses on the inner elements that encourage family involvement experiences (Green et al., 2007), attempting to describe why families prefer to be involved (Tekin, 2011; Altinoz, 2016), how they select particular types of involvement and what role parental involvement plays (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). The model therefore presents a rigorously personal and emotional viewpoint of parental involvement (Tekin, 2011). As a result, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model presents a valued context for scholars seeking to explore the psychological factors of parental involvement. It was not considered a suitable model for use here, however, since the focus of this study is not to explore the psychological factors of social media interactions.

Lev Vygotsky, in his socio-cultural theory, emphasised the relationship between the child and his or her physical and social environment. According to Vygotsky, social and cultural elements have many effects on development and education (Vygotsky, 1978). Children are surrounded by adults – most often their parents – and are affected by the culture in which they live. The communication between children and parents in the society is therefore very significant since it is through this interaction that children learn about the world (Tekin, 2011). However, a child's abilities become more proficient when learning under the assistance of an adult (Vygotsky, 1978). Accordingly, by emphasising reciprocity and interdependence in education and development, the concept provides the notion that a child's domestic life is important and that family members support the child's

development and educational success (Tekin, 2011). Thus, the link to parental involvement in children's education is emphasised by the socio-contextual model; in particular, researchers have confirmed the importance of parents' thoughts about education and schooling for a child's development, behaviour and learning (Englund et al., 2004; Jeynes, 2012). It is also evident that close environmental elements are a means of shaping a child's developmental outcomes (Vygotsky, 1978; McPake, Plowman & Stephen 2013); this study is therefore linked to a socio-contextual approach.

Socio-contextual perspectives have their roots in Vygotsky's concept (Van Lier, 2000). Such approaches have a shared concern regarding the role of the context in the education and development of early years children. Particularly, they explain how social connections form opportunities for education across meaningful activities. In this study, I focus on the work of Epstein (2001) in the form of the Model of Parental Involvement, which is driven by socio-contextual views (Epstein, 1987, 1994). According to the socio-contextual approach, a child's essential development takes place primarily within the family and affects their comprehension of instruction, thus ultimately shaping their scholastic advances and future accomplishments (Palts & Kalmus, 2015). Teachers and parents form dynamic relationships with each other and with the society, and these interactions inevitably influence the academic achievement of a child (Epstein, 2001). Thus, an important advance in the area of developmental and educational research was the definition of interconnected close adults that directly influence the child's (individual) experience. From the perspective of the twenty-first century, it seems interesting to consider the inclusion of the child's immediate environment and how it relates to the wider contexts through social media interactions.

2.4.2 Epstein's Model of Parental Involvement

The work of Joyce Epstein (2001, 2011) triggered a paradigm shift in parental involvement (Tekin, 2011). Epstein (2001) demonstrated extensive involvement activities that create

successful collaborations among educators, parents and community. Her model helps researchers seeking to analyse the practices and perceptions of parents' involvement in their children's learning (Karlie, 2009). Epstein's notion of 'Spheres of Influence' (2001) describes how the family, educators and society influence the education and development of children (see Figure 1) (Epstein et al., 1997). This involvement recognises that educators, parents and other people in the community share a more collaborative responsibility for children's learning and development (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006). Involvement is a child-centred approach where professionals and parents collaborate and coordinate to enhance children's opportunities and success socially, emotionally, behaviourally and academically (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000; Downer & Myers, 2010; Jeynes, 2012). The intersecting circles below present a graphical example of the model, illustrating the collaborative relationship between the different spheres of influences.

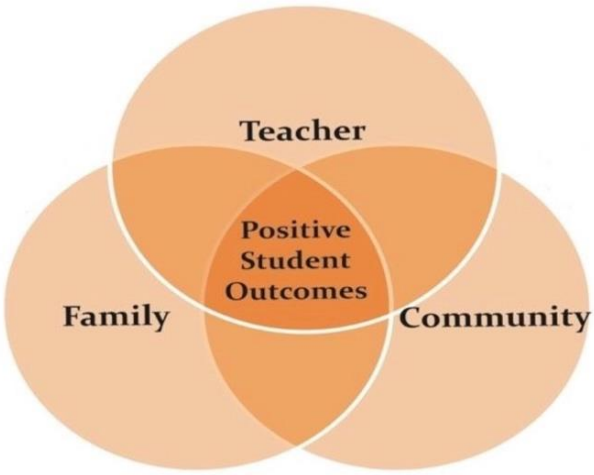


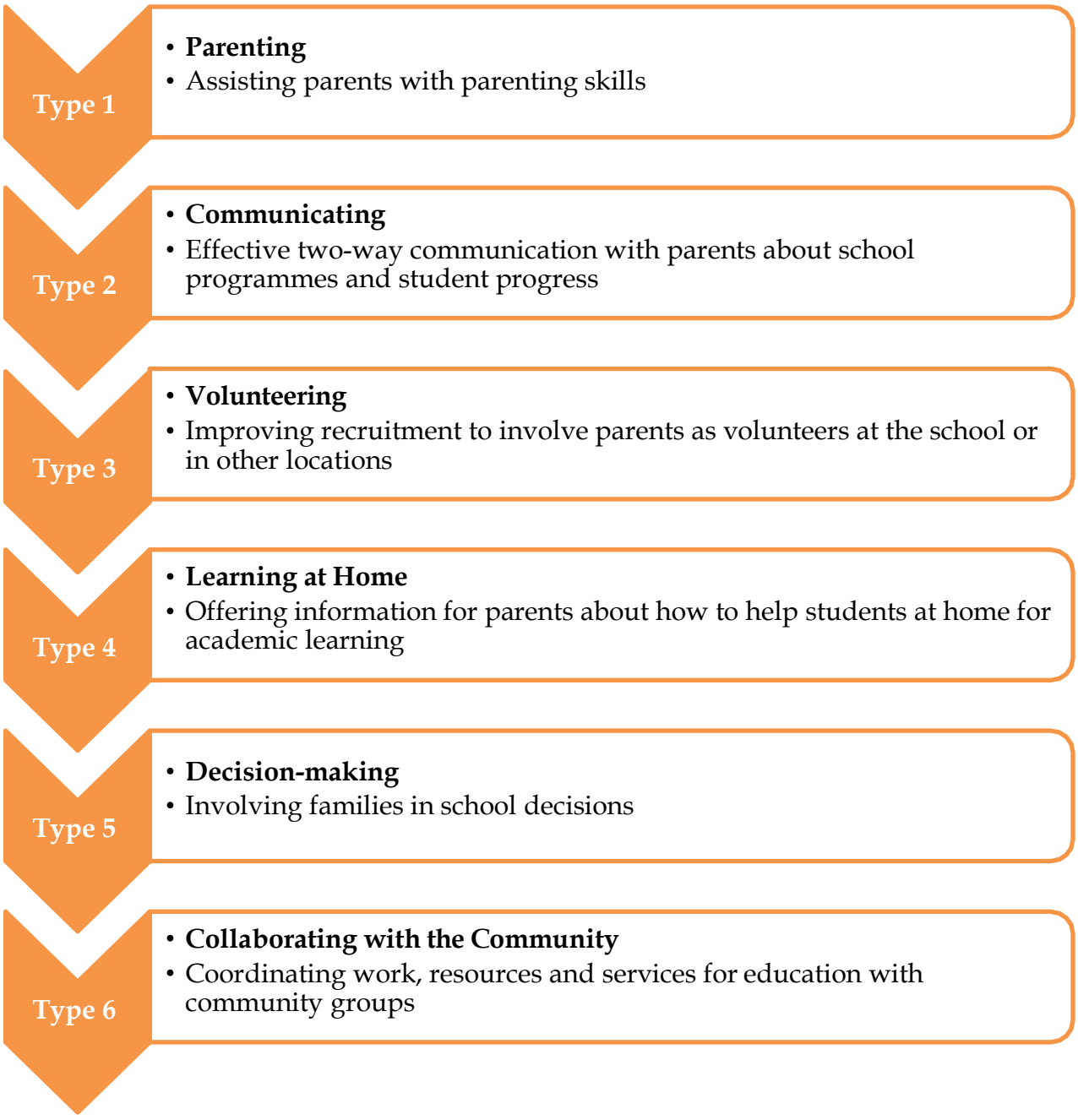
***Figure 1*:** Overlapping Spheres of Influence (adapted from Epstein 2011)

Figure 1 also shows that the main contention of the model is that the consolidated impact of the teacher, family and the child's immediate community is imperative for the achievement of positive student outcomes, since the correspondence between the spheres allows the teacher, family and immediate community to contribute jointly to encourage the child's development (Epstein, 2005a, 2005b). Epstein's model therefore predicts that communication and shared goals between teachers, parents and the community are likely to lead to successful student outcomes. She says that the reciprocal interests of teachers,

families and community can be successfully supported by the actions and policies of schools and the actions of teachers (Epstein, 2001). Although the individuals and groups involved have their own beliefs and practices, they might be interconnected via social media. Thus, the overlapping spheres might be supported by social media interactions to enable the needs of the child to be understood and for support to be provided (Olmstead, 2013). Epstein's model, therefore, extensively sets out the concept of parental involvement in order to demonstrate a richer conception of the dynamic relationship that should exist between schools, families and community (Barton et al., 2004).

Furthermore, Epstein indicates six types of parental involvement in the model which have been suggested for in-depth/detailed parental involvement (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). The following six types are described: Parenting; Communicating; Volunteering; Learning at Home; Decision-making; and Collaborating with the Community (Epstein, 2001) (see Table 2.1). There are certain difficulties associated with the successful design and implementation of each type of involvement, and each type leads to different outcomes for children, families and teachers (Epstein, 2001). Regarding teacher–parent communication, Epstein (2001) suggests that teachers should implement effective forms of communication in relation to the development of the child and about the school's programmes. Family involvement in this model comprises a set of interrelated roles, tasks and factors, as described by Epstein. Underpinned by the concept of involvement, the family, the school and the community are required to make decisions and act continually in relation to student development and education (Epstein et al., 2002). The framework developed by Epstein et al. (2011) presents central areas where parental involvement has the most effect on children. For this reason, the teacher should work to build a method of steady parental involvement that embodies each of the six types. The six types of involvement are outlined in the table below.

Table 2.1: Epstein's Parental Involvement Types (adapted from Epstein 2011)



There are several rationales behind the decision to use Epstein's model. Firstly, the model is designed from a socio-contextual view (Epstein, 1987, 1994). The features of the Epstein model highlight the centrality of the interaction between teachers and parents in the education of young children. The model emphasises the cooperation and complementarity

of educators, families and community, while also encouraging communication and cooperation between individuals and/or institutions (Epstein, 1987, 1994). Thus, the Epstein model might be useful for exploring social media activities as a forum for the interactions between people in the context of views and practices.

Secondly, the literature on parental involvement over the last 60 years has examined a range of effective practices of family involvement (Larocque et al., 2011; Jeynes, 2012), and there has recently been a paradigm shift towards increased awareness of the people immediately surrounding a child's world and their influence on school achievement (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006; Downer & Meyers, 2010; Epstein, 2011). This latest conception of the role of parents in a child's learning has progressed from one of limited one-way communication to a more inclusive model of mutual interactions (Epstein, 2011). In addition, research suggests that the use of social media by educational partners is a multidimensional and complex process in the sense that a wide variety of factors play a role (Alazami, 2017). These involve the parents, teacher's attitude and the wider society (Ball & Junemann, 2012; Silius et al., 2011). In other words, social media is a record of all the permutations of interaction between stakeholders, and between them and their environment. In this context, this present study investigates the social media interactions between the parties surrounding preschool using Epstein's model as a multi-type parental involvement framework with which to reach tangible and comprehensible solutions.

Thirdly, it is well recognised that every society has an individual (attitudes, values, beliefs, perceptions) and local (neighbourhood, logistic) settings. In other words, every nation has a distinctive sociological context (Ihmeideh & Alkhawaldeh, 2017). This study is focused on exploring the social media experiences of Turkish teachers and parents at preschool, and the influence of those sociological factors on their practices. The prevailing conditions of the sociological environment "as a way of life of a group of people in a certain society, differs from that of other societies according to the context of the generally prevalent culture that guides individuals and groups" (Ihmeideh & Alkhawaldeh, 2017; p. 140). The culture of any community is shaped by people in relation to their life and involves their lived experiences as well as the behavioural, ethical and moral values derived from shared

beliefs, thought, science and art. Thus, a child's environment has a range of settings, including home, class, peer groups and informal learning settings (Ball, 2010; Ihmeideh & Alkhawaldeh, 2017). This environment has been influenced by many factors during the twenty-first century as a result of the growing influence of digital technologies. There is thus a complex interaction between social media as a window on the interactions in the close environment (as in the previous paragraph) and social media as itself influencing those settings.

Lastly, the Epstein model understands mutual interaction on the basis that the parties are influenced by each other. Simply put, the model acknowledges the importance of the multiple, interconnected contexts of children's immediate environments. The notion is that children are influenced by a range of immediate environments. The interactions begin with the individuals closest to them before extending out to the wider society. Thus, the communications, opinions and attitudes of the adults in their environment and the surrounding people's morals and opinions shape children and their learning (Wilson, 2011). This research spans two of the most centred education settings (preschool and home) of which every early year's child is a part. Epstein's model asserts that the interactions within and among these two environments are significant for preschool children's education and development.

To sum up, this section on parental involvement models has endeavoured to present an overview of parental involvement in the education of young children. The paradigm shift from structural to multi-type family involvement models has led educators and researchers to consider not only the realised activities but also the nature and depth of these relations. This offers the opportunity for all the relevant stakeholders – including investigators, teachers, families, policymakers, community and other individuals in the field of education – to understand social media interactions in preschool and how and what they are based on. Since the process itself entails a continuing reciprocal discussion of its practices and outcomes, it will be useful for people in different areas of the discussion to understand the process as a complete phenomenon with a contextual and conceptual basis.

2.4.2.1 **Criticisms of Epstein**

Before proceeding to consider how Epstein's parent involvement model might be applied to the particular concerns of this thesis, it is important to assess the scholarly critiques of the model. A number of researchers have criticised Epstein's model for being centred mainly on school/teacher-initiated mechanisms for involving parents, with less emphasis on how involvement might be driven by parents themselves (Lareau & Shumar, 1996; Kohl, Lengua & McMahon, 2000; Auerbach, 2007; Bower & Griffin, 2011). Thus, Epstein's model may not entirely take into account how parents desire to be involved in their children's schooling (Jeynes, 2012). Similarly, the sixth type of involvement, i.e. collaboration with the community, has been argued to be quite narrow, and in particular lacking two-way communication (Freng et al., 2006).

In my view, the above criticisms have some merit, and, in a sense, this thesis responds to that critique, by updating Epstein's model to take account of the potential of interactive Web 2.0 communications that serve to place parents (and the community) on a much more equal footing with teachers than was the case when Epstein's model was developed. Social media technology is a prime example of this, in that it allows for much more parental initiation of action than the traditional Epstein model (Mazza, 2013). In many ways, social media is an ideal forum for parents and teachers to interact and understand each other's interests and concerns, and share resources, etc. In essence, although the thesis uses Epstein as a model, it does not do so slavishly: social media actually expands the Epstein model, updates it and, potentially, addresses some of the recurring criticisms it has faced.

A second critique of Epstein relates to its lack of consideration of societal power differentials. Fine (1993) says that parental involvement is a matter of power, and power is not always allocated equally among social classes. Epstein's model has little mechanism for the separate exploration of different family structures and backgrounds, however (Freng et al., 2006; Auerbach, 2007; Jeynes, 2012). Also, it is known that parents from more disadvantaged backgrounds (minorities, single parents, less educated) experience more barriers to becoming involved with their children's education (Benson & Martin, 2003),

and a number of studies have shown that socioeconomic status (SES) is a risk factor for parental involvement (Lee & Bowan, 2006; Fields-Smith, 2007; Auerbach, 2007; Freeman, 2010; Lopez & Stoelting, 2010; Bower & Griffin, 2011).

These concerns remain relevant in the social media age, in that research on social media interactions indicates that there are differences in access and practices based on family socioeconomic status (income, education) (Livingstone, 2015) and wider society involvement (Freng et al., 2006). In other words, low-income groups tend to have less access to social media technology, which may lead to less involvement in communication with teachers through social media. This critique could also be levelled at this thesis since the study does not encompass the socio-economically disadvantaged. Currently, however, it would be very difficult to conduct such a study in Turkey, given that the socio-economic profile of parents whose children attend nursery and who use social media is overwhelming middle-class.

2.5 Applying Epstein's Model to Social Media Interactions

As introduced above, in applying Epstein's parental involvement model to preschool social media interactions in Turkey, this study can be seen as taking account of one of the key critiques of that model and as seeking to repurpose Epstein for the social media age. In particular, the application of Epstein in this thesis emphasises the two-way and multiple levels of interaction between educational stakeholders as being key to supporting learning outcomes, rather than simply a teacher-led approach to engaging parents (Hohlfeld et al., 2010; Palts & Kalmus, 2015). Teacher–parent–immediate community interaction and involvement in children's education facilitates instructors' practices and the pedagogical climate, thus helping educators to perform their work more effectively (Oostdam & Hooge, 2013). A high level of communication is required at the point where teachers engage in compelling interactions with the parents and immediate community, thus contributing to positive student outcomes (Epstein et al., 2002; Howland et. al., 2006).

Powerful techniques for expanding parental involvement are therefore key concerns for positive child outcomes. Employing user-generated technologies in this context, such as social media, might be seen as a way of promising expanded collaborations that build the coverage of the wider community, leading to positive educational results for children.

In this vein, Epstein's model might be investigated further to offer an organised and effective context for comprehending the connection of level interaction through social media. Thus, another contribution of this research is its use of the Epstein parental involvement model to understand the role of social media in teacher–parent–community interaction (Karno & Bilodeau, 2016; Chong, 2017). In this regard, the understanding of social media practice that is developed through this study will provide the groundwork both for more wide-ranging qualitative work and for the quantitative measurement of the impact of the use of social media on children's educational attainment.

Epstein's model is based on the notion of multi-type involvement where the developmental outcomes of the relationships between the different types are direct (Epstein, 2001). Epstein focuses on interactions, how educational stakeholders interrelate with other beings in different contexts and how such relations, or a lack of them, affect experiences. However, there is also a recognition that the influences arising from the experience of social media interactions might differ from those arising from face-to-face interactions. Furthermore, the notion of parental involvement has changed as a result of scientific and technological developments. "Societies began to witness what is called 'digital culture' that rapidly grew and evolved at the end of the 20th century and became much more sophisticated at the beginning of the 21st century" (Ihmeideh & Alkhawaldeh, 2017; p. 140). Although Epstein's model was developed prior to the existence of social media and digital technologies, it might present a useful tool for exploring the impact of social media on child development and family involvement in the twenty-first century. Epstein proposed that immediate environmental contexts are important in understanding the child developmental process, and some scholars have postulated that Epstein's model can be used to explain home–school contexts within digital technologies (Karlie, 2009;

Smith et al., 2011; Hampton, 2016). Thus, the model encourages a detailed exploration of the immediate environmental contexts.

Incorporating social media within this detailed understanding of the child's environment is an increasingly urgent task for research, and one that can help researchers, practitioners and teachers to begin accounting for the possible influence of the interactions and education that occur in these immediate contexts (Johnson, 2010; Eaton, 2014). In addition, social media makes visible the interactions between the multimodal ways that occur around the child (Karno & Bilodeau, 2016). Social media, in particular, offers a direct link to cross-communication within the child's close settings and the opportunity to create cross-cutting information between parents, children and teachers in the classroom. Since Epstein's model is the basic lens used to guide this research, helping the researcher to explore aspects of the social media experiences of teachers and parents in preschool settings, the experiences of teachers' and parents' social media interrelationships with the wider community also need to be captured.

Besides this, Epstein's model emphasises the child outcomes process in patterns of social community. Various theoretical and empirical studies support this idea (LeVine, 2003; Handel et al., 2007). Society affects the child in the context in which s/he lives directly (i.e. the preschool, family and class) and throughout the contexts in which these intimate environments meet or interact. Although the external environment affects the development of the child (such as the area of work of the parents), child development continues to take place primarily in the closest settings (home, classroom), influencing children's educational understanding and thus their academic progress, subsequent success and career prospects (Palts & Kamus, 2015).

The current literature supports the notion of teacher–parent social media interactions for parental involvement at preschool and explores the benefits and challenges of such interaction. While potential benefits are often suggested, detailed in-depth experiences have not been established. Furthermore, the social media environment is complex and changing rapidly, and each platform, and element within it, may provoke a different set of considerations, while the actual experiences of platforms and elements may not fully

represent those that were desired by both teachers and parents. Although the social media interaction of preschool teachers and parents is influenced by the social environment, as Hampton (2016) states, there is a gap between the law, high-level rhetoric and plans, and the popular use of communication technologies.

In light of these debates, I considered Epstein's model to be the most appropriate approach for the research. Therefore, it is considered that the model might represent an ideal framework from which to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that affect the social media experiences of preschool stakeholders as they interrelate with each other. It is an especially convenient model when investigating the social media experiences of teachers and parents and the socio-contextual interference/intersection at preschool in the Turkish context. In addition, Epstein's model will be used as a parental involvement model to help facilitate the interpretation of the detailed data.

2.6 Summary

It is known that parental involvement significantly enhances the quality of students' education and that it is required for positive outcomes during preschool education. To this end, educators are constantly trying to discover a medium to communicate efficiently with society members, particularly with families. Innovative Web 2.0 social media technologies, such as blogs, wikis and social networking, provide interactive platforms for preschool stakeholders to experience interactions. Many of the challenges of time, space and motivation that often characterise traditional face-to-face interaction can be overcome through the use of social media in positive environments.

Currently, social media is an increasingly important form of interaction between teachers and families, and one that requires detailed academic exploration. So far, however, the potential of social media for teacher–parent interaction remains a challenging agenda. This study therefore aims to investigate how social media is used by preschool teachers and parents and what promises and/or dilemmas emerge through mediated relationships.

Considering the spread of social media technologies in a number of cultural and economic areas, there is growing interest in and encouraging results for the use of these tools to develop successful parental involvement strategies (Sad et al., 2016). Following this line of thinking, this study reveals how social media is experienced at preschool and what these mediation relations and/or dilemmas reveal.

The literature review shows that a handful of previous studies have investigated the experiences of teachers and parents with social media. Very little research has been conducted overall on the topic, and there are few comprehensive works to understand the use of social media in a preschool context. Despite the large volume of research demonstrating teachers' positive attitudes towards the use of technologies, further research is needed to study preschool teachers' and parents' experiences with social media interactions. This in-depth case study addresses these gaps in the literature base by exploring social media use at a preschool in Turkey through the model lenses provided by Epstein. Such a detailed exploration of the social media interactions between teachers and parents within a preschool setting requires consideration of the different and detailed types of parental involvement for the impact of close settings on their practice. This appears to be a crucial process to push forward a twenty-first-century research agenda on children and social media interactions. The data collected from this study might therefore help early childhood programme directors and other preschool stakeholders to understand the detailed social media practices that may be carried out in preschool settings.

This chapter has reviewed the literature on the research topic of the preschool social media practices of teachers and parents. Although the history of research on preschool social media interactions is short, this chapter has included a discussion of how preschool interactions are affected by social media and how the Epstein model can be applied to preschool social media interactions settings. Discussion of policy issues, calls for research and gaps in the literature show how this study could add to the current literature. The next chapter describes the qualitative design of the study, along with the detailed methodology and the plan for data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3 DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design sets out the plan or strategy that will consistently and logically combine the different components of the research to enable the researcher to tackle the research questions effectively. It comprises a plan for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. In this study, a qualitative approach was used to explore how a preschool teacher and parents engaged in social media interactions. The data collection was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, observations were made to identify the forms of social media used, the types of communication entered into, how they were used and the policies governing their use. In the second phase, interviews were conducted with the same participants as for the observations, in order to undertake an in-depth investigation of their social media interactions. The data were then interpreted using thematic analysis.

The following sections initially contextualise the methodological framework and the study design. The data collection methods are subsequently explained and discussed along with the means of analysis and the study participants. Finally, the ethical considerations and trustworthiness are explored.

3.1 Meta-theoretical Framework

This piece of research reflects who I am, how I define myself and how I see and interpret the world around me. It is therefore underpinned by both inherent and consciously chosen ontological and epistemological assumptions.

Ontology is the research of the nature of reality (Hammersley, 2012). According to Blaikie (2000), ontological states are "claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other. In short, ontological assumptions are concerned with what we believe constitutes social reality" (p. 8). What I believe about social reality is mainly shaped by my cultural background (Weiler, 2013). Relativists believe that knowledge is a socially constructed concept, that it is merely a value-adding entity, and that it emerges only with individual interpretation.

Epistemology deals with how we know something. It is the concept of knowledge (Grix, 2002); that is, epistemological assumptions are concerned with the nature of knowledge and with how we know; "with what constitutes knowledge, with where knowledge comes from and whose knowledge it is, and with what it is possible to know and understand and represent" (Wellington et al., 2005; p. 101).

Since the aim of this study is to explore the experiences of parents and teachers with respect to the social media interactions in Turkish preschools, I chose to use the interpretive paradigm. The subject under investigation is inherently one of perceptions, and perceptions within a socially constructed context. It is therefore best suited to an interpretive rather than a positivist understanding of reality (Bray et al., 2014) since this helps the researcher to understand the subjective world of humans, such as their practices (Cohen et al., 2011). I do not believe there is a 'one-size-fits-all' solution to any given problem, plus truth is socially constructed and I value people's experiences and subjective views. Interpretivism allows access to the complexity, contradiction, social, ecological and cultural aspects of people's experiences. Each individual constructs his/her own reality, which means there are multiple interpretations of social science issues. Thus, people's social media interactions in the preschool context are better understood from this paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm chosen for a piece of research guides the researcher as to the decisions that will subsequently be taken with respect to the research design and method. This will be explored next.

3.2 Methodological Framework

The theoretical paradigm influences the selection of the methods used to gather data to support the research, which is also guided by the research aims and questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Silverman (2000) suggests that the research approach is the main methodology for a study subject. Due to the nature and aims of the research questions, an exploratory qualitative case study method was preferred as the research methodology for this research. A qualitative methodology was chosen as the study methodology since the intention was to undertake a relatively comprehensive and detailed exploration of the phenomena initiated by the research questions. The qualitative methodology was used to investigate how society, specifically teachers and parents, interact through social media at a public preschool. Qualitative research aligns with the interpretivist paradigm; certainly, most of the literature related to the use of social media as an educational practice adopts a qualitative approach (Flick, 2013).

The methodology and analytical techniques used in this study were inspired by Epstein's parental involvement model with respect to paths of education and development; a viewpoint that emphasises the ways in which the interaction between close settings mediates education and communicative experiences (Epstein, 2001). The educational interactions provoked by social media in the preschool context remain unknown in Turkey and thus a qualitative methodology relates the objective of this study to those interactions. Thus, the focus has been on founding the proper approaches and models for the objectives, extent and questions of the study (Rocco et al., 2003).

3.3 Research Design: Case Study

Yin (2009) notes that a case study can be an in-depth study of a person, people or circumstances. Basically, a case study entails the broad and inclusive analysis of a setting that is the subject of the study (Bryman, 2016). The case study method involves the

investigation of a reduced number of factors or tracing assured guidelines (Yin, 2009). The in-depth and self-generating research that is characteristic of case studies allows the research to extend naturally beyond any pre-defined assumptions and limits. In other words, qualitative approaches in a case study method function as the best strategy when there is limited information available about the case and when an exploratory method is preferred (Creswell & Creswell; 2017). A case study design also enables the researcher to focus on one phenomenon, in this case exploring the practice of social media interactions by the preschool community. Case studies provide a means of exploring what is happening in a specific setting through the employment of an organised method of data gathering and investigation of the findings. This research is an in-depth case study of social media at a preschool (Creswell, 2008). Since only limited work has been carried out in this area in the Turkish context, this case study design is planned to act as a detailed introduction to potential future research (Silverman, 2013). In addition, the triangulation of different research methods, procedures, evidence, reflections and perceptions allows for rich investigation within a single study (Flick, 2018).

Social sciences research often employs a case study design, and educational settings are particularly suitable for case studies (Hammond & Wellington, 2012). The 'case' in question is classrooms in Turkish primary schools, which have recently been transformed into 'smart classes' with the implementation of the latest technologies. The purpose of the study is to identify and explore the existing practices of teachers and parents with respect to the use of social media in a specific preschool class setting. It investigates how the use of social media affects the interaction between the relevant social actors and their experiences of the relationships that exist between them. It was therefore necessary to identify a Turkish preschool to take part in the study.

3.4 Methods

Social science projects tell a story about individuals, a society, an event or a setting. There are many different ways of telling such stories and communicating them to the reader. Each altered design we employ works to improve the value of our studies and of the meanings we try to convey. In this section, I therefore present a brief discussion of the methods used to collect the data, including their advantages and deficiencies. Prior to that, however, it would be useful to remind readers of the research questions.

Table 3.1: Research Questions

	Research Questions
1	In what ways does parents' and a preschool teacher's social media use shape/ influence parental involvement in an urban preschool?
2	From the viewpoint of parents and teachers, in what ways do their social media interactions impact upon the preschool children?

The data for this study were collected over a two-month period (70 days). An overview of the data collection process is given in Table 3.2. The participants (the teacher and parents) involved in the research had a social media account and used it to connect with each other. The data collection was carried out in two phases. In the first stage, online and classroom observations were conducted to explore the types of social media used by the teacher and parents, and how they were used. The second stage comprised interviews with the same participants that had been observed previously.

Table 3.2: Overview of the Collected Data

	Method Employed	Number of cases	Duration
Observations	Netnography-based Online Observation	For 2 months	11th April to 11th June 2017
	Classroom Observation	2 days	16 hours
Teacher Interviews	Weekly Informal Interviews	Weekly (9 times)	5 hours in total
	Semi-structured Final Interview	1	2 hours
Parents' Focus Groups	Focus Group Interview	3 groups	5 hours in total

The data sources comprised interviews carried out with the teacher and three focus group sessions with 19 of the children's families. The teacher was interviewed informally numerous times because of her important position as the motivator and most central organiser for the employment of social media (Knauf, 2016). The parents were interviewed in a focus group format as an essential target group and also as the users of social media for their children's education.

3.4.1 Observations

According to Hennink et al. (2011), observation is an investigation technique by which scientists steadily monitor and record the behaviours and communications of individuals. It also supports investigators to gain a comprehensive explanation of the social environment or actions in order to place people's practices. To this Cohen et al. (2011) add

that the purpose of observation is to enable the researcher to explore things that participants do not speak easily about in interview settings. Thus, observational data enables the analysis and understanding of an environment, providing a kind of knowledge that cannot be obtained in any other way (Anderson & Arsenault, 2005).

Aside from this, there are different views on the role of the observer in academia. Adler and Adler (1994) define the role of the non-participant observer as creating an inner identity without participating in the activities that form the core identity so that they can closely observe and interact with the group members. The aim of the observation is for the reader to have a description of the environment in which the researcher has undertaken the observation (Patton, 2002). The goal is to record nonverbal data such as gestures or behaviours at the same time as recording what is taking place (Cohen, 2011). Given (2008), meanwhile, asserts that researchers take either a participatory or non-participatory role in the study setting. When working as a participant observer, the investigator engages to a certain degree with the routine actions of the society, then retracts periodically to consider the views and opinions, record field notes and analyse data (O'Leary, 2017).

Since the aim of the study is to explore the practices and experiences of the teacher and parents in terms of their social media interactions, for which there may also be some previous background communication strategies in operation, I observed some of the lessons involving the preparation of social media content. The purpose of the observations was to investigate what happened regarding the practising of communication strategies. I preferred to use observations as the first data collection technique. I needed some preliminary knowledge to assist me in asking the right questions to ensure that the later teacher interview and focus group sessions with parents would be meaningful. Hammond and Wellington (2012) state that observation can be helpful when observing genuine settings where it would not otherwise be possible to access rich information. Observations were therefore used in the research prior to the semi-structured interviews with the teacher and the focus group interviews with parents. Online observations and classroom observations were carried out, accompanied by note-taking and the downloading and recording of multimedia (photographs, videos) from the classroom social media accounts.

This technique aimed to gather information that could not be derived using other methods based on the behaviours described by the participants themselves.

Following on from the discussion above, the next sections provide details of the types of observation undertaken.

Classroom Observation. This technique was preferred since it made it possible to obtain data that may not have been possible to capture by other methods (Bailey, 2008), as well as to observe experiences related to social media interactions in the classroom environment. The classroom observation focused on the experiences and behaviours in the classroom. My position in the observations was as a non-participant observer, sitting at the rear of the class making field notes but without disturbing the education at any stage. Investigators in non-participatory observations, meanwhile, are not part of the observed population (O'Leary, 2017; Anderson & Arsenault, 2005). Hennink et al. (2011) state that a non-participant observer undertakes frequent observation of the relevant people or events without actually participating in the associated activities or acting as part of the setting being observed. In this research, my role was that of a non-participant observer. Nevertheless, it has been claimed that the very existence of an observer within the observed setting can influence what is observed and encourage those being observed to behave differently (Cohen, 2011; Patton, 2002), while Hennink et al. (2011) state that researchers should find a suitable place for observation. The implication for this research is that I must consider the effect of my own positionality and presence on the study and especially on my observations.

The classroom observations gave me the chance to establish relationships with the teacher and better understand the research topic, in particular how social media interactions fed through into the classroom and how, conversely, classroom activities were then reflected in social media. Since I was interested in how social media was used to share what was happening in the classroom, the classroom observations provided an opportunity to see these practices. This refers to the process of the teacher taking pictures/videos, etc. of the activities in the classroom for the purpose of posting on social media, while also exploring the use of social media as a classroom aid. The social media materials used were intended

to act as a series of intertwined, publicly available documents that together created a holistic record of the interaction modes among the teacher and families.

Thus, during the school observations, I was able to see how the parents were traditionally involved both in groups and as individuals. Having the opportunity to see and get to know me in that setting prior to the parents' focus group interview increased involvement. I feel that the positive pre-interview atmosphere helped to increase involvement. Seeing this type of interaction between the parents and teacher, it is possible to say that the parental support and involvement were clear in the parents' behaviour. In addition, I noticed that the teacher was actively involved in the parents' discussions. The participants grew used to me and the interview sessions had a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. Some of them enquired about my background related to research and studies abroad. I answered their questions as best as I could.

I spent a total of twelve hours in the classroom and four hours at the school entrance with the teacher and parents at the drop-off and pick-up times. Outside of these formal full-day classroom observations, I conducted weekly informal interviews with the teacher at the school. I interviewed the teacher after school hours. These informal interviews were a primary part of the research without which I would not have been able to construct such fruitful and detailed interviews.

Based on the discovery environment of my study overall and the purpose of this method specifically, the act of taking field notes during the classroom observations was important. I sought to be selective in writing my field notes. Expressing this differently, I tried to identify or capture events that would help to address some of the factors and draw attention to the problems tackled in this study. Memos capture the thoughts of the researcher as they enter the analysis process (Schwandt, 2007). Similarly, Glaser and Strauss (1967) point out that memos from fieldwork can act as a prompt for an idea. As a result, it was very helpful to keep field notes in the observations and they helped to emphasise the themes and patterns from my data. I found the notes to be good places for reflecting on my data.

Netnography-based Online Observations. In response to the growing spatial intricacy of digital technologies, new methods have emerged for researchers seeking to collect data through observations of online activity; in other words, where the Internet itself is the 'field setting' of the research. Virtual ethnography (Hine, 2008), online interviewing (James & Busher, 2009) and netnography (Kozinets, 2010) are the most commonly used approaches.

"Online qualitative methods can generate rich 'immediate' data which have different characteristics to data generated through retrospective face-to-face qualitative methods" (McDermott et al., 2013; p. 127). Researchers have been able to develop an immersive understanding of societal developments that appear on cyber platforms, authenticating them and emphasising the importance of digital shared experiences. Taking part in online connections and becoming immersed in virtual spaces is one such method. Using the Internet in this way allows one to ask questions and investigate what is happening from the viewpoints of the participants. Accordingly, various social media platforms enable the emergence of certain social formations. Gathering data from the online domain about traditional forms of interaction is not straightforward, however. There are difficulties associated with determining how researchers will be placed online and taking into account the movement between online and offline domains and between different online activities (McDermott et al., 2013). Thus, traditional qualitative social science methods (e.g. interview, observation) need to be adapted when researchers explore the content of online interactions.

On the other hand, researchers may have valid concerns regarding fraud or the possibility of misrepresentation in online discussions. Well-developed field research techniques and offline data collection methods can be added to online research in an attempt to meet those challenges. Careful and long-term observation of the online society will empower the investigator to gather reliable online data (Kozinets, 2010). In addition, Puri (2007) presented three practical ways of determining whether the findings apply to more than

one cyber platform when reviewing social media interactions. These include using web platforms that provide user accounts, reviewing the content of specific shares to check for constancy over periods of time, and using several platforms. These are all inviting methods (triangulated with various other data-gathering methods) that encourage researchers to follow their interests across settings to improve understanding of the numerous complex and ambiguous forms of connection that characterise contemporary life.

Therefore, the data collection occurs during the study and usually covers both online and offline activities because researchers find that a particular online activity is meaningful as long as it is embedded in an offline area and vice versa (Postill & Pink, 2012). Kozinets' (2010) netnography approach was found to be useful for the study since it does not include ethnography and online interviewing. Kozinets (2010) developed 'netnography' for the study of online communities, which researchers often use to explore social media communications. It is a qualitative research methodology and therefore seeks to understand life from the perspective of people (Lynch, 2014). It can also be adapted to explore social media content and discussions (Lynch, 2014). A netnographic study includes the particular implications and exercises of specific social groups. After a researcher has chosen his/her research questions, however, the next step is to identify the relevant social media interactions. These social media interactions are then analysed by employing a route similar to those employed in texts in other qualitative data processes, such as interviews (Kozinets, 2010). As a qualitative approach, netnography is not intended to generalise a wider population empirically but rather to provide options that can inform future investigation. The results can augment a certain repository of information and help in the development of wider and new perspectives (Kozinets, 2010).

Kozinets (2015) provides guidelines that recognise the online environment and respect internal flexibility and openness. His suggestions have been included in this study. As Kozinets (2010) indicated, the matter of what composes communal/private communication on the web is for the moral navigation of the Internet for investigators. I

also found the Association of Internet Researchers' research ethics guidelines (Markham & Buchanan 2012) helpful for Internet investigation guidance. I combined these guides with the view that investigators should respect participants' expectations of confidentiality and reflect the level to which observations may potentially harm them. This research did not directly involve online participants and I did not attempt to interact with account followers. I explored social media exercises to provide detail about social media use in a preschool classroom. The teacher and parents were interacting on social media. Therefore, the objective of the research was suited to a netnographic method. Netnography includes researchers who observe social media interactions in their natural, cyber environments and/or actively use social media to bring out participants in product and service design (Lynch, 2014). This research method was considered suitable to explore the teacher and parents' social media interactions (Instagram and Facebook). Using a combination of traditional (interviews, observations) and different techniques (social media analysis) can provide a more inclusive perspective than either method (online or offline) is capable of producing alone (Kozinets, 2010).

Furthermore, McDermott et al. (2013) provide suggestions for helpful questions to consider when choosing social media data for a netnographic research study, i.e. "What are the contributors' likely expectations of privacy? To what extent may observations potentially harm participants?" (p. 128). For this research, inclusion criteria were created to only select social media platforms that did not require membership or a password and were open access through the group social media platforms. Because I was working with a small number of people, however, I also obtained signed consent from the teacher and parents. In addition, although the data pertain to views and experiences on social media interactions, they do not include any contentious or harmful issues or thoughts that may harm the participants (McDermott et al., 2013; Lynch, 2014). Data were included only if they were open to the public. The accounts did not include any data that could directly identify children and the issues were not anticipated to be sensitive. In addition, no descriptive information is provided about the participants.

I observed how the teacher and parents interacted using social media across applications and devices, and explored how these channels were used. Since their social media group was a public account, I was able to follow the account without the need for my follow request to be approved, and all of the posts were publicly available. Nonetheless, to ensure the ethical treatment of the participants, information forms for the teacher and parents and consent forms were required. I observed their conversations, took records and, where applicable for the observation, retrieved chat. Observational data were recorded as field notes and by downloading audio/visual/written content. The social media data retrieved contained a record of the interaction between the teacher and families. Data such as records of their regular conversations, schedules, pictures and homework, along with other valuable digital communication, were obtained through online observations.

I first logged on to the social media accounts with my profile and accessed the classroom social media accounts in April 2017. Basic information about the group account was collected, including the total number of followers and parents' usernames. I observed virtually over a period of two months, and all of the images posted between April 2017 and June 2017 were downloaded. I had a weekly meeting with the teacher to discuss that week's social media interactions. The social media group accounts were linked so that each new post was simultaneously shared across each platform. Online observations allowed the main features of the social media interactions to be identified and these could then be used to access details about the communication/interaction among participants.

The main features are the post itself (see Image 3.1 and the following table), the date of the post, any explanation of the post by the account holder (the teacher), hashtags and mentions, likes/shares, and comments (including emoji). I colour-coded each of the features for ease of identification. All posts were downloaded, and any types of interaction associated with them were numbered according to their timeline flow. A Microsoft Word document was prepared for all 46 posts in order to make it easier to follow and investigate the interaction process for each post. Each page included an image and a table. The table was divided into two parts; the teacher's side with a white background and the

parents'/followers' side with a light orange background. As can be seen below, any interactions were copied into the table. Each post begins with a description/explanation (including hashtags and mentions) by the teacher to provide an indication of what it is about and what ultimately provoked the reflections/responses from the parents/followers/society. In the second part of the table, parents/followers reflect on the posts on their social media platforms (through likes, comments, views, etc.). I observed those interactions, identifying who liked and commented on each post. This made it easy to understand/follow the communication. As can be seen from the example below, **the number and date of the post are in bold black**, the description/explanation by the teacher is in green, if it is a video this is indicated with **V**, any hashtags **(#) are in bold black,** any emojis appear as they are (□□□), and **mentions (@) are in bold purple.** The same process was followed for the parents'/followers' section, with their reflections also colour-coded (likes/views of the post in blue, commenter's name underlined with comments in red).

Post 29)

Image 3.1: Recyclable bag preparation for Mother's Day

May 11, 2017 It's true that our class is like a workplace for the weeks for MOTHERS DAY, ☐ What great works which came out of the hands of little children☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **#mother #mothersday #activity #preschool #preschooleducation #bag**	
Instagram	Facebook
52 likes	Like 13
A teacher/friend: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ A parent: Ohh, we are very curious ☐	

In my study, the teacher posted the same material on each platform, meaning individuals who only used one site were able to access it. The social media platforms allow an exploration of the discourses and interactions that take place on them due to features that allow public observation of group integration. In addition, it was possible to observe the parents' and teacher's social media interactions within their wider social network. This could be used to explore types of parental involvement within the Epstein model. The social media accounts were managed by the teacher and used mainly for educational purposes. They offer an open-access platform and every part of society and education is involved in the communication.

Furthermore, the 'hashtag' feature can be an important component for research in social media. People can use prefix words or phrases with the # sign to characterise their post. Hashtags generally serve as indicators of relevance, where people's posts are mostly specified by hashtags signalling what the post is about. People can also use the search functions of the various platforms to search all posts in social media that use a particular hashtag. The user can then click on the hashtag to display all previous posts containing that hashtag. In brief, hashtags act as a guide for users to categorise their own images and videos and they will also link them with others' posts in that classification. Therefore, hashtags increase the potential for any posts using the hashtag in question to be noticed by other users and become widespread (Delello & Consalvo, 2019).

Visual Methods. Visual data were an integral part of the data collection and it is thus important to discuss how they are interpreted in research terms. Images are integral to understanding the world we live in (Stanczak, 2007). As Pink (2007) claims, images are another way of communicating with the reader, alternating with text and clarifying and strengthening the text. Over the last 30 years, researchers from a variety of disciplines have sought to develop an accepted methodological approach to the analysis of visual data in research (Prosser & Loxley, 2008), recognising that, as is the case with any other data, visual data present their own advantages and disadvantages.

On the one hand, the eye is an important route to capturing someone's attention. For most people, a visual effect is the easiest to interpret. Pink (2006) indicated that images are also the most persistent and are the [visual] effects most easily related to other sensory practices. Visual techniques are another way of expressing our story, and visual data have the necessary impact to provide a safe transition for humans and even create a kind of understanding. As human beings, we hold previously drawn pictures within our minds and these images shape our interpretations of social life. As social scientists, when we engage in study on a culture, setting, event or human, the words we prefer may not actually convey what we are trying to communicate for every reader, or else the words may create an image in the mind of the reader. We can transmit emotions or suggest emotions given by events, surroundings and communications and we can deliver a level of information, but these will not necessarily translate in any concrete form the actual feeling of being there, and other forms of symbolic communication (Bourdieu, 1998; Berger, 1972). According to Pink (2007), therefore, visual data and texts (field notes, interviews, etc.) complement each other to produce a new holistic demonstration of the information.

Images provide an alternative for the researcher with regard to being a different set of data and, more notably, in relating to our way of perceiving past and present data. Researchers (Pink, 2006; Prosser & Loxley, 2008) therefore suggest that images provide data that are qualitatively different from other data types and are built-in, meaningful and social

messages. Although images have a stronger and richer presentation potential, they also pose some difficulties (Banks, 2018), and these will be discussed next.

The most debated issue concerns whether or not images do in fact represent reality. People often see photographs as real, they become instant; images therefore represent the moment. For this same reason, however, images are not real. Instead, they are characterised by the photographer's understandings and assessments. Prosser (2006) highlights how an image is created by a mechanical machine, a very specific person in a certain setting, produced by an individual controlling that production with their own set of parameters. Thus, given their two-dimensional form, photographs cannot exactly copy and explain the three-dimensional reality of the world (Stanczak, 2007).

Second, Spencer (2010) explains that issues arise from the presentational side of the photographs. There is a closeness and clarity about visuals. The formality and clarity of images equips the reader with fast, often open, ideas that may or may not be obtainable by reading a long text. However, these characteristics may also serve to mislead the investigator and the readers; for example, individuals usually make instant decisions about images. In order to tackle the seductive closeness and clarity of photographs, investigators must always be alert when choosing and investigating photographs, ensuring they offer sufficient data about the situation.

Third, as Pauwels (2010) stated, photographs have index and iconic properties. Although the index of images reflects a precise and clear record of the reality of the image, the relationship of this index to the real world of images has the potential to systematically distort, as is the case with any other avenue, in the hands of those who want to motivate or form thoughts. Images, however, have the potential to express and possess a conceptual influence.

Fourth, no matter how much care has gone into the creation of a picture, there are always a number of potential meanings that can be ascribed to the photographs (Rose, 2001; Prosser, 2006). This may be due to the social distinctions, practices and views of the reader and researcher. In research, a photograph continues to be interpreted by the researcher. It

is known that empirical data are not perfect, neutral or unbiased and qualitative investigation reflects the interpretations of researchers. It is clear that images suggest the personalities and selections of their producers and also reflect the viewers' views (Pink, 2007), while the interpretations of a photo taken by a photographer can be very different (Pink, 2007; Buchanan, 2008).

These difficulties should not prevent researchers from exploiting the possibilities offered by visual materials. Pauwels (2010) suggests that many researchers have addressed the broad potential of visual narratives that lead to scientific debates and have introduced new forms of expression in relation to the inexpressible and inexplicable. With careful and accurate decisions, visuals can bring another dimension to research. Overall, I argue that the pictures included in this research add value as an additional source of information. (Analysis of the images will be detailed in the data analysis section).

3.4.2 The Teacher Interviews

In order to explore the teacher's experiences, a series of individual interviews were conducted with her with the aim of developing a detailed exploration of her experiences in terms of social media interactions. The teacher also had the chance to ask questions and request an explanation so as to be well informed about the research.

Wellington (2000) argues that the interview allows an investigator to investigate and ask about things we cannot observe. On the other hand, interviewing has the drawback of being an expensive method of collecting data. In addition, participants tend to be influenced by the interviewer. The stance, background, gender or age of the interviewer can affect the debate as it is a process of the individual (Hoyle et al., 2002). I was therefore conscious of these issues when conducting the interviews.

The teacher interviews were conducted in two steps. First, weekly visually mediated informal interviews were conducted with the teacher following the classroom and online observations in order to obtain explanations about the posts as well as any interactor

identities. It was useful to understand the differences and similarities in the teacher's and parents' perspectives. Second, a semi-structured interview was held with the classroom teacher in order to identify her experiences of using social media to connect with parents. The interview approach is effective when researchers "… have their shopping list of topics and want to get responses to them" (Robson, 2011; p. 284). Researchers can question the opinions, beliefs, prejudices, views, opinions and thoughts of the people being interviewed. Interviews support investigators to gain access to what is in their minds, such as what a person knows, likes, dislikes and thinks. For this reason, the purpose of the interview is to allow one to see things from someone else's point of view (Patton, 2002). This opinion is supported by Wellington (2015), in addition to interviews allowing people to get to know their own perspective, that is, the opportunity to open themselves up to the public.

The teacher determined the location of each of the interviews, and this was dependent on her availability and schedule. I interviewed the teacher either by making appointments or calling her whenever she was available to talk to me. In this case, I asked detailed information relating to the online observation from the previous week. All of the interviews were audio-recorded. I also took notes. The weekly informal interviews and semi-structured interview with the teacher helped me to discover her experience, since the purpose of this study is to explore social media experiences. Similarly, Smith (1995) stated that in order to obtain a detailed picture of the participants' experiences on a particular topic, it is necessary to take advantage of a weekly interview and semi-structured interviews with the researcher.

A possible shortcoming is that an interviewee's information may be dishonest and biased towards providing the view that they want the investigator to hear (Creswell, 2008). In order to minimise this effect, efforts were made to create a connection with the participants prior to the start of the negotiation phase, especially through engagement in daily events and through observations. Many elements can influence the quality of the interview data, including the influence of power relations between the interviewer and the interviewee. The resistance posed by certain individuals and groups to researchers'

investigations may influence the result of any exploration work (Kvale, 1994). Put differently, if the researcher encounters any resistance in relation to the participants' responses to questions, the research discoveries may not be as reliable as they could be. The second point is the presence of ambiguity in the questions, which may lead to disagreements or misunderstandings over the meaning of the terms used. Wellington and Szczerbinski (2007) stated that an additional element that may impact interviews is the use of controlling questions. During the interviews, I tried to overcome these factors by mentioning the arrangements made for interviews or observations with the teacher. Regarding uncertain or ambiguous questions, I always tried to ensure that my questions were understood by the teacher and tried to clarify any misunderstandings that did arise. I would like to note, however, that the teacher was able to understand the interview questions easily as a result of her own educational background and experience. I should also emphasise that, in all of the interviews, the teacher had the chance to talk about any related matters.

Semi-structured Interview. Before I begin discussing the semi-structured interviews, I will provide a brief explanation of the other two kinds of interviews, namely structured and unstructured. Structured interviewing is carried out when the study aims to obtain data through the use of a set of standardised questions (Gray, 2013). Patton (2002) says that, for a structured interview, the investigator should prudently create a list of interview questions, and each interviewee should be asked the same questions. When it comes to unstructured interviews, Berg and Lune (2012) state that they are located at the opposite end of the spectrum. In such interviews, the investigator does not need to create a certain set of questions, but rather they should be equipped with a set of records or issues to argue. The task of the researcher is to reassure the interviewees to engage in discussion and to elicit responses from the participant.

Semi-structured interviews are the third type of interview and comprise elements of both the structured and unstructured variants. Researchers often use semi-structured interviews to examine participants' views and ideas (Gray, 2013), typically touching upon a range of topics and ideas that were not originally included and with the goal of

obtaining a broad range of answers. The researcher has more flexibility in arranging and organising the thoughts and problems to be tackled in semi-structured interviews. The questions should be unrestricted to provide the participant with greater opportunity to advance the concepts put forward by the interviewer (Denscombe, 2014).

In the context of the above, my interview questions were helpful in learning about the teacher's experiences of social media interactions. The use of the semi-structured interview meant that the inflexibility and quantitative nature of a fully structured approach could be avoided, while semi-structured approaches are easier to manage and provide more focused data than unstructured ones (Kvale, 1994). I would also like to express that since the questions I asked were open-ended, the teacher had the opportunity to bring in different issues in her responses to the interview questions. Moreover, as Hennink et al. (2013) state, the type of interview guides used in my study expose notions that are "embedded within the research questions and the conceptual framework of the study" (p. 117).

3.4.3 Parents' Focus Group Interviews

After the observations and teacher interviews, focus group interviews with volunteer parents were conducted to explore their experiences with social media. Bryman (2012) asserts that focus groups are discussion groups held with a group of participants, directed by the researcher, to discuss a particular focus. I decided to adopt a focus group approach because of the strength and potential advantages of this type of study. According to Peek and Fothergill (2009), focus groups help investigators to aggregate more views within a short time. They are more cost-effective than interviews and can offer another type of data collection or view of the study problem than can be achieved through singular interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Finally, Krueger (1988) adds that focus groups can generate large amounts of data while focusing on a particular theme.

Since the research topic concerned the experiences of a preschool teacher and parents of using social media to interact in a preschool setting, all of the parents were invited. From the class of 19 students, all 19 parents joined the focus group interviews, meaning that every child was represented by an adult. The parents were split into three focus groups (6, 7 and 6 participants). As Peek and Fothergill (2009) conclude, smaller groups are both easier to manage and give all participants a better chance of talking and actually contributing to the discussion. Discussions were held at a place and time appropriate for the group members.

Focus group interviews promote cooperation and help in establishing a relationship with the interviewees because of the face-to-face relationship they entail. They also provide the opportunity to clarify and explain subjects. The interviewer has a chance to explore the participants' practices and thoughts (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997). As with conventional interviews, the interviewees may simply provide the information that they think the interviewer wants to hear. In the focus group setting, however, this risk is minimised due to the group format, which encourages a diversity of views and minimises the role of the interviewer, in comparison to a one-to-one interview. Another risk with focus groups, however, is that only one or two individuals may come to dominate the discussion. I therefore needed to be alert to the need to ensure that as many participants as possible had the chance to express their views and be ready to intervene to move the discussion on if certain individuals within the group were taking over.

Krueger and Casey (2009) define the focus group interview as "a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment" (p. 2). In the focus group interviews, the families were asked to discuss their experiences of social media interactions concerning their child's preschool education. The focus group interviews assisted in the gathering of common views and practices. I motivated the participants to contribute by advocating focuses for the discussion and encouraging them to share their thoughts and views during each focus group interview. Therefore, my role was that of both a moderator and a guide. The emerging cooperative conversation then further encouraged the participants to state their

own views and to take note of the views of others. The participants were homogeneous in terms of context, language and culture. The focus group interviews lasted for around an hour and a half (Robson, 2011).

Sim (1998) emphasises that the moderator in a focus group needs to create interest and conversation about a specific topic without actually directing the group. As the facilitator of the three focus group debates, therefore, I attempted to probe about social media interactions as neutrally as possible. However, I found that as the discussions warmed up, the parents continued to talk, and thus I needed to help guide and move the discussion on once it had reached a natural conclusion, if it became bogged down or if it had veered onto a topic that was not relevant to the research. In such circumstances, I sought to address the issue that was being discussed and then move the discussion on. Personally, I believe that the information I collected was representative because the diversity of views meant that the answers were not homogenously filtered by the speaker, as can be the case in individual interviews. Overall, the focus groups helped me to understand the use of social media among the parents, and also the perceptions of the teacher among the parents.

3.5 Sample Selection and Participants

The digital technologies available to schools in Turkey are similar because of the national curriculum and policies in place in the country. When considering the choice of site, however, it was still essential to consider a number of elements beyond the tools to be used (Warschauer, 2011). In this study, these comprised the skill to engage in social media interactions, the actual use of social media by the educator(s), training, time and the families' access to and use of social media. The method used to identify the case study was therefore essentially purposeful. Purposeful sampling from a wider population (here, all preschools in Turkey) is conducted to increase the usefulness of the information obtained from small samples (Schumacher & McMillan, 2006). A purposeful sampling method is chosen if the researcher wishes to guarantee that the preferred sample is capable of

providing rich information about the topic being examined (Patton, 1990; Denscombe, 2014). Purposeful sampling is limited, however, because the choice of participants is not random, and everyone is chosen with the same probability. For this reason, the sample is not representative of the population. Nevertheless, the choice of participants always includes a compromise between generalisability and practicality (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). Researchers (Rooney & Evans, 2018; Robson & McCartan, 2016) agree, however, that if the intention is not for the results to be generalised to other populations beyond the studied samples, as is the case here, then generalisability is not a problem.

The selected preschool is located in Istanbul and is part of a public primary school attended by five-year-olds. The preschool class serves to prepare younger children for their primary school career. A total of 19 children attended the class, comprising eight boys and eleven girls. The parents of the children were also participants in the research, as was their teacher. The teacher was 37 years old and had 14 years' professional experience. The case location is important because a situational social phenomenon is intertwined with the location of the context (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Since Istanbul is the largest city in Turkey, it represented a convenient study site.

Getting reliable socio-economic data in internationally recognised forms (such as the widely-used NRS social grades) is not possible in Turkey. The Turkish Statistical Institute does not collect or present data in such a way as to allow conventional statistical indicators of social position. Socio-economic data for the school's neighbourhood was therefore estimated by combining neighbourhood-level data from the Ministry of National Education and the Turkish Statistical Institute. This identified the catchment area of this preschool as comprising 'middle class' families. What constitutes middle class varies from one country to another (Bigot et al., 2012). In the case of Turkey, the Turkish Statistical Institute defines classes based on household incomes (Balikçioğlu & Dalgiç, 2015). At the province level, Istanbul is fourth in the Human Development Index and second in GDP within Turkey (Gülel et al., 2017). There are 39 districts in Istanbul, with one of these being chosen region, where the study was located. The chosen neighbourhood is one of the places where well educated and economically active and employed people live

(sozcu.com.tr). Generally, urban areas have a higher proportion of such middle-class households (66.17) than rural areas (33.83) (Balikçioğlu & Dalgiç, 2015).

In this study, categorisation of socioeconomic class was based on the combination of occupation and education, and income data which is provided by National Statistics office of Turkey (tuik.gov.tr). Besides that, data collected and analysed by Endeksa (a real estate location-based data analysis platform) (endeksa.com). The average monthly household income in Istanbul in 2016 was 4308 Turkish liras. The average income in the chosen neighbourhood that this study conducted was 10000 Turkish liras. A few other areas in Istanbul have an average income of up to 15000 Turkish liras (per month), however. According to Endeksa, the region in which this research was undertaken, has the third-highest real estate price in Istanbul (ntv.com.tr); 47% of the residents have an undergraduate or higher degree. 41.96% of the households are married and the average family size is 2.61. It is on that basis that I conclude that this is a family neighbourhood where educated small families with one or two children live. Taken together, this information reinforces the Turkish Statistical Institute's classification of this as a middle-class neighbourhood. Endeksa, meanwhile, provides a neighbourhood analysis utilising the NRS Social Grade categories, based on an analysis of the education level of residents, income, average property prices, number of businesses in the neighbourhood and consumption habits. According to this, the majority of the population in this neighbourhood belong to the A or B socioeconomic classes (76.83%) (endeksa.com), with the range encompassing five socio-economic classes from the highest (A+) to the lowest (D). I conclusion, it Is possible to conclude that this neighbourhood contains a high proportion of A, B and C1 grades in a Turkish context. Since, In Turkey, parents in the A social grade mostly prefer to send their children to private schools, the best estimate of the socio-economic status of the participants of this study, therefore, is that they cluster in the B and C1 grades if translated to the UK classification.

The selection process consisted of several steps. The first step was to identify a middle-class neighbourhood in order to ensure that the participants did not face barriers to obtaining access to the Internet. Clearly, this choice of a middle-class environment has

implications in terms of the findings, and these will be discussed further in the discussion chapter of the thesis. At the selection stage, however, the aim was simply to ensure that the case study was capable of collecting a significant body of data to analyse, and this could only realistically be achieved in an environment in which the teacher and parents had unfettered access to the Internet, and where they were familiar with social media interactions. The second step was to find a preschool class that used social media interactions. The third step was to ensure that the selected class specifically was effective and practised with social media; that is, active with regard to their frequency and continuity of use.

I had previously taught in the city for three years and was therefore familiar with the environment and had connections. This not only accelerated the process of obtaining access but also facilitated the finding of volunteer participants. Nonetheless, access to any public school in the country is subject to the permission of the national and local education authorities. A gatekeeper from MoNE was therefore sought to offer help in selecting and accessing a suitable middle-class school. The objectives of the study were discussed with an officer from MoNE, who suggested some middle-class areas in Istanbul. At the same time, I asked a former colleague whether they knew of any preschool teacher who uses social media in those areas. My former colleague then suggested one of his own former colleagues, and it was this teacher who was eventually recruited to this study. Although the recruited teacher was a former work colleague of my acquaintance, neither their current workplace nor their work neighbourhood were the same, and their only ongoing relationship was by following each other on social media. I then established contact with the teacher independently. No data of any type was shared with my former colleague at any stage in this process.

I was then assisted in accessing the selected teacher's school by the gatekeeper from MoNE. After successfully obtaining the requisite authorisation, I visited the school administration to introduce myself and the research, to gain access to the school and to obtain permission to speak with the teachers. After approval was granted by the principal, I began the process of obtaining the participants' approval.

3.6 Recruiting Participants

Recruiting for observations. An opt-in strategy was used to recruit participants for this phase since I wanted to ensure that the study adhered to the basic ethical principles of confidentiality, voluntariness, beneficence and fairness. Participant consent was required, and I prioritised the protection of the participants' autonomy. Therefore, participants had the chance to ask questions and receive an explanation in a bid to be better informed about the research.

The parents were informed first by the head of the school in order to seek their initial consent, and contact was then made with all of the parents by the teacher. Then, the parents and teacher were provided with an information sheet explaining the details of the study. I also provided further verbal explanations and answers to any questions. Participation in the research was voluntary and the participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time.

Recruiting for the teacher interviews. Since the study was conducted in a single case, I interviewed just one teacher. The only requirement for participation was experience of using social media with parents at a preschool level. The teacher was recruited directly.

Recruiting for the focus group interviews. The parents were initially invited to the focus group interviews by the teacher via a group text message. Direct contact was then made by the researcher to inform them of the nature of the focus group interviews, making use of the parents' preferred form of communication (e.g. telephone, e-mail). The parents were then asked for their permission to participate in the interview. The place and time were negotiated beforehand so that the participants would feel comfortable while being interviewed. Only those who were willing and available were provided with a written consent form to sign.

The role of the teacher was important since she had been using social media interactions for a number of years and was eager to see what insights academic research might bring to her practice. Her positive relationship with the parents made them comfortable and

motivated to join. Thus, one parent of each child volunteered. All of the focus group interviews took place in an empty classroom within the school. All of the interviews conducted were audio-recorded with the consent of the relevant participants. Table 3.3 shows the pseudonyms and gender of the focus group participants.

Table 3.3: Focus Group Participants

	Pseudonym	Gender
Group 1	Rukiye	F
	Naz	F
	Zehra	F
	Esma	F
	Ibrahim	M
	Ali	M
Group 2	Ayla	F
	Yigit	M
	Murat	M
	Funda	F
	Muserref	F
	Meryem	F
	Damla	F
Group 3	Asya	F
	Cihan	F
	Aynur	F
	Sirin	F
	Naciye	F
	Begum	F

The next section explains the method of analysis used to help me understand the data.

3.7 About the Data

3.7.1 Transcription and Translation

Data transcription usually took place immediately after the data were gathered, occasionally on the same day or in the same week. However, when gathering data from multiple sources at the same time, it was not always possible to transcribe them

immediately after they were gathered; nevertheless, I endeavoured to write everything down before I forgot any of the details about a session. I prepared field notes to remind myself of any important information about a session or to remind myself of the major ideas that I might need to address. The process of transcribing the audio recordings made it possible to listen to the speech repeatedly. The long hours of listening and writing produced familiarity with the data and helped with the subsequent realisation of ideas during the analysis (Bailey, 2008).

After the data had been analysed in Turkish, I then began work on the translation stage for the results section. As such, one of the difficulties encountered before and after the investigation was in translating the material from Turkish into English. All of the materials used in the data-gathering phase had to be translated from Turkish. I was responsible for the translation of all of the material and data in this work. However, bilingual friends were asked to assist in verifying the accuracy of various terms and sentences when necessary. In addition to cost savings, it was felt that a specialised translator might not reflect the nuances of the data/documents as I had seen them at first hand. I was aware that some of the data may have been lost because language, social and national dissimilarities can affect translation into another language (Bryman, 2012), or that there may not have been an equivalent translation for every word, depending on the sensitivities of particular national and cultural contexts. It is difficult to reflect the meaning of participants or the cultural contexts they belong to in translation. In this process, it is never possible to obtain a 100 per cent correct equivalent in translation. Another method I found useful was to investigate the data in its original language and then translate the findings. This reduced the influence of translation on the data. Lastly, after everything was completed, I checked the meaning of the translated data to ensure consistency with the meaning that the participants wished to reflect. This last step was especially useful as I was able to retain as much of the meaning as possible while also making it appear more natural.

I considered this process to be an effective way of ensuring that the data were reflected as accurately as possible, given the different cultural contexts. It forced me to think deeply

about the meaning of the data, the concepts and the voices of the participants, and I was able to understand the data better prior to commencing the writing stage.

3.7.2 Deductive and Inductive Approaches

"Research is a function of both inductive and deductive analyses" (Orton, 1997; p. 422). In inductive approaches, researchers work from the more specific to the more general. They begin with specific observations and use these to construct general conclusions or theories when they use inductive methods. When a researcher inductively generates their data, the themes or categories emerge from the data (Given, 2008). In a deductive approach, however, they work by progressing from being more general to more specific. Researchers begin with a relevant topic of interest, which is then narrowed down to specific hypotheses to be explored. When a researcher generates their data in a deductive way, the themes or categories emerge from the research questions, the relevant literature and the researcher's own experience (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006).

Qualitative studies mostly tend to be both inductive and deductive (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), which is the approach that I applied in this research. For RQ1, I adopted a deductive approach. This was because there is an existing well-established theory of parental involvement by Epstein and it seemed sensible to undertake a study to understand the extent to which this model is meaningful for the three particular novel circumstances of interest in this research: the use of social media for involvement; a preschool context; in Turkey. This deductive approach is reflected in the methods I used to aggregate the relevant data, in that the themes I explored were grounded principally in Epstein's existing model. On the other hand, I accept that there are some limitations to this approach since no researcher enters the process with an empty mind (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). The use of data collection methods also provided the opportunity to follow the potential of leads gained from my view of the data. This is additionally reflected by Charmaz (2006), who states that an observer's worldview, disciplinary assumptions, theoretical tendencies and research interests will affect their observations and the resulting

categories. Thus, I used an inductive approach to establish the themes relevant to RQ2 by summarising and classifying the raw data (Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Creswell, 2008). For this reason, the inductive aspect of my work originates from the notion that I did not intend to demonstrate or invalidate any theories when analysing the responses relevant to the RQ; this aspect of the research was therefore more exploratory in nature. The themes for RQ2 are summarised in Table 3.4 below, and the process followed to establish those themes is set out fully in the ensuing sections.

Table 3.4: Themes

RQ1; **Parental involvement**	Parenting Communicating Volunteering Learning at Home Decision-Making Collaborating with the Community • Self-Advertisement • Comparison, Competition and Pressure
RQ2; **Impact on child**	Increased Communication Social-Emotional Effects Education Process
	Influence of Legal Framework

The next section explains the method of analysis used to help me comprehend my data.

3.7.3 Analysis of Data

This section presents a detailed explanation of the process used to analyse the qualitative data. Wellington (2015) explains that analysis literally means separating a subject or object into its constituent parts and seeking to know how these parts fit together. Researchers acknowledge that there is always a way to manipulate data analysis (Wellington, 2015). Thus, I was aware that my duty entailed doing my best to make sense of the topic.

Thematic analysis is therefore an investigative method in which researchers encode their own text sections according to patterns associated with a range of relevant themes (Schwandt, 2007). Thematic analysis is explained by Braun and Clarke (2006; p. 79) as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data". Furthermore, as Boyatzis (1998) points out, thematic analysis conceives thoughts, assumptions and conceptualisations and beliefs. The data reveal themes that describe the teacher's and parents' experiences of social media interactions in a comprehensive and complex way. While researching the themes in the narrative transcriptions, a difficulty I encountered during the first stages of the analytical process was deciding on the criteria to determine what to use as a theme. This is also pointed out by Bryman (2012), who describes that a theme is a classification defined by the researcher based on his/her own data. It is about the focus of research (and possibly research questions), transcripts and/or field notes. This allows the analyst to base their theoretical understanding of their own data.

In this way, Bryman (2012) defines a theme as a category for the centre of the work, and it may also be related to the research questions. A researcher may mark a theme as being noteworthy or related to the pertinent literature, although it may not be suitable for answering the research questions. The research questions usually take their final form in these designs. For this reason, I consider that a theme should be linked to one of the following dimensions – the literature, the researcher's own interests or decision, the researcher's decision, the need for one of the topics and what the research questions are (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme captures something significant within the data related to the research question, thereby representing a set of patterned responses or meaning in the

data set. This explanation also centres on the research questions from the main view of highlighting a theme in the data.

Initially, I considered using a software program to speed the process up and to achieve better findings. I thus allowed myself a few weeks to become acquainted with NVivo, using a free licence for students at the university. I also attended workshops delivered by the university and used both lessons and online resources. I did not feel totally comfortable using the software, however, and after discussing it with my supervisors, decided to opt for a traditional method using highlighter pens and notes. Patton (2015) says that the process of analysing qualitative data is not just about the analysis itself, but rather change, and that the ultimate product of this transformation is more than just the results. And he adds that there is no correct answer or finding to speak of, meaning the investigator stops only when s/he is fulfilled with the last findings. In regard to writing these findings, the words used are the personal preferences of the investigator as distinct from the original participants. From the beginning to the end, the analysis and presentation of the data changed several times according to my reading and reflection and the discussions/feedback I had with my supervisors. This study was conducted using manual coding and the following six stages from Braun and Clarke (2006). The next section contains a brief explanation of these steps in the thematic analysis.

Familiarisation with the Data

Wellington (2000) states that familiarisation is the phase in which the immersion process takes place. It is about getting a general sense from the data and entails a finding procedure where one remains close to the data and explores the study aims (Hennink et al., 2011). Parallel to this, one has to dive into the data in order to become familiar with its possibility and limitations (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Yin (2011) outlines how this phase is also the first one of the review processes, wherein the researcher is constantly observing and replaying the recorded data and becoming familiar with their interviews and field notes. I began the transcriptions as soon as I started listening to the interviews, and I thus began to get close to the information. In addition, the

transcription process enabled me to pay greater attention to the information that had been gathered. It is a good idea, at this point, to start thinking about notes or to suggest things to return to later (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

For me, knowledge accumulation is one of the main vital steps in dealing with data, because it provides the researcher with the opportunity to begin considering their general thinking and the purposes of the data collection methods. At the same time as being an exciting period of the research, it is also the time at which researchers begin to identify the first ideas that appear remarkable for the research. I also subscribe to the notion that time spent on transcription is not wasted because it signals the first steps of analysis and one comes to understand the data more thoroughly through repeated exposure to it (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Generating Initial Coding

Coding is defined as the attaching of keywords or labels to pieces of writing to allow for later retrieval (Miles et al., 1994). This phase involves the development of a list of ideas and commences once the researcher is familiar with the data and comes to see interesting meanings in parts of the text (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This explains how the researcher separates and then unites this part of the analysis, involving both the data they have gathered and the reflections they make about it, as Miles et al. (1994) point out. Moreover, I highlighted the parts of the data that had remarkable meanings and for which separation was important (Geertz, 1973). In other words, I looked for expressions that appeared initially to be relevant to the research investigation. As Bryman (2012) further notes, this view suggests a few general remarks about what makes one's data particularly interesting or important. Accordingly, I added notes to the text sections of my interview transcriptions that seemed particularly interesting in the context of the research.

Bryman (2012) says that, for some authors, "a theme is more or less the same as a code" (p. 578), but for others, it is made up of different codes and groups. Similarly, at times I saw a particular code as a theme of its own, while at other times a specific theme would emerge from different codes. Hammond and Wellington (2012) emphasise this idea and explain

that there is no single agreed approach to understanding terminology such as coding and that certain terms, for example 'codes', 'themes', 'categories' and 'levels', can even be used interchangeably. My real purpose, however, was always to have meaning, not words (Miles et al., 1994). For this reason, I gave less consideration to the variations in the terms used and refrained from evaluating a particular label as the most accurate. In short, I provided flexibility and did not follow rigorous rules throughout the entire study or in this particular labelling process, building on my belief that qualitative research is intended to capture the essence of what people are doing in relation to any social phenomenon, and that this implies that it is self-consciously not encumbered by excessive or restrictive rules of the process.

Looking for Themes

Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that this stage includes dividing the diverse codes into potential themes. At this stage, researchers have to accept that data is not coded in an epistemological gap. In a similar vein, I felt that besides my research questions, the reading of relevant literature influenced the coding that I used to investigate the social media interactions. For this reason, I considered the data using three views. First, specific research questions were used to expand the knowledge about the primary research questions. Second, the literature review lens suggested meanings that were similar to or different from other investigations in this area. In addition, I continuously tried to refer to any influence or theoretical relationship when adding my own understanding or reporting at all phases of my work. Yin (2011) also indicates that the researcher must define the properties of the lens, or lenses, being used.

These three viewpoints were used to investigate the participants' opinions and thus to understand their position on experiences with social media interactions. This stage ends when a number of themes and sub-themes are associated with the essence of the data associated with them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to this, I began to think about the significance of the specific sense for each theme, but without constantly looking at all of the details (since this would come in the next stage). I was aware that at this point it was

unclear whether there was a need for the themes to be brought together, refined, removed or separated.

Revising Themes

Braun and Clarke (2006) state that the aim of this stage is to examine and enhance dissimilar themes and evaluate whether they work with the coding removed. It is necessary to check that the researcher's work matches the raw data (Boyatzis, 1998). Thus, I revised all of my themes and checked that they matched the text sections that they were added to. At this point, I began to develop the thematic map. This process, however, went hand-in-hand, both at this stage and in the following stages, with the process of fixing or adapting the themes that turned out not to fit the data well, leading to the need to revisit certain areas that I thought I had already completed. This is a positive step, however, due to the fact that one is learning about the subjective experiences of the participants in a more nuanced way (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Researchers need to determine when the theme is complete and the time to stop is when further corrections are failing to add anything significant (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Identifying Themes and Producing the Report

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the fifth stage begins when the researcher builds an adequate thematic representation of the data and it is then essential to describe the themes to be offered for analysis. Likewise, Boyatzis (1998) suggests that the theme should be named with a readily understandable sentence that expresses this common thread. Such a label should be (a) theoretically important to the searched case; (b) well-defined and brief by conveying the subject's core in as few phrases as possible, and (c) close to the data. I thus tried to identify and categorise all of the themes to support me in providing them to the reader. I also attempted to keep the themes simple and open to avoid including anything that did not make sense. Finally, to produce the report, the themes and patterns from the methods used were compared, contrasted, described, interpreted and reviewed, to support in outlining the significant findings. Again, I thought carefully to find the most appropriate way of presenting my own thoughts.

Analysis of Visual Data. Like the teacher interviews and parents' focus group data, pictures also provide data to be interpreted. Researchers' practices, education and disciplines influence the meanings they obtain from the visual data, and they are therefore subjective readers of visual data (Pink, 2007). Furthermore, analyses can be performed in the field or elsewhere where photographs are taken. Even if the content remains the same after having been moved from one place to another, the images are a new context that creates different perspectives on interpretation. The argument for Pink's (2007) contextual change has also been confirmed in this research. For example, many of the images used are associated with the Turkish national curriculum and national culture and traditions. The following three pictures are from different national festival days. Although they appear similar at first glance, they show different circumstances, and thus their interpretation requires the viewer to have a background in the culture of their production. The first image relates to the day for celebrating the establishment of the Turkish Republic. The second relates to the remembrance ceremony of Atatürk's death, while the third is based on celebrating the opening of the first republican parliament in the country's history. All, therefore, have a different meaning for the nation, as well as in the education curriculum. These events are part of daily life in preschools, state buildings and communal spaces, and although they may be perceived as a mundane practice in Western cultures, they are highly meaningful in their original contexts.

Image 3.2: A birthday cake of the country in the colours of the Turkish flag

Image 3.3: The remembrance ceremony for Atatürk, again with the Turkish flag

Image 3.4: The country's sovereignty day with flag decorating

As a former teacher at a preschool, I was fortunate in being able to recognise the context from my own experiences in that context. Nevertheless, I do not mean to add that the understandings and interpretations are completely objective or neutral. This idea recommends an attitude to Pink's analysis of visual data according to three rules.

- Obtaining an authentic visual record of any activity is not possible. For this reason, analysis is not a true genuine record of the real setting.

- The environment of the visuals should be examined to explore how the matter is affected by the subjectivity and intent of the person concerned.
- The analysis must account for the different meanings of different people in different contexts, as well as focusing on the content itself.

A thematic analysis methodology was used to improve understanding of the types of pictures that were posted for all 46 images within the social media. As previously discussed, thematic analysis involves researchers categorising data into a set of classes that are pertinent to the study aims, based on their views and following a structure. In 2012, McNely developed a coding scheme for the analysis of social media content. This was useful to follow when analysing the publicly available images shared on the social media platforms. The system has three analytic axes: 1. The theme of the image; 2. The explanation of the photo and any complementary labels, and 3. Direct communication with followers via post comments (McNely, 2012). Therefore, in this exploration, the theme of the post (video, photo), accompanying explanations/labels and direct interactions of the follower were observed in order to understand the setting of the post. This is particularly essential for categorising the objectives of a post. Thus, I identified the coding categories by following the analytic axes in McNely's (2012) scheme. These closely supported the potential objectives of the social media posts.

For this reason, I followed the recommendations given above when analysing the images. By this, I mean that I recalled that the images created may not reflect the entire story by themselves; however, the field notes in this context and the interviews with the individuals led the analysis process.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Researchers should be primarily responsible for assessing the ethical considerations in their research (Borg & Gall, 1983). The BERA (2018) Ethical Guidelines for Educational

Research state that "individuals should be treated fairly, sensitively, and with dignity and freedom from prejudice, in recognition of both their rights and of differences arising from age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, nationality, cultural identity, partnership status, faith, disability, political belief or any other significant characteristic" (p. 6). Robson (2011) emphasises that educational research raises numerous moral issues in terms of the potential for misconduct and the risk of provoking distress or concern among those participating in it. In this sense, Stake (2005) says that "researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict" (p. 459). Similarly, Hammond and Wellington (2012) cautioned the researcher against manipulating the data to comply with ethical rules and against choosing methods that are deceitful or dishonest, simply to obtain the desired results. The anonymity of participants should be protected when the results are reported.

This study was conducted within the guidelines of the Sheffield University Research Ethics Implementation Code. First, an ethical application form was completed, and ethical approval was granted by the Department of Educational Research. Later, ethical approval was applied for and granted by the Turkish MoNE. Then, information sheets and consent forms were provided to the parents and teacher. Confidentiality was a priority throughout the research. All kinds of artefacts and information were accorded the highest privacy, protection and priority. To keep the identity of the participants confidential, the collected data were anonymised and pseudonyms used. Furthermore, I completely avoided asking questions about any sensitive subjects that may have caused distress to the participants.

Once ethical approval had been obtained, the next stage was to secure the consent of the participants. This is a necessary step before any research can be conducted in order to confirm that the participants are completely aware of the subject of the study and what to expect in terms of their involvement. To accomplish this, I prepared information forms for the attendees, along with informed consent forms, and asked them to read these and ask any questions that they wished. Participant confidentiality should be prioritised for study, including human issues. Researchers must respect the privacy and anonymity of their participants, and the participants should be informed at the beginning of their

involvement that they can access their data. The investigator should ensure that unauthorised persons cannot access the data and that the privacy of those who participate is protected (Gall et al., 1996).

Moreover, I was aware of the possible power relationships that could develop between myself and the participants (also, between the teacher and parents). I thus considered matters such as 'power relations' that could potentially arise during the research process (Mercer, 2007). I visited the school one week prior to the start of my data collection to meet with the teacher, explain my research and supply consent and information sheets for anyone who wanted to volunteer. My participants (the teacher and parents) may potentially not have fully opened up to me, partly because I was a former preschool teacher and I was doing a PhD now. The fact that I had received a scholarship to study abroad as a doctoral student could have been perceived as affording me a position of higher status. Therefore, I was aware of this asymmetry and my potential 'superior' position in terms of academic knowledge in pre-school education. I was continually conscious, therefore, of the need to put the participants at ease from the very outset. To achieve this, I aimed to create a low hierarchical environment. Also, I used techniques for building rapport. For example, I followed the dress code in the school. I attempted to harmonise my body and oral language in line with the participants to build rapport. In more detail, in respect to the teacher, the regular meetings after class observations were constructed in a deliberately informal way and the semi-structured interview approach emphasised her opportunities to add thoughts of her own, tangential to my questions. In respect to the parents, meanwhile, the focus group format was designed to minimise the authoritative position of the interviewer (compared to semi-structured or structured interviews), while encouraging the expression of diverse views among the participants, as is discussed further in section 3.4.3 above.

Furthermore, the findings section (Chapter 4) raises the particular ethical issues – involving preschool children on social media, the teacher's commercial interests and legal framework. These are argued in the discussion section (Chapter 5).

3.8.1 Consent

After providing information about the nature and content of the research and the participants' and researcher's roles during the observation, verbal consent was obtained from the participants to allow me to observe the classes and outreach activities. Written consent was obtained only after the participants had been formally invited to take part in the interviews. At the outset, all of the participants were given information sheets about the nature and content of the research and their role in the study. Once they had indicated their willingness to be interviewed, the participants were asked to complete and sign the consent form as attached.

The obtaining of a signed approval form does not however signify that the participants have agreed to contribute on their own behalf. Organisational, economic and emotional pressure points may each affect participation in groups (Tyldum, 2012). My experience of recruiting participants among families can be related to Tyldum's argument. As I explained earlier in this chapter, the parents' participation was voluntary, but the teacher's individual interest and experiences with communication technologies was a factor that encouraged them to volunteer. That does not mean the parents were forced to participate; nevertheless, there is no way of knowing whether the parents would have agreed to take part if the educator had not had an interest in the specific topic of study. As such, I had to work with what was right for me, up to my ability to comply with the ethical rules; thus, I tried to be as clear and honest as possible with the teacher and the parents (Hammond & Wellington, 2012) and I explained clearly that if they did not wish to take part in the study, then they were under no obligation to do so.

3.8.2 Children's Assent

In the classroom and social media observations, I adopted a non-participant observer role, as mentioned above. Nonetheless, research involving human participants raises certain ethical concerns (Shaw, Brady & Davey, 2011), and such concerns are particularly

pertinent when the research involves ‘high-risk’ participants such as children (Flewitt, 2005; Lahman, 2008). The particular ethical issues that were considered and addressed in this study are set out below.

Conducting research with children raises a variety of difficult issues (James, 2007). The first and most fundamental challenge that researchers face is that of consent. Consent is a fundamental principle for all research with human participants, but it is particularly problematic when working with children since the standard concepts of 'informed consent' are difficult to apply. By definition, children have the potential to struggle with the consent process (Christensen & Prout, 2002).

Nonetheless, I sought to go beyond this minimum by seeking the children’s assent and not just that of their parent (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). In this, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which Turkey is one of the partner countries was a useful guideline. According to UNCRC, researchers who work with children should give children time and space to express and articulate their own concerns and wishes. It ensures children’s rights are protected. It suggests that children rights, views and feelings should be taken into account (Swadener & Polakow, 2011). Besides this, I follow in the tradition of the UK's Children's Act (1989), which was ground-breaking in its recognition of the importance of involving children in decisions concerning them.

In a research context, the concept of a child's assent, as distinct from their consent, or their parents' consent, is well-established but also problematic. As both Waligora et al., (2014) and Baines (2011) note, there are widely varying concepts, even between different research bodies in similar disciplines in the same country, of what ages are appropriate for the seeking of assent as opposed to consent, and, crucially for this research, what the lower age limit might be. In that respect, ‘school-age’ is the closest thing to a consensus for a lower age limit, but seven years of age is typical in the USA (Wendler, 2006; Baines, 2011; Waligora et al., 2014). It has to be noted, therefore, that according to these measures, the children in this study, who were pre-school age, would be deemed by some researchers to be not fully capable of either assent or consent. In this regard, also, researchers

(Christensen & Prout, 2002; Baines, 2011) points out some inherent contradictions with the concept of assent, noting that if adults and children give incompatible responses to questions of consent/assent one is forced to overrule one side or the other—if children refuse assent and are overruled on the basis of adults consent then the concept of assent is revealed as a sham; on the other hand, if adults are overruled then their consent is revealed as meaningless.

The above debate signifies that the question of a child's assent remains problematic. Nonetheless, it seemed good practice should attempt some engagement with the child participants in order to introduce them to the subject of the study and what to expect in terms of their role in that setting, and some attempt to attain an age-appropriate form of assent could be embedded within that. To accomplish this, I thought deeply about what it means to be ethical while conducting research with children.

Through this process, I was guided by the principle of seeking to reduce anxiety in children and provide the provision of sufficient and appropriate information. Thus, the form and nature of the observation were started in the general introduction in such a way that the children could understand. Explaining the role of the researcher is important so as to reduce children's doubts about 'strangers'; for this reason, I introduced myself as a former teacher. I explained that I used to have students and that I got along well with them. Furthermore, when I engaged with the children individually, I employed icebreakers as a useful method for comforting them. Icebreakers have a number of functions: they give everyone the chance to practise by saying something, to make children feel comfortable, and to create an atmosphere where values are shared and listened to. I asked the children some general questions to build a comfortable atmosphere (Doswell & Vandestienne, 1996), such as who has a tablet/computer, and what they use it for. Including oneself in an icebreaker is useful for breaking down the adult–child connection. Enjoyment and movement can build a comfortable atmosphere, increase group compatibility and affect the quality of the interaction to follow. In this process, a child-friendly repertoire is particularly useful, and I think that my three years' experience as a preschool teacher contributed greatly to my ability to follow the above strategies

through. Thus, I created an appropriate environment where children can share their thoughts and ask questions. Although in subsequent sessions I reverted to my intended non-participant observer role when each observation ended, I briefed the children with a summary. Before I left the classroom, I asked if they had anything they wanted to say/ask. I thanked the children for their contribution at the end of the observations.

Being ethical, also, means ensuring no harm is caused to others during the investigation process (Morrow, 2008). Denzin (1989, p. 83) says that "… our primary obligation is always to the people we study, not to our project or to a larger discipline." In this research, I wanted to avoid situations that might make children upset, give harm to them or increase their stress levels. Therefore, I aimed to develop continuous sensitivity and reflexivity. For this reason, while working on this process in which children are involved, I developed a series of strategic aims to reflect and respect children's rights. Also, an ongoing dialogue between researchers and participants in the research process is necessary to develop an ethical practice. With that in mind, I met with the teacher one week prior to my first classroom observation and explained my research to her. The teacher then mentioned me to the children the day before my first day of classroom observation. Then, on the following day, the first day of classroom observation, I introduced myself and explained to the children what the research was interested in exploring. I told them I would be watching their lessons and explained what I would be doing during specific times in their classes. I asked whether they would like that and, on this first day, I made a point of engaging with each child informally as they were doing their activities and asking them whether they were happy for me to watch them in their class. Thereby, I tried to recognise their expectations, thoughts and feelings. All seemed content for me to do so.

Furthermore, to protect the children's rights, their anonymity, confidentiality and privacy were ensured. I was aware that my primary obligation was always to the rights of the people I was with during the study. I, therefore, maintained the privacy, anonymity, safety and well-being of the participants and children to the highest ethical standards. Here, the online media did not include any identifiable information pertaining to the children.

Whenever it was necessary to publish detail about a child, the teacher obscured the child's face using a special application.

3.8.3 Protection of the Adult Participants

The potential for psychological harm/distress to the participants was minimal. A few of the participants encountered minor stresses or discomfort when talking about their personal thoughts on their social media interactions during the focus group interview; however, I did not anticipate this leading to any substantial distress.

Firstly, data were collected through different social media, and the conversations and interactions among the teacher and parents were observed over a two-month period. The social media accounts were set to public. The consent of each research participant was required to gain access to their communication records, and I obtained the consent of the teacher and all 19 parents to do this. Further permission was requested to store other data for the purpose of this study. Any personal data seen in the form of text, video or pictures were not discussed or shared with a third party.

The observations were based partly on documentation kept in a recorded archive. Both the parents and teachers were provided with an information sheet, consent form and a verbal explanation of the observation process if necessary. The participants' names were kept anonymous. The interview recordings were not shared with anyone outside of the study and will be destroyed after the PhD research. Only non-identifiable data were transcribed into the research. Images were only used with permission; no names were revealed and any 'unsuitable' images that may have caused psychological distress to any of the participants were left out of the study. I also provided my contact details and encouraged the participants to get in touch if they had any questions and concerns, or if they no longer wished to be involved. During the study I reminded the participants of their autonomy and that anyone was free to withdraw from the study at any time. I remained alert to my

participants' reactions as I observed or questioned them in order to ensure that none of them experienced any distress caused by the topic.

All of the focus group interviews were carried out in mutually agreed places (an empty classroom in the same school), which provided privacy and safety for both the participants and myself. The participants were provided with the required information and if they had any questions, these were answered. Confidentiality was maintained by not sharing the recorded information with either the management of the organisation or with anybody unconnected to this research. In order to keep the discussion on track, I explained that I would like to learn about certain topics during the interviews. If there were other topics that the parents wished to discuss, I stated that I could arrange a time to talk about these on a one-to-one basis, either at the end of the focus group or at a later time; however, no parent took up this opportunity.

3.8.4 About the Data

In summary, I received permission from MoNE to gain access to the school. All of the information on the participants that I collected in the relevant phase of the study was stored confidentially. I changed all of the names and other key pieces of identifying information. Historical conversations with the study participants were anonymised and I used pseudonyms when writing the report in order to protect their identities.

3.9 Trustworthiness

As opposed to quantitative research, case studies are considered to be 'microscopic' (Yin, 1993). This was a multiple instrumental single case study for comparing a number of different types of data in order to understand the variables that influence the experiences of the participants and to allow a better understanding of the outcomes. The researcher's

findings depend on views and procedures, which may be to the detriment of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 2009).

In this study, the trustworthiness of the work was increased through self-reflexivity, thick, organised reports and triangulation with different data types with different participants. Triangulation uses two or more types of data collection in the researching of certain aspects of individual behaviour (Cohen et al., 2011). As Guba and Lincoln (2005) expressed, this aids in addressing validity, helping investigators "to see the interweaving processes in the research: discovery, seeing, telling, storying, re-presentations" (p. 208). I attempted to increase the trustworthiness of this study by presenting a complete and transparent picture of the research phases. This provides the reader with understandable and sufficiently interpretative explanations of the research to enable them to identify the practices herein, and thus added to the precision of the research (Creswell, 2008).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasise that credibility, transferability and conformability are important parts of a study's trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Wellington (2015), credibility indicates the degree to which a document or an interview is intact. In order to meet this criterion in my work, the chapters in this study were reviewed several times by my supervisors who offered me understanding and criticism. I also increased the trustworthiness of my data by sending the interview transcripts to the interviewees for confirmation of their content. This is confirmed by Patton (2002), who states that transferability relates to the notion that the results of research may be contextualised and meaningful in the setting of the study. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue, qualitative researchers conduct research only to explore results that may be valid at that time. Researchers develop bold explanations which allow readers to transfer the results to other contexts. Conformability requires that researchers do not explicitly express their personal values and their theoretical implications (Patton, 2002). Similarly, Hammond and Wellington (2012) indicate that the criteria for qualitative work involve the level to which the data support the results of the study. At the same time, they emphasise that this credibility orientation can be focused through the use of participant confirmation.

On this basis, the teacher and all parents had the chance to receive and reflect on their interview transcripts. In addition to the above arguments, Yin (2011) adds that one of the most critical goals in establishing research reliability is to make research work accessible to others. Thus, researchers need to define and document the work of others in their own work in order for the content of their work to be inspected and understood. This is referred to as transparency, and researchers should conduct research on their readers and illustrate how they reach their findings and conclusions (Flick, 2018). The quality of qualitative research will be improved by this type of transparent representation.

Thus, I propose including full explanations for each phase of my study's data collection procedures and explaining how they were decided upon. Furthermore, I was aware that readers should have sufficient knowledge to decide whether they would do the same, and whether they would reach the same conclusion as the researcher (Flick, 2018).

3.10 Summary

This chapter has described the overall methodological framework used for this study. It has discussed the research design and methodology adopted, commencing with the reasons for adopting an exploratory qualitative approach and then describing the basic research paradigms that led to the adoption of the qualitative method as the basis for this work. This chapter has also examined the process of selecting the case study and the reasoning behind the choices of observations, interviews and focus groups for the data collection, in addition to how these methods were applied and how the resulting data were analysed. Ethical issues related to the research and the measures put in place to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of the research outcomes were also discussed.

The next chapter will present the findings.

Chapter 4 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In this chapter, I will present the results of this research in relation both to the research questions and the literature surveyed in Chapter Two. The analysis of the data is developed through themes deriving from the research questions. The goal of this part is to explore the views and experience of the teacher and parents regarding the use of social media for communication between school and families in a preschool education setting. To achieve this, data from classroom observations, online observations, semi-structured interview with the teacher and focus group interviews with parents were analysed to support the points under reflection.

The study used a qualitative case study approach to investigate participants' opinions and practices about social media use at preschool. This approach was chosen as the most efficient way to answer the research questions.

Before turning to consider specific aspects of that engagement in more detail according to Epstein's (2001) six types of parent involvement model, this section provides a general overview of the teacher's and the parents' motivations for using social media as part of their engagement with each other is considered to be useful. The teacher explained aspects of her aim in using social media for parental involvement in preschool education. She also emphasised that she had used social media for educational purposes for several years. These experiences had made her familiar with the process of social media and enabled her to use it within the professional context, with her main motivation coming from her perception of its benefit for the relevant stakeholders she deals with.

> … using social media is so controversial an issue here in Turkey. However, I think that I have enough knowledge and experience to use

> social media for preschool education. I am getting better day by day. I am quite familiar with many platforms. So, I can say that I am using social media because it helps me, the parents, children and any other followers. (…) Of course, social media is more than that, but you do need to know how and what you can do with it. [Teacher]

On the other hand, parents were using social media because of its convenience in terms of supporting communication and involvement. They have found that social media helps them and their children.

> I can access class activities anytime. Getting information and ideas from social media helps me and my child. When I (we) need extra help, we (parents) ask further. [Funda]

Social media was found to be useful in terms of revisiting classroom activities, accessing them at any time. It was easy to connect. Naciye added:

> Social media was useful because we are cooperating with the teachers and the parents. We watch, assess and provide feedback for our children education. [Naciye]

The next section will explore the participants' views and experiences of how social media supports parental involvement in preschool education process.

4.1 Application of Epstein Model through Social Media

The data in this section is analysed according to Epstein's (2001) six types of involvement model (further discussion on Epstein Parental Involvement Model can be found in Chapter Two). This also helps to develop a clear understanding of the use of social media interactions to support child outcomes in the early years' phase.

4.1.1 Parenting

Parenting involvement entails helping all families establish home environments to support children (Epstein et al., 2002). This level of involvement is mainly associated with the

parental support that children receive in their homes. As the range of parental involvement increases, families get a better understanding of their child's development. Support in this context includes educating parents on child development by providing and producing information, training and assistance for parents. This can be related to nutrition, health, housing, safety, cognitive and physical development and education more generally (Epstein, 2001).

The teacher was aware that improving the parenting skills of the parents would support their children's education at preschool. Her use of social media in relation to parenting was based on those motivations, as well as on raising parents' awareness of their children's education. The data obtained show that the teacher frequently used social media to communicate information intended to support parents with their parenting skills in both textual form and through other media. Her aim was to raise parents' awareness of child development by helping them to acquire and produce information, assist in education and exchange information about their child, thereby promoting interaction between preschool and home and creating a good home environment for children. Some of the content supplied was also related to nutrition, health, housing and safety for children. As a result, the parents' knowledge of their children's development and needs improved, in the teacher's opinion. The teacher reflected extensively in the interview on the issues that she addressed through social media posts, saying:

> Families ask many questions about many topics. Even though most of the parents are well educated, they still need extra knowledge of their children's needs and developmental stages. The social media posts seek to educate and inform them in some respects. I posted about sickness, cleaning, safety and so on in the first semester. [Teacher]

The teacher's social media posts support what the teacher said about providing useful information related to parenting skills. Examples such as the posts below outline how parents can remove paint stains from their children's clothing (see Image 4.1) and the types of illness that should stop a parent from sending their child to preschool (see Image 4.2). The parents' likes and comments indicate that they were grateful for this information.

Image 4.1: Advice on cleaning clothes. **Image 4.2**: Types of illness

Furthermore, the teacher added:

> I share information on child development and pedagogy when I think it's needed, beneficial and related. As an example, the parents are middle class and so I sometimes ask them to consider their assumptions when they buy things for their children. I emphasise the quality of the time, toys, books, furniture, etc., not their quantity. It is important to make them realise that their children need to be themselves without consuming unnecessarily. And the same goes for food. I understood that some of the parents did not have great awareness with regard to consuming junk food. I have posted about healthy food many times. [Teacher]

The teacher indeed posted extensively on healthy eating. As an example, she stated that when she prepared an apple for each child on report card[1] day as a gift, along with the other preparations for that day, the note[2] on the apples was not clear in the social media post (see Image 4.3). The parents noticed this and enquired as to what the note said. As a result, she later shared another post that clearly indicated the point of the text (see Image 4.4).

[1] *Unlike the UK, report card day is considered an important day in the educational life of a child in Turkey. Even though the marks on the card can be non-functional/nominal at the preschool level, it is still celebrated. It is common for children to get a gift from their teacher on that day.*

[2] *The note with the apples: "A healthy mind in a healthy body. Then, do not eat junk food. Eating fruit is healthy. This is the best gift for children."*

Image 4.3: First post on report card day **Image 4.4:** Second post on report card day

In regard to parenting, the parents were agreed that the teacher provided various content and media which were helpful for their parenting skills. The parenting content on social media was seen as an additional form of help for families to learn about preschool and education, and how to help meet their children's needs and support their development. Thus, social media involvement was an effective form of support for parenting, in the parents' opinion. One of the parents explained this as follows:

> The teacher takes photos, writes explanations-content and creates hashtags. That content informed and educated us in many aspects. If I want, I can ask questions and learn more. Do I find it useful? Yes, absolutely. It offers a lot of information on child development. [Murat]

Another member of the group indicated that the teacher had provided useful information for parents on child development through social media:

> The first week of the preschool was the hardest time for me. My child did not want to leave me. She was crying and so emotional. I did not know how I could manage this. Sure, the teacher observed us and provided some short notes for parents using social media. That was useful. I understood it is just normal behaviour. Because that was my first experiences in the preschool. I did not know what was wrong with my child. And how can I stop it. Those notes helped me. [Funda]

Funda was referring to the posts below (see Image 4.5). The posts provided pedagogical support for parents leaving their children during the first week of school. The teacher

wrote these small notes for the parents in the orientation period/adaptation process and later shared these on social media as well. There are some crosses and ticks on the posts which served to guide parents as to which behaviours, both on their part and on the part of their children, could be appropriate or not.

Image 4.5: The notes provided during orientation week for parents on social media

The teacher also provided training and assistance to parents when they asked:

> Sometimes the teacher shares without asking, but sometimes we asked for her help. We were worried about child protection. And one of the parents contacted a child psychologist to give a seminar on child abuse at preschool to children. After that seminar, the teacher shared a flyer for parents on social media. So, everyone got benefit (see Image 4.6). [Ayla]

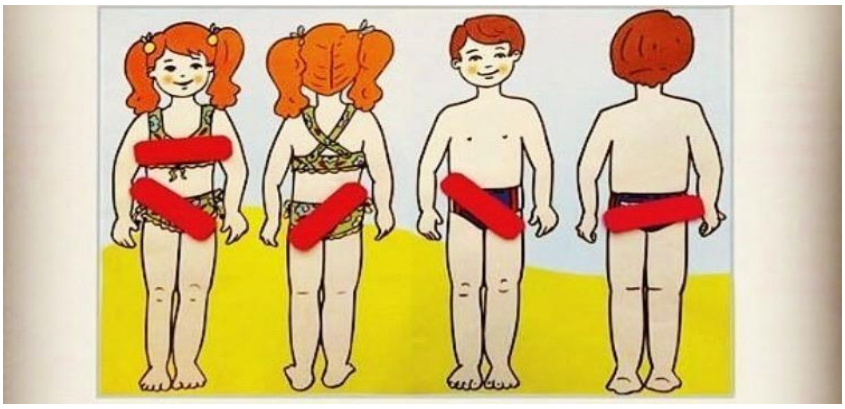


Image 4.6: The posted flyer with untouchable body parts

Through explanations and hashtags, the teacher supplied detailed information intended to increase awareness about protecting children from sexual harassment and abuse. Indeed, the teacher noted that she frequently made such posts. She stated that she was also informed by a parents' needs form. Furthermore, she voiced that she also used her

professional experience of teaching as another factor when determining the subjects that she needed to address with the parents on social media. It was also observed that she asked for help from experts when doing this type of sharing.

> I suggested many books and some other facilities like toys. I am so close to books and I design toys. Some are storybooks, some are academic learning-based. I am also the author of some of them, too. And yet, I shared many suggestions for families in this respect. I believe that these suggestions help. [Teacher]

The teacher therefore created information for parents in a presentable and easy-to-access way, linked to children's education in preschool. Some of the families who participated in the focus groups, however, underscored that social media interactions with the teacher were a good addition to preschool parents' involvement:

> Social media content makes us very clear about our children's learning. She picks up a photo from an activity she has done in those days. Sometimes it can be a video. She shares this with us after a few additions (explanation, hashtags, e.g.). Then, it makes sense to share it as a whole. I saw my child's success and development there. Also, we have arrived at the end of the year. I have a better understanding now of what is being done. [Cihan]

As Meryem indicated, the teacher shared many book recommendations which the teacher believes can support the development of preschool literacy and learning.

> There were many books which were suggested to us. And a lot of information that I needed. I said to myself; 'Wow! She knows well what she is doing'. [Meryem]

In the examples above, the communication is relatively one-way, with the teacher taking the view that although most of the parents are educated, they do not always have enough background in child development, and thus seeking to fill that gap. Even though there was a lack of content for certain topics, in the teacher's experience, her social media shares were felt to have supported improvements in parenting skills and types of parenting involvement. This kind of content enables the parents to understand their children's development better and includes support for their needs. It also raises parents' awareness by assisting and educating them. On the other hand, the parents thought that the social

media content helped their parenting skills and their involvement with their children's preschool education. My full-day observations at the preschool also suggest, however, that other 'traditional' forms of involvement provided by the teacher were still needed. For example, drop off and pick up times still appeared significant in maintaining the traditional way of involvement to get information about the school process.

The above, therefore, models the traditional approach of teacher-led engagement with parents, which, as discussed in section 2.4.2.1, has been criticised in the scholarship. The parents also revealed another model through which parenting is developed, however, and one in which they had more control. For example, when it comes to learning or sharing information about children's goals, strengths, talents and individual-private problems, the direct messaging facilities were used. Specific information about children was not shared and discussed in the open-access webpages of the social media platforms.

> I use the public access side of social media for general things. I prefer to speak about private things using the direct messaging facility of social media, if there is an issue. You cannot talk about your private issues there openly. [Zehra]

Rukiye agreed with Zehra's statement and added:

> I received a direct message from the teacher. She was asking about some individual characteristics of my child. She communicated directly and asked questions in private. An observer outside cannot see. It doesn't matter how many followers one has on the social media accounts. I spoke with the teacher in person. [Rukiye]

Another parent stated that she had had a better experience of parenting this year compared with 'previous/traditional' because of the social media-inspired interaction between home and school.

> This is my second child who is attending preschool. I did not use social media with the first child. I think that social media has a positive effect on knowing each other. The teacher understood us and our needs. We knew each other more closely and perhaps got used to each other more rapidly through social media. She realised that children consume junk food from our accounts. She posted about healthy food many times. [Sirin]

Besides these, the teacher indicated that there were many areas in which parents needed support and that she was not able to address all of these through social media. She said that she tried to share parenting content more, but that this sharing could be limited. In this regard, she considered that more requests from parents would be beneficial.

> I would prefer to get more response and requests from parents and followers. For sure, I can forget or be unaware of some of the topics that may be needed. I post about child development characteristics mostly, such as appropriate play, books, toys, food, health advice, activities and academic studies for this age group of children. I think that there could be more. [Teacher]

In all of the above cases, we can see the parents using the social media platform to engage themselves with the teacher in respect to their family circumstances and parenting techniques.

The second type of involvement is Communicating.

4.1.2 Communicating

Planning efficient forms of teacher-to-home and home-to-teacher communications about school programmes and children's progress is the second type of involvement in Epstein's model (Epstein et al., 2002). This type of involvement is a way of sharing information about the preschool and children, and supporting the exchange of ideas between parents and teachers. According to the collected data, social media is often used in the context of establishing communication between the teacher and the home.

The data showed that the teacher employed various different types of communication, including the use of social media, to communicate with the children's families. Importantly, social media was not the only channel of communication. Some of the parents perceived the purpose of communicating with the teacher, both during and outside preschool hours, as being for sharing individual (personal) information. Aside from this, social media was used for general information. The teacher said that both she and the parents derived benefits from using social media to communicate general and

group information. She highlighted that social media is almost free, comfortable and does not require any physical presence to help provide benefits for all.

> I prefer to share the children's group work on social media. That gives parents ideas about their learning and activities. Thus, I can reach the parents quickly and easily. And there is no restriction on doing that. But I would not be able to achieve that kind of communication through either hard copies or face-to-face communication. [Teacher]

As one of the social media main features, the teacher used visual media contents to make more sense of the social media communications. Visual content such as photos and videos were useful in making the aim of the particular communications clear. For example, in the case of the Mother's Day preparation photo (see Image 4.7), even though it was not completely clear what was taking place, it still indicated something related to the extensive preparation that was being devoted to the painting.

Image 4.7: Mother's Day preparation

With the post above she was trying to grab the parents' attention. Thus, she posted with a question. Later on, she explained how this form of communicating may take place both between parents and herself and also between parents.

> I know it's far from Mother's Day. So, people (parents) may not understand what we are doing with this image. But it's actually a way of getting their attention and raising questions. Then, they will probably ask their children at home. So, they can have an opportunity to talk about preschool life. For that reason, not every post needs to be completely representative of what we did that day. I know that the post itself is not so

> clear to parents and followers. If parents wonder about it, they can ask when they come to preschool or ask their children. A follower can comment or send a direct message. I am so keen on giving a response to any question. (Mother's Day is celebrated on the second Sunday of May in Turkey.) [Teacher]

One parent explained her idea about those types of post.

> I think if the teacher made the explanation of the tasks in the posts clearer it would be better. I did not understand sometimes. A few of them don't have explanations. We (parents) ask for further. [Funda]

Thus, several questions, contributions and comments on these posts were observed from parents. Two-way communication also created a better understanding of the children's preschool and home life.

> Parents ask questions, contribute and comment on the posts. This is another advantage of social media communication. It's not only from my side. Thus, we have a better understanding of each other. [Teacher]

Similarly, parents reported many relevant communication experiences via social media interactions during the focus group interview and generally agreed that children benefitted from this social media communication between parents and teachers. social media is free, convenient and does not need one's physical presence in order to help bring benefits in terms of children's outcomes. The first impression in respect to social media interaction was important for parents to practise social media. Some parents had positive attitudes towards the teacher and the use of social media as early as the orientation week.

> At the beginning, the teacher introduced to us these accounts, and I found it useful for me. It increased my trust in her and her job. [Meryem]

In contrast, Naz's experiences were different. She highlighted the power relationship between parents and the teacher.

I did not use social media until my child began at this school. I started to use my account by the teacher's request. [Naz]

Social media communication was useful because it makes accessing children's work (portfolios) more convenient for parents. As the teacher aimed, the virtual type of

communication stopped the problem of lost hard-copy text-based communications and made interactions more interactive.

> I had another child who attended preschool a few years ago. We were getting monthly paper reports on what they did that month when she was attending preschool. It was a bit of a messy process. It could be broken or lost. But this time I followed/observed my child online. There was no need to get a monthly report. Now, I have the chance to review and discuss my child's work daily and to discuss with my child and the teacher. [Sirin]

As discussed above in respect to the parenting type of involvement, the teacher preferred to send confidential information privately to parents. Assessments, achievement levels and reports were shared with parents, either via direct messaging or in person. Moreover, academic and behavioural problems were only shared with the child's parents. Social media was used for general information and activities. Thus, some parents told that they give importance to privacy.

> I prefer to speak about private issues privately. [Damla]

Similarly, the teacher claimed that the privacy of the children and their parents was respected at all levels of communication.

> I never share any private information related to an individual. I would use the phone to discuss such things, or the direct messaging facility of social media. It's another way of increasing the parents' trust in me. Our communication is based on trust. [Teacher]

In contrast, there were some policy contradictions as well. This form of communication was not supported by specific policies and this discouraged parents in some cases, even though they had all signed a consent letter for their children's content to be used in social media. Nonetheless, a few of the parents were not comfortable with the framework provided for those social media accounts, although they were still active users. One of the parents indicated:

> Even though there are some negative sides to using it; like privacy and safety, it is unarguable that it is so beneficial for me and my child. I learn there what they are doing, and if I have questions then I can ask the teacher. [Zehra]

For some parents, the teacher created a virtual place to develop their involvement by communicating on social media. This helped to alleviate the lack of involvement because of barriers such as time and place.

> I cannot get to visit preschool regularly. I have a busy work schedule. I follow the classroom social media account. It makes my life and my son's life easy. It gives me a clear understanding about his education. [Aynur]

Furthermore, social media improved the involvement of parents due to its clear and readable content.

> The social media provided a very clear way of understanding my children's education and progress. It makes more sense than a text-based paper. The visual and audio features of the content are useful. It helped me to understand what was happening there. [Rukiye]

Social media appeared to increase the level of communication with parents who had problems in speaking in public contexts. One of the parents felt social media communication helped her to express herself easily and freely despite her social phobia.

> …for an individual like me who has difficulty speaking in front of people, it is easier to express myself in written language. I have the chance to ask the questions that I would like to ask. I am more comfortable now. [Naz]

Social media also made two-way communication easier; rather than just getting notices from the school, parents had the opportunity to provide a response. Here, again, we see how social media offers a route for parents to lead the home-school engagement process, rather than this being an entirely teacher directed process.

> I find these social media account communications more satisfactory when I compare it with the other ways in which teachers communicate. I have another child in primary school. We communicate with that teacher twice a year. It is the parents' meeting at the beginning of the season, and he tells us, we listen. We only have 5-10 minutes to ask questions. That's the whole year's communication with other teachers. How much can I be aware of the condition of my child? And how do I support him if I do not know about him? Social media creates a mutual form of communication. [Cihan]

Thus, social media has improved the teacher's personal relationships with parents. In her experience, this leads to more trusting communication between home and school.

> I shared some photos of my son on his birthday. They were not related to any educational activities. However, this post got the highest number of comments from followers. And many of these commenters were current students' parents. That makes me more connected to them. I can show the same empathy when they share their special days on social media. It makes us more connected (…) We were busy with Mother's Day preparation and celebration for almost two weeks, as observable. But, it's worth that. I am a mum as well. I would like to be celebrated. So, I guess mums liked those posts too. [Teacher]

Fathers were also considered in communication through the use of images, hashtags and textual content of social media interaction.

> As you know, we did a number of events related to Mother's Day. Father's Day will be celebrated after the preschool closes. According to the curriculum, we do not need to make big preparations like for Mother's Day. But there will still be something for them on social media later on. [Teacher]

Social media communication provided an updated bulletin of what is going on in and outside the classroom. Parents regularly got information on special events and on other activities, as well as helpful tips. Parents thought that using social media for communicating is a fundamental part of the information society and they were happy to have that kind of involvement in their child's education.

> We are living in modern times. I think that the communication is definitely better now, adapted to this century's needs. Because I think there are many barriers with traditional communication for parents. I do not miss things and get information easily now. [Ali]

Besides this, same parents noted the use of other interactive features of social media interactions; features that they had not used before.

> If the teacher wants, she can inform us by using other features of social media. It can be used as a virtual meeting place. We can get online seminars on the topics which we need. Also, there are online survey options. She can prepare and ask about our needs. Then, she might decide what we (parents and children) need. [Ali]

The communication on social media is influenced by culture and tradition. Social media posts reflect the history, ways of life, likes, traditions and customs of the Turkish people. The teacher said that by doing and sharing these activities, the parents and children learn

about others with their own culture and can then compare this with examples from other cultures. Parents enjoy to see Turkish national and cultural values on social media. Culturally related shares on social media increased parents' confidence in the education their children are receiving. They considered that social media interactions can help children to develop a strong identity with cultural roots and values.

> These national days are the values that make us united. We must live our culture. Social media content connected us with these values. [Asya]

The teacher shared content related to culture alongside her own personal opinions and the requirements of the curriculum. The use of social media is thus affected by traditions and national values.

> Culture is the richness and distinguishing feature of a country. We should hang on to it with our values. We have to protect our language, religion, culture, identity. I really care about those values and transferring them to our young. Such as national festivals are a good opportunity to learn your own cultures/history besides others. [Teacher]

In brief, the teacher said that there is a place for social media to work alongside the more traditional types of communication since those traditional means are often insufficient to establish successful communication channels between preschool and home. Social media interaction was thus filling that gap. Taking these views into consideration, communication between preschool and home appears to be of great importance to the teacher, and this communication is not limited to its traditional forms. It is understood that parents have the opportunity to meet with the teacher face-to-face in relation to personal issues while also gaining the benefits of sharing information and communicating through social media with respect to general information about their children and the process of parenting. Similarly, the parents felt that social media improved their communication with the teacher and therefore their involvement in their child's education. It provided opportunities and was more flexible in terms of the commitment of time and space. Moreover, in the parents' experiences, virtual and face-to-face communication types each had some opportunities.

The third type of involvement is Volunteering.

4.1.3 Volunteering

Recruiting and organising parents' help and support is the third of involvement in Epstein's Model (Epstein et al., 2002). Volunteering involves the voluntary help, support and involvement of families, both inside and outside classroom activities. Thus, this type of involvement aims to encourage parents to volunteer to support students and preschool programmes.

Parents were frequently involved in activities both inside and outside of the classroom/school. Family involvement activities are organised at the beginning of the year, at which point parents complete the involvement preference form indicating their interests, talents and skills. The teacher uses this information to decide who to ask for help. In addition, it is observed that the teacher used social media interactions to encourage and benefit from the voluntary involvement of parents.

The teacher explained that a lot of voluntary involvement on the part of families can be seen from social media and that in fact, the social media posts acted to encourage them. The Family Involvement Preference Form, which the parents use to indicate their interests, abilities and skills, helped the teacher to include parents in volunteering activities. The role of social media was mainly to advertise the content and encourage families to become involved in the next event.

> There is a family involvement plan that we created at the beginning of the term with parents. With this plan, we decided (with parents) who would do what and when. You know, these are optional things in the programme/curriculum. MoNE encourages teachers to involve parents in the classroom activities, but not many teachers do so. The parents need to do some prior research on preschool education, such as what might be interesting and fun for the children. They need to know and follow me here on social media to see what other parents did and to understand the classroom structure. Also, I know that they tell each other about their experiences about the classroom. Now, in this activity [see Image 4.8], a parent taught us to make lights in a tree, like a Christmas tree. The parent talked about the place of electricity in our life and asked questions before the activity started. The children had a discussion with the parent about the machines that we use in our lives, the energy sources that machines

use and the mechanisms that cause them to work. Learning and volunteering therefore takes place at the same time. [Teacher]

Image 4.8: The light tree activity

The encouraging role of social media worked as intended by the teacher. During the focus group interview parents often reported how they used social media to manage their volunteering experiences with the school. It was common to benefit from the parents' own areas of expertise.

> I got some advice from one of the parents, who is a dietician. We did some work together to raise awareness of healthy food and I shared this with others through social media. Another parent supplied some book recommendations. [Teacher]

The dietician parent explained that process in a focus group interview.

> I did many activities in the classroom and helped the teacher when she needed it. I am a dietician. So, I did mainly something related to food. The posts related to food belonged to me generally. That organic handmade yoghurt was from me. And, the idea of giving an apple to all children on the report-card day belonged to me. You can see many things like that from parents. And my son witnessed all this process. He is so proud to show that yoghurt jar on social media to someone. [Naz]

As online observation showed that several examples of healthy food advice and images were shared through the social media account. Children made lemonade and yoghurt during the year (see Image 4.9). They received apples as a gift on report card day. The teacher supplied some text and image-based explanations through social media posts on junk food and health, that served to clarify the purpose of these activities.

Image 4.9: Class-made lemonade and yoghurt

It seems that parents were motivated to volunteer partly because the social media posts made the purpose of such activities clearer to them, and partly because their work and efforts were more overtly and publicly recognised on social media, both by their children and by the teacher. Sometimes, extended family members were included in volunteer work in class, with this later being put on social media. Parents considered this to be an effective way of encouragement for involvement.

Image 4.10: A grandmother telling a story at preschool

> When we were encouraged by the teacher, we want to do more for our children. Our grandmother attended classroom to tell a story [see Image 4.10]. My daughter was so happy. Then, some images were shared. We felt we did great work for all. It's making opportunities for children from any place and any people. Social media content gives an opportunity to understand what others do and what I can do. It gives us a chance to think about it. [Ali]

The teacher expressed similar sentiments:

> Social media has the power to advertise something. I posted when parents helped and supported me in many cases. This led to the development of positive competition between the parents to be a volunteer. One child's grandfather sent us some pomegranates in the first term that he had grown in his garden. I presented them in a very grateful and attractive way. When they see that kind of post, they are motivated. [Teacher]

The opportunity was taken in the online and full-day school observations to look at how the parents were involved in these activities. As mentioned earlier, drop-off and pick-up times were significant in maintaining the traditional forms of involvement, but social media also played a role in supporting this volunteering involvement. It was found that the parents often lent their help for special celebration days. When events were held for special days, such as 23rd April and Mother's Day, families would voluntarily and actively get involved in these sessions.

> Also, I could not do all those celebrations without the parents' help [see image 4.11]. As you see, there is a lot of celebration of some special days and festivals. We shared responsibilities and improved learning quality together. [Teacher]

Image 4.11: Preparation of Mother's Day cookies

As online observations indicated, parents were involved in indoor activities to support their children and learning in many ways.

> Here is a very special day for all [she refers to the end of the year celebration]. All families came to watch their children's performance with their cameras in their hands with enthusiasm and pride. During my first years of teaching, I used to get stressed out by those days. I used to say things like 'Will everything go okay?', 'The children should not forget their roles', 'We'll finish today without a problem'. But now, I am completely comfortable, and the children can make mistakes. The parents do not compare their children with others, anyway. In other words, my approach focuses on the process, not the results. I aim by the end of the year to show that children can demonstrate their individual talents. It was with learning and fun. They shared that with their families. I think that it was a nice memory for the future. I hope I have succeeded. [Teacher]

The teacher explained that while some parents offered their help for indoor activities others helped in field trips (outdoors). The quotation below was referring to a social media post from that week.

> The Emirgan[3] is a combination of everything: history, tradition, nature, fun. I visit this park with the children every year. It's really important to have an awareness of nature. We should teach ways in which people can live in a sustainable way. We should realise that everyone in the world has some effect on the world; this can be either positive or negative. Briefly, who doesn't want to live in a clean and sustainable environment? Personally, I see lots of high buildings and a non-green city around me. There are few opportunities to see and live close to the green, but Emirgan Park is one of them. And this park is extra attractive for children during the tulip festival. I asked for their help and some of the parents joined us that day, as you can see. [Teacher]

Thus, the majority of families noted they became involved in some volunteer work through their social media interaction. Specifically, parents were involved in outside preschool activities (such as taking care of the children when they visit museums, parks) and social media interaction was found to be useful in organising those events. They did not need a physical meeting place.

> We don't need to gather or sit somewhere. To organise these activities, we used social media. We shared our responsibilities. We had duties in respect to our children's learning in any way, at any place, and at any time. We used our time efficiently. Social media reduces barriers to our involvement by removing transportation and time restrictions. [Begum]

To conclude, the teacher was satisfied with the role of social media with regard to the parents' involvement in volunteering. Social media interaction with parents was encouraged and motivated them to become involved in future volunteering opportunities. She found that social media made volunteering easy for parents and was helpful in overcoming obstacles such as place, time and transport. Parents' also found social media interactions helpful in respect to their involvement in volunteering. Social media interaction with teachers was encouraged and motivated them to volunteer in future. They realised that volunteering is easy and parents' involvement in voluntary work was influenced and increased.

The fourth type of involvement is Learning at Home.

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[3] *Emirgan Park is a historical park. It is closely associated with the tulip. An annual international tulip festival has been held there every April since 2005, making the park attractive and very colourful with these flowers at that time of the year.*

4.1.4 Learning at Home

Learning at home is offering information and opinions to parents about how to support students at home with homework and other curriculum-based activities, planning, and decisions, and is the fourth type of involvement in Epstein's model (Epstein et al, 2002). Parental involvement is increased by monitoring, discussing, reviewing and practising student work at home through social media interactions.

The teacher said that social media posts that help and inform parents about how they can help or support their children, about their duties and responsibilities related to their children's learning, and about classroom and schoolwork are all related to the area of learning at home. In this regard, the teacher said that she was supporting the development of the learning environment at home and was teaching parents how to assist with their children's education. The teacher's contributions included coursework.

> Parents have a chance to know about classroom activities. That makes it easy to revise and revisit learned topics. Parents have a chance to monitor, observe and practise student activities at home. I provide part of the curriculum gradually and clearly. Including the definition of a post by text helps them to understand the context better. The images and text complement each other. [Teacher]

The post below (see Image 4.12) is a good example of the process the teacher mentions above. Since these children were due to start primary school the following year, they were expected to have some awareness of 'phonetics-writing-reading-letters'. The teacher provided a written explanation in the post for parents 'children studied words starting with the same vowel voice – it was A.'

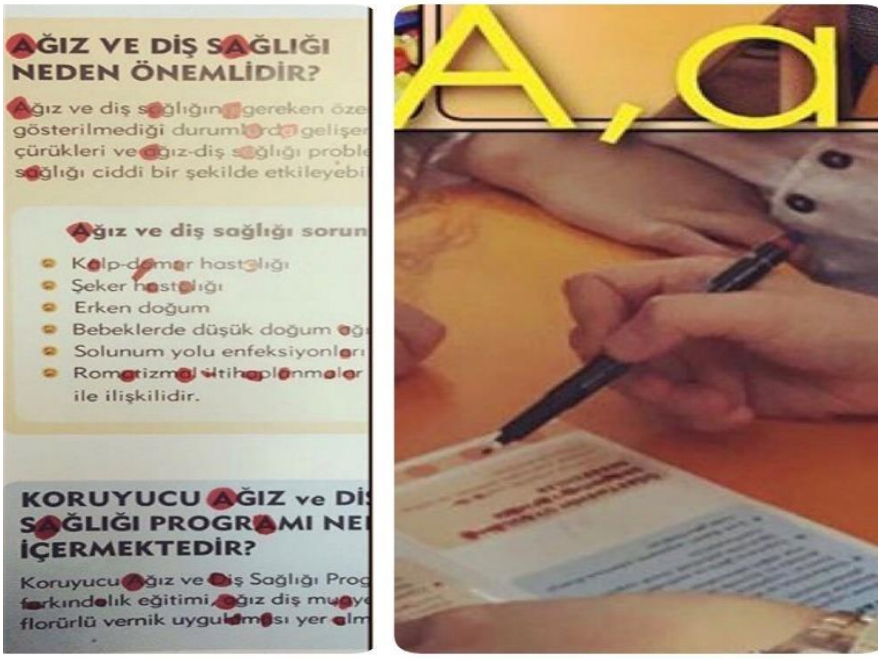


Image 4.12: Studying the letter 'A'

In this type of involvement, activities such as informing parents about how to help students with their homework, activities, plans at home, preparing for preschool and preparing family reading activities were observed. Thus, social media interactions provided information for parents on how to approach their children's homework in different subjects. Parents felt more confident in assisting with learning at home. Reading bedtime stories was given as an example of this. This activity helps parents to teach effective reading and learning techniques to their children and also helps them to learn how to reinforce language skills at home.

> During the first semester, we used social media to organise bedtime story reading, arranging for different children in the class to bring a book each day for a month. We (parents) were responsible for reading to them at home. After reading we had a discussion. Although it is not hard to read books the teacher used social media to share some examples of reading to children [She referred to some of video recording shares]. I adapted her style. [Esma]

The teacher, therefore, used social media to provide parents with strategies and examples that they could adopt to reinforce teaching at home. As well as knowledge about what is

going on in the classroom, social media interactions also helped parents to discuss interactive homework practices.

> Her posts illuminated and encouraged us. We do things in the same way; when we work on some subjects. My child and I did that light tree experiment together at home [see Image 4.8]. We increased our skills together. [Sirin]

The light tree experiment was created by another volunteer parent in the class. Later on, the teacher described this on social media so that other parents who wanted could try it at home with their children. She explained the steps and materials needed for this activity in her post. Similarly, another parent said;

> The teacher shared many activities that we can do at home, with explanations. We may find them by searching the Internet, but I think it has the benefit of taking advantage of getting an expert opinion here. We have been doing these kinds of activities at weekends. We learned to use different materials in the house or outside, and play new games with them. [Naciye]

The teacher explained how parental support can be useful at home.

> I know that parents can make a huge contribution to their children's education. And I also don't think that only doing educational activities in the preschool setting is a good idea. I believe that education and learning can be everywhere. Thus, I try to involve parents as much as possible. As you can see in this post, we did some 'phonetics-writing-reading-letter awareness studies' with different activities. I think that the image and my explanation give a clear idea to anyone about what we did that day. It was a good activity to reach outcomes. (…) I preferred to give a clear explanation to parents for home practice. It's April and we started with the vowel A. I plan to do the same activity with other vowels until the end of this term. So, we can do it with all the vowels (there are eight vowels in Turkish). [Teacher]

The teacher provided some examples on social media concerning the topics being studied, helping to ensure that the children's homework was made clear to the parents.

I sometimes share examples to make the homework clear for parents. My goal in this sharing is to be very effective for everyone. The main aim is, of course, the child's learning; but it is a useful activity for adults as well. This image is from a previous year [see Image 4.13]. Parents sometimes ask, 'what can we do at home to support our children?' It is not easy to explain the activity verbally to every parent in a short time when they come to drop off or pick up their child. Also, the photo embodies what I am saying. I think this example is a great opportunity to save time for both sides. Moreover, for the child, I can tell s/he will spend time with the family and with an educational purpose, and they can learn from each other, ask questions and there is a willingness to complete the task for which they have been given responsibility. Also, this is nature-related work, the child can learn to use the natural resources (soil, water, energy, food, etc.) which are necessary to sustain life. The child can learn to take care of their lives and learn to take responsibility for protecting the beauty around her/him. The basis for the cultivation can only be taken with responsible citizens. [Teacher]

Image 4.13: The tree made from recyclable materials as a home activity

Social media has therefore made it more convenient for the teacher to send/share children's work (portfolios) to/with their parents. It has made the sharing process easier and more convenient.

Not for individual progress but for group work it's great. There is no need to prepare a big hard-copy file for children each week or month. So, parents can visit the classroom learning on an almost daily basis. If there

> is the need, they can help with learning at home. Social media communication is about updating parents every day. [Teacher]

Similarly, parents found social media useful in terms of revisiting materials and accessing it at any time, thus helping them to help their children learn at home. They became more familiar with the educational topics that their children were involved in at school. They had some suggestions for improvement, however. They said that the teacher should provide more assistance by having more detailed explanations of her posts.

> I can access their activities anytime. Getting information and ideas about materials from social media helps me. My knowledge expanded. I designed some at home activities in my own way. It helps my child. Later on, we discussed about what we did. But I think if the teacher made the explanation of the tasks in the posts clearer it would be better. I did not understand sometimes. A few of them don't have explanations. [Funda]

Social media content was also used by the teacher to aid paternal involvement in learning at home.

> Fathers don't have time to come to preschool often. Because of that, I shared some activities to do with fathers at home. I emphasised that by the definitions in the (textual) part of the post. It works because the visual and textual data complement each other. It is easy to understand. [Teacher]

There are compulsory policies and a national curriculum at the preschool level in Turkey. The national curriculum also stipulates the compulsory celebration of certain special days and weeks. The preparations and celebrations for April 23rd and Mother's Day took place during the weeks in which data was being collected for this study, and the teacher posted many images related to these. In addition, content related to Father's Day was observed. The teacher shared an activity for Father's Day almost at the end of the data collection (it is during the third week of June). Father's Day was celebrated more based on the fathers' involvement in an activity at home. The teacher provided an explanation of the activity on social media for any parents who may not have been able to attend the activities at school.

As you know, we held a number of events related to Mother's Day. Since Father's Day will be celebrated after the preschool is closed, we do not need to make big preparations like for Mother's Day. But I think that it is useful for the children to know that the day is for fathers. The purpose of choosing this activity is to motivate children and their fathers to think and act out of their traditional role-sharing. There's baking powder on the back of the heart, it's hidden. On the outside, it looks like a child offering love to their father with a heart shape. I asked the children not to say anything until they give it. If he accepts, both of you should do something together in the kitchen and you will use this baking powder, otherwise the surprise will not be sprung. Let us see, they agreed [see Image 4.14]. [Teacher]

Image 4.14: Preparation of cards with baking powder inside for Father's Day

Parents found that family-oriented practices were useful for the involvement of fathers in parenting at home. In Turkey, culturally, women are more likely to be at home with young children rather than working; whereas fathers are more likely to be working. Social media interactions helped to connect fathers with their child's educational settings, thus helping to minimise the barriers that otherwise tend to be created by fathers' time constraints. Parents wanted more of these family-oriented practices.

> Some activities required other family members' help. Such as playing a group game that needs more than two. We all played together. It was funny and nice to get the father's help. [Begum]

The teacher found that the social media content offered at home can provide an important opportunity for learning. Social media helped her to find ways to revisit and remind children of their tasks and subjects. The parents were also encouraged by the many

examples provided in this way. As has been discussed with respect to parental involvement, homework for the family also helps to include the whole family in the learning and educational process, and the involvement of fathers has been an especially positive aspect. Likewise, parents clearly thought that the things that social media can offer in respect to home learning are necessary and represent an important opportunity for education. They found the ability to revisit and remind themselves of tasks and subjects through social media helpful. They were encouraged by examples from the teacher. As mentioned, parents' involvement and family-oriented homework were also found to be helpful for involving all the family in learning, with the increased involvement of fathers a particularly positive aspect of learning at home.

The fifth type of involvement is Decision Making.

4.1.5 Decision-Making

Decision making refers to the involvement of families in the decision-making process with respect to both individual classes and the wider school (Epstein et al., 2002). It is the fifth type of involvement in Epstein's Model. It can be seen in school councils, organisations, action teams and other parents' groups. Of all the categories of parent involvement, this one revealed the biggest differences between teacher and parent perceptions.

The teacher experiences on decision-making activities were focused on their role in promoting family involvement in the educational process. Thus, according to the teacher, the voices of parents are heard through social media interactions.

> Social media tells parents about what happened in class. At the same time, it is also used to inform them of what is coming next. Anyone can provide feedback and personal views. For me, this helps to involve parents in the decision-making process. [Teacher]

She claimed, however, that the parents are generally reluctant to get involved in decision making to do with the preschool. They do not express their opinions when asked through

social media interaction. Nonetheless, she tries to empower parents to become involved in decision making on social media.

> As usual, the children, parents and I were so excited about the coming National Festival (23rd April). The festival costumes had just arrived, and I wanted to share it with parents or any followers. Maybe I could get some ideas from them. Exchanging ideas in a positive criticism way is useful, but it doesn't always happen that way. (…) If I hadn't shared the National Festival costumes here (social media), then lots of people, mostly parents, would have asked about them until the day. As you see, social media can be used for many purposes. [Teacher]

Parents did not necessarily hold the same opinions as the teacher, however; they did not see social media as a forum for involvement in decision-making processes. For parents, decision-making processes needed a physical presence at school and social media was not appropriate for this; except in respect to parents' organisations. In this latter regard, however, parents recognised a need for a means of communication about how to become involved in the decision-making process. Creating an alternative parents' social media group was seen as a way of making sure that the voice of all families could be heard. Such parent organisations could help provide a forum to voice their concerns and thoughts, as well as providing an opportunity to inform each other and increase involvement. Parents were not sure how they could be involved in the decision-making process in the class, however. Some families felt they could be involved by producing content on social media, but they did not know how to achieve this.

> We did not offer to supply content. We could. We were simply an audience to decisions. We cannot change any policies, decisions or the content of the curriculum. If you look at the feedback which the teacher gave you can see she encourages all to make their own voice heard. But, we are not the decision-makers. We should create a parents' group on social media, if we want to have equal rights rather than just being an audience. [Asya]

Parents did not get any official offer from the teacher that was explicitly aimed at ensuring that parents' voices are heard in respect to important class decisions. Nonetheless, parents did want to be involved in the decision making. They realised, however, that they needed the teacher to direct class improvement goals and decisions to them.

> If the decisions are not directed related to us, the teacher does not ask us. She asked us to buy an extra internet package for the classroom. She asked that because we will pay that internet access bills. If there is something related to social media and their equipment. Yes, we were asked for payment. [Meryem]

As Meryem indicated, the teacher believed that parents generally make negative judgements with regard to the decision-making process, and the decision-making mechanisms have become overly focused on their involvement in financial matters. Families therefore think they are being called upon simply to provide more resources to the school.

> Social media interaction could not change negative assumptions on the decision-making process. Some parents think that I will require money for something. [Teacher]

In Turkey, educational curricula, schedules and activities are strictly planned by the MoNE and shaped by the central government. The MoNE requires and controls parent–school cooperation as well as involvement programmes (Akıncı et al., 2012). Thus, parents did not believe that they could influence any decisions in respect to preschool education processes. Parents were unsure of how they were involved in the decision-making process through social media interactions. One parent said that the teacher posed questions in social media posts and that could be a form of decision making. Others did not agree, however: for them this was simply the teacher's curiosity. A few of them considered that each shared post could be a way of asking for their ideas about how to do the next step or activity. The teacher, meanwhile, added that the bureaucratic structure of MoNE does not allow for families to be involved in decisions in some cases.

> Of course, it is not possible to ask parents everything to get ideas from them. As you know, the curriculum is already fixed by MoNE. It is a certainty. We cannot change it. [Teacher]

The teacher also mentioned another barrier in the form of parents offering activities without knowing about the conditions of the classroom and the facility of social media. She did not find some of the ideas put forward by parents to be very valuable, which meant that she did not always want to include parents' suggestions on social media.

> Social media is not suitable for every kind of interaction. They asked for more content to see all of the process of preschool education. I did not. It's not a live broadcast camera. [Teacher]

The teacher did believe, however, that she used the many opportunities presented by social media to obtain the views of parents as contributions to the decision-making process, even though some parents were unwilling to be involved in this process and decision making was limited by the curriculum in some respects. Although, parents would like to be involved in the decision-making phase by being informed and being able to offer outcomes for preschool education, they did not experience an effective decision-making process via the teacher social media interactions. Parents suggested, however, that a scheduled monthly meeting through social media with the teacher would help them to voice concerns and to become more involved in the decisions in the classroom.

The sixth and last type of involvement is collaboration and communication with the community.

4.1.6 Collaboration with the Community

Collaborating with the community refers to recognising and incorporating resources and facilities from the society to support class curriculums, family activities, and student learning and development (Epstein et al., 2002). It is the sixth (last) type of involvement in Epstein's model. Child outcomes can be improved if teacher and parents collaborate and communicate effectively with the wider society (Epstein, 2005a). It was revealed that participants interact with the community (and local institutions) through social media for preschool education.

The number of followers on the accounts totalled around one thousand, and the accounts were open to public access, meaning that anyone was able to interact on the accounts, not just the followers. The teacher stated that she aims to increase the number of followers, with large numbers of followers benefitting her in several ways. A large number of followers increases her collaboration, communication and enables her to introduce her

products to many people through advertisements. She explained that both her motivation and the quality of social media interactions are strongly related to her follower numbers and to her getting interrelations. Interaction with followers (wider community) is a two-way process, and she believes that the children are somehow affected by these aims. She assumes that this usage is sequential, provides educational opportunities and that the children benefit from the interaction.

When interacting through social media for preschool educational purposes, the participants generally shared media (photos, videos, text), viewed information sent by others and responded to each other's posts (commenting, liking). The participants said that they checked posts by their friends, relatives, parents and institutions, and that this gave them the opportunity for communication regarding their children's education. They found this interaction to be a mutual and two-way process. They mostly agreed that it provided educational opportunities and that their children benefited from the interaction. Parents also noted some negative aspects of social media interaction with the wider community, however. Parents looked at each other's social media accounts to see what others were doing with their children, thereby leading to comparisons and competition between parents with respect to their children.

Participants' experiences of collaborating and communicating through social media encompassed local people and institutions as well as wider society. With respect to this type of involvement, the participants used the level of social resources, services and collective contributions needed to strengthen the learning and development of children through social media interactions. The studied case was located in Istanbul, the major city in Turkey, known for having many educational opportunities and facilities. The participants' collaboration and communication had a particularly strong connection with the city's facilities. Social media helped in connecting with the surrounding facilities and opportunities. The possibilities and opportunities within the local neighbourhood influenced the educational cooperation and communication with the community. These collaborations and communication are analysed under two subthemes: extended family and society and, with institutions.

4.1.6.1 Collaboration with Extended Family and Society

According to Epstein, teachers' and parents' communication with the extended community is an important factor in the education and development of children. In their early years, children benefit from increased communication between their teacher, parents and the community. For this reason, it is useful to investigate the participants' relationships with the wider community on social media. According to the participants' experience, children benefit from their communication with the extended community. Their experiences provide a broader context for social media interactions in extended learning communities.

For the teacher, increasing her number of followers encouraged her to raise awareness on social media through social responsibility activities, charity and fundraising. For example, she made an announcement to promote fundraising and said that the activity was to support social responsibility projects. Although this type of post was only indirectly related to child outcomes, having been aimed predominantly at the adults/parents, the parents were nevertheless able to help/donate together with their children. Thus, the aim of this type of post with respect to learning/the child could be to promote empathy for the feelings of others about an event or situation, helping them to begin identifying the feelings of others, giving reasons for the feelings of others and ultimately to identify some of the consequences of the feelings of others.

> This is an opportunity to raise awareness about helping children with cancer. My husband is a teacher as well, in a high school. His students designed these kerchiefs (bandanas) and they would like to sell them for the children's charity. I posted about it with an explanation. If people want to contribute, they can search for the name of the organisation, which is provided. I am also interested in helping non-profit projects on social media. It's a way of caring for each other and society. [Teacher]

The data collected on the parents' experiences with the extended community (and institutions) provides a broader context for social media interactions in educational settings, and shows how the critique of Epstein's model as too focused on school and teacher-led engagement with parents potentially falls away in the social media age.

According to the parents, there is a mutual influence between society and themselves. First, parents can affect others; second, they can be affected by society. A parent described how her son was encouraged to talk with extended family members based on something they had shared on their account, or from classroom accounts.

> Our extended family members talk with my son about what he did at school. Because they see what is going on at school. That makes him and me happy and motivated. [Naz]

This discussion about their education with extended family members had a positive effect on children. Another parent reported similar experiences.

> We were delighted when the pomegranates sent by our grandfather were shared on the group page (see Image 4.15). [Naciye]

Image 4.15: Pomegranates sent by a grandfather

As was observed on the account, the teacher shared the photo of the pomegranates with the following message: "One of our granddads sent pomegranates to us, we are so happy. It was squeezed and drunk in the morning; fruit juice, organic." In this case, social media communication reduced the distance from the extended family. Parents did not need to live in the same neighbourhood, and children derived benefits from that.

> We do not have the chance to live in the same town or city with our close relatives. Everyone is somewhere else. The shared posts within social media make us closer so that we can see our relatives and their enthusiasm as well. Relatives who are teachers in our family can conduct follow-up and assessments about the overall educational level/condition

> of my child. The same thing for us, we can see the children of our relatives who we have not seen face-to-face yet. We know about them even though we live far from them. [Murat]

Other parents also had similar reasons and experiences.

> We live far away from both of our own families due to our work. They cannot see my child's growing stages closely. I shared the link to the class social media accounts with them so that they can see what my child does at school. So, we can get closer, even though they live far away. [Rukiye]

Some extended family members went on to comment on the classroom activities that helped to promote familial involvement. Social media was helpful in making the involvement process clear for them.

> Even, some grandfathers and grandmothers attended our classroom. Some of them read fairy tales and some told old (fiction) stories that they were told when they were growing up. There are some posts from past shares, you can see. [Teacher]

The teacher attempted to build a transparent teaching and learning environment for all.

> Anyone can see how much progress has been made in the children's learning when they compare it with similar exercises at the beginning of the year. This is another benefit of social media – anyone can access any previous and present activities that have been done by these children. Then, they can compare their progress with a couple of clicks. It makes the progress observable and increases transparency. [Teacher]

According to the teacher, the effect of social media in terms of her own personal motivation in the classroom environment is greater recognition and popularity. The teacher expressed that she had become more popular because of the use of social media in the surrounding area. She enjoyed the greater levels of curiosity and interest in her class. The teacher also expressed satisfaction with this situation.

> I get many questions through social media from people I know, or who I don't know. Could we register for your class next year, or how did you do this activity, where can I find this book? And so on. This is what makes me happy when it comes to showing the value that I have derived from my starting reasons. social media usage improves my image in the public eye. [Teacher]

The positive feedback that was generated coincided with the motivating role of the teacher in using social media.

> I write children's books and design toys, too. The positive pressure of people in the process motivated me to use it more in an educational way. I thought why should I not do much better? I think my professional image has increased. People are getting serious and show respect to you through your number of followers. [Teacher]

Preschool education is not fully funded in Turkey. For that reason, not every child at preschool education age can attend school. According to the statistics for the 2016–2017 academic year, the proportion of children attending preschool was 59% per cent within 5 years old children (Egitim-Sen Report, 2017). The teacher is thus aiming, through her social media posts, to provide opportunities for education to those who are not able to go to preschool. She claimed that this could improve equality of opportunity for them.

> I believe that my posts have provided many activities for children who could not join preschool education too. It gives equality of opportunity for them. [Teacher]

Parents who are not able to send their children to preschool can ask questions, give feedback and obtain suggestions from her.

> For example, with this puzzle competition [it was shared on social media], in this sense, I can say this activity, also, gives an idea to people who don't have enough knowledge of preschool education. Someone who has children at the preschool stage can get an idea of what s/he can do at home by following me. [Teacher]

The teacher believes that her use of social media serves as a form of role-modelling to other followers and for the wider society around her. The use of social media also contributes to filling in the communication gap between generations.

> I encourage parents and other people in society to use social media actively, to contribute to filling the generation gaps. I think that it will have a positive effect on the children and adults who use social media in the long term and that the children are getting stronger. [Teacher]

The teacher also highlights the scope for data recording and downloading.

> The uploaded data can be downloaded by the parents. They can create their own activities; it's a fund of resources for anyone (including society). [Teacher]

It is not always easy to use an open public account with a high number of followers. The anonymity afforded by social media can also lead to unwanted reactions and reflections from followers.

> I need to produce good materials in good quality. It is necessary to be sensitive to the sharing of information on children since it is a medium that is watched by everyone. [Teacher]

In addition, when it comes to interaction with wider society, some of the parents indicated that they wanted to show others what they do with their children.

> I love sharing my child's successful moments on social media. Why? Because I believe that my posts open others' horizons in some educational settings. For example, I post media from his sports training (he plays basketball). That kind of post helps to develop the view of people around me about sport at an early age. I think that different examples are worth sharing. [Aynur]

Interactions through social media were organised and experienced in various ways, such as cooperation with the community, consultation and assistance, getting gifts/contributions for classroom equipment; invitation letters to visit a place, with permission being granted by individual owners, and obtaining donations for classroom equipment. For example, since Istanbul is situated in a first-degree seismic zone it is essential to conduct earthquake exercises. The teacher worked with a professional to present the information and guidance required in the context of earthquake preparation. The teacher obtained the help of a dentist on preventive health care and asked for help from a lecturer when the parents needed information on a specific topic.

> When there is something which could be crucial for children, education and parents, I ask for professional help. It's easy to connect with those people nowadays because of social media. [Teacher]

Social media provides an opportunity for people wishing to launch a preschool education-related business. Those people connected with her.

> People who have newly emerged with a preschool business want to be known. They connect with me. If they have a contribution, I accept their request. One English teacher wanted to introduce her product. She prepared a training set. I bought it. [Teacher]

Social media has made it easier to collaborate with the wider society for learning. This leads to help and contributions coming from the wider community, allowing the teacher to expand the classroom educational resources.

> I was following a children's bookshop owner on my social media. She has a nice bookshop with a variety of books. She was organising events for children sometimes. I thought our children could attend one of those events. I asked her, and she accepted. In real life, we are not friends. Later on, children have been there a few times. She donated some books to the classroom bookshelf. [Meryem]

It could also be used to ask for professional help for children's safety.

> I asked a well-known child psychologist to give a seminar on child abuse. I had worries to see many news stories on child abuse recently. Personally, I don't know how I can teach my child to be aware of this issue. I asked the teacher first and communicated with the psychologist on social media. Her place is close to our school, and she accepted. I read and analysed her social media account before asking for her help. That gave me confidence about her professionally. [Aynur]

In conclusion, in terms of getting participants to interact with the extended society for educational purposes, social media works as intended: participants collaborate and communicate with others. Using social media to focus on issues directly related to the preschool made collaboration and communication with wider society easier and more convenient for the stakeholders. To some extent, the teacher therefore sought to communicate with society as a role model and pioneer in the preschool education setting. She aimed to improve society's understanding of preschool education by enlightening people alongside improving her own preschool skills through their constructive interpretation and feedback. On the other hand, parents, extended family and the community can initiate engagement with issues of concern to them that then influence what the teacher and the school focus on.

4.1.6.2 Collaborating with Institutions, Industry and Services

Participants' interactions with institutions were related to the neighbourhood. Istanbul provides a range of opportunities with institutions, industry and services with respect to preschool education, and participants used social media to connect with many of those services. The children sometimes visited those places, and the services themselves would at times supply educational activities for the class.

> We have been a few times to the 'Child Science Centre', which is quite close to the school. It belongs to the municipality and has institutional social media accounts. They can get involved in collaboration if the educator asks. I get an appointment and organise trips. The children did some observations and careful experiments there. Children have a huge interest in the scientific processes around them. Media (photos and videos) were later shared for any followers [see Image 4.16]. [Teacher]

Child Science Centre media content shows children involved in science lessons.

Image 4.16: A chemical reaction experiment at the Child Science Centre

Parents experiences were similar. The class has been invited to many places that have activities for children as a result of parents' social media interactions with those institutions.

> I follow qualified firms, groups, books, and toy companies for my kids. I subscribed to their pages to see and review them. For example, I was following a child theatre group. It's been followed by the teacher as well. There are good child plays. Children went to the theatre at least five times this year. Later on, they got familiar with us and we have been invited. The teacher posted some of those visits. As she said, children like theatre. I can see that my child is happy there. [Muserref]

The teacher used social media to search for events for children in the vicinity of the school.

> I can find many events related to children and preschool on social media. We are close to a shopping mall. As you know they do some attractive things to get people in. I follow those accounts and go there with the children when it could be beneficial. We visited first and went only to Apple Store of Turkey, the child-friendly cinema, Space Centre for children and so on. The mall announces these events on their web pages. Later, the children prepared and painted their space rocket after visiting the space centre. Theory and practice take place at the same time. [Teacher]

It was not always possible to get promotions and invitations, however. One of the parents reported her experience of trying to get a discount from an ice-skating firm.

> There is an ice-skating company in the shopping centre. They have some special offers for groups of 25 or more. We are 19 and some of them are reluctant to go there. I asked the firm for an offer for a smaller number of children. I could not get it. [Damla]

Interaction offers can be from both sides. One child-blogger parent said a Turkish Red Crescent (the biggest humanitarian organisation in Turkey) worker asked for help to reach a group of children. Turkish Red Crescent give seminars on first aid.

> When they asked for my help, I led them to our children's classroom. They did seminars and did first aid simulation in preschool later on. I think the awareness of children towards to people who are in need increased. [Begum]

The teacher later used social media to provide related activities for children to do. Those posts emphasised the importance of first aid and blood donation to help people in a natural disaster. Later on, children watched a short cine-vision with a cartoon character and learnt the emergency call number, while painting their first aid bags in art class (see Image 4.17).

Image 4.17: Turkish Red Crescent collaboration media

Turkish Red Crescent personnel provided a beneficial seminar on first aid assistance and other humanitarian issues.

> Turkish Red Crescent personnel came to class after connecting with one of the parents through social media. They shared many educational resources with us, like short videos on the importance of first aid help and blood donation. The children talked about their experiences of those situations. I shared a short video of children's role play. The children became doctors and nurses working to save lives. We prepared a first aid help bag. This has improved the children's and parents' awareness of emergency cases. [Teacher]

Collaboration with municipalities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on social media has also contributed to education. National festivals were another reason for institutions to connect with the teacher.

> Many companies invited us during the October 29 and April 23 festival weeks. Then, I can say, the municipalities and NGOs held seminars on consultation and invited the children and parents. These included an

> invitation to visit the Emirgan tulip theme park, 23rd April exhibitions and theatre events. All were free. Municipalities and NGOs provided that opportunity. Both myself and the parents had been following the related institutions on social media to find opportunities related to learning. [Teacher]

Some preschool product brands connected on social media and wanted to introduce their products and conduct activities:

> When some preschool-related brands connect and wish to come, we welcome them after analysing their proposal. Faber-Castell employees came and did mask-painting activities in the class. The children liked it and it's the same with some children's book and toy companies. They donated a lot of equipment after introducing themselves. [Teacher]

To sum up, all these surrounding society and neighbourhoods, facilities and events help to connect children and preschool education and boost their familiarity with real-life experiences. Participants, therefore, worked in cooperation with the facilities available in the neighbourhood and the wider city. Participants had an effective level of cooperation with society, and these experiences expanded their visions for future cooperation. It is evident that children can benefit from different types of collaboration with the community when social media is used for educational purposes, and in this the findings point to a way to expand Epstein's conception of engagement to include the wider community more fully, as urged by Schutz (2006).

4.1.7 Concerns Regarding Connections with the Community

Despite the advantages of interacting with society, there were also some unwanted aspects to being connected with the wider community. Specifically, the teacher was advertising her products and parents' comparison and competition with other children could put their own children under pressure.

The Teacher's Self-Advertisement. The teacher argued that her teaching skills, competencies and development were facilitated through social media interactions with the wider society. This interaction indicated that what the teacher was doing was being seen

and heard, and that this had the effect of raising her motivation. The feedback received from the wider community led to an improvement in the quality of her own teaching approach. This was due to the fact that she has established a transparent communication system with the wider society. However, she was ignoring the ethical rules and using legal gaps at some points. In contrast, she considered that she was only contributing to an improvement in the quality of preschool education by featuring her own products on social media. Thus, the teacher used social media interactions to reach a large audience for her own products, which she believed helped society as much as herself.

> I think I need to use those social media accounts to get the benefit. I am the one who is spending time and effort on it. There are many preschool products made by me. I introduce them there too. [Teacher]

She did not consider that advertisement could be an issue. Thus, she aimed to increase her professional skills with the personal product introductions she posted on social media. Increased recognition from society made her more motivated to engage in social media interactions

> I get opinions from others about introducing my products here. I have thought of upgrading myself to a better level. As I introduce my products, the awareness towards me increases. It makes a positive impression on me around. My reputation is getting stronger on the job. [Teacher]

The ability to reach a greater number of people was beneficial for introducing preschool education, sometimes with her own products.

> My followers are the people who are interested in preschool education. I share these kinds of products. I introduce products related to preschool education. [Teacher]

She claimed that the questions and feedback that came from the followers increased the [professional] quality of her own work.

> The followers tell me if there is a problem with that. I can know where I made mistakes. [Teacher]

She pointed out that she keeps a close eye on the interests and needs of the children in these posts.

> I post those product advertisements with meeting the children's needs in mind. For example, I shared the support products/books in order to improve the quality of learning during holiday time. I share support products in order to improve areas in which the children are deficient. [Teacher]

She pointed out that the users share their comments and questions in an efficient and forward-looking way.

> We (she and her followers) are interacting with each other. I am open to the good or bad reactions given. I find the chance for self-evaluation and enhancement in the direction of the incoming criticism. [Teacher]

The teacher considered that her products help to fill the gaps in Turkey's preschool education. The followers benefit from their ability to educate themselves on the process of education. She described her products as being different, interactive and containing unique/original content that meets the needs and expectations of the followers.

> I think that the products and advertisements I have used are beneficial for both children and followers. I have been in education for a long time and I am doing that professionally. I like being productive, creative and sharing in my field. I see it as a responsibility. [Teacher]

The teacher was getting benefits from all those her activities on social media. She did not considered advertisement as an issue. However, some parents indicated that there are not so many choices for them to not use social media in this way.

> Educational usage of social media is voluntary in public schools. Private schools use it more actively but generally, they make advertisement not really for educational purposes. So, if a teacher uses social media actively for educational aims in a public school, s/he would also be advertising her/himself; like our teacher does. Thus, I can't blame her. There is no clear official framework. She spends time and labour on this website, she can advertise herself. If we don't like it, we can ignore those posts. [Zehra]

Damla said:

> There are some paid social media applications which strictly protect privacy. Some private preschools use those. If I had enough money, I would have been able to send my child to one of those schools. [Damla]

Some parents had consideration on the teacher's propensity to use their class, their children (and their money) for her own self-advertisement. However, the teacher only indicated the positive side of her self-advertisement.

Parents' Comparison, Competition, Social Pressure. Moreover, parents' concerns about social media interactions are relevant to comparison, competition, social pressure in wider community practice. (The teacher did not reflect on this tendency for comparison and competition among parents.) When those concerns become dominant then they are likely to withdraw from social media use and this would obviously affect the parent-teacher interactions. Indeed, it would undermine the interaction the teacher is trying to develop through social media. Understanding parental concerns about social media use is therefore important for a full appreciation of the influences on levels of involvement and collaboration. This section also provided a basis from which to understand how any negative impacts from the wider community affect the social media interactions. One of the parents drew an analogy on this issue, describing it as a 'horse race of children'.

> It seems to me that people use social media with their children to hide something from real life. Otherwise, for example, a person – generally mothers – why share ten photos of a child in one day. Is that a horse race? Why do children compete with each other at every stage? Why are we trying to make our children so visible? Even when they are so sad, they should wear their best clothes to take a photo. The main thing that they want to share with the public is, actually, the desirability of their life. There are many people like that. [Esma]

She claimed that other people shared media insincerely and with the aim of advertising their parenting skills in a hidden way. They considered themselves to be competent in social media use, yet they also interacted inappropriately. They blamed the public generally for living in an exaggerated way on social media, thus leading them to use their children's experiences inappropriately on social media.

> I think that, generally, people who are around me and who are active users of social media with their child are so wannabe and selfish, including me. But, for sure they disguise their main aims there. It is the same for the pages that focus on education. I do not find their contents to

> be sincere mainly. I have serious doubts about what they are really trying to do there. So, wannabe and fake stuff is there. [Ibrahim]

A mother shared her similar experiences. For her, it is an almost unstoppable fashion trend in modern society. People compare and compete through their children on social media, and this raises many concerns for child development. The mother related how this unfavourable atmosphere on social media affected her and her daughter.

> Facebook and Instagram are a magical world and everyone who is there seems to be very nice, happy, free. When I am not happy enough in my own life, the people who are there irritate me so much. I compare my own and my child's lives, abilities. It can lead to her getting aggrieved as well. [Asya]

In contrast, another parent told of how her child benefits from these kinds of comparisons. She supports her child better after those comparisons and understands what her child needs.

> I get lessons from educational posts and find them so beneficial for all. I have the chance to compare my child's progress with others. I can compare the variety of the training practices that I have done for my child with others. It's an advantage. [Cihan]

Aside from this type of comparison and competition, other social pressures were also evident. The parents' workplace colleagues, managers and other friends could have an indirect influence on a child's development. For example, workplace rules and codes of conduct had affected some of the parents' use of social media, with some examples of people on the periphery negatively affecting the parents' use of educational social media.

> I have to pay attention to my all activities there. It is an obligation, not optional. I got a warning from my boss twice for giving a like to someone's posts. I am a civil servant at a low level. All managers observe and record the employees' activities who work under their department. I am aware that all social media accounts are secretly being followed. For sure, these followers sometimes do not do this with good intentions. You could ask 'why are you a friend, then?' At the beginning, you don't know who has those intentions for you. Furthermore, if you do not accept their friend request, they will react against you. So, it is the obligation to accept it, if the person is your manager. It makes my educational activity there limited. I feel so restricted. I cannot comment and post with my child easily. I can only view some educational web pages without making any

> responses. Even though it is my personal/private account, it is not really. [Aynur]

The parents' social environment may also lead to undesirable interaction.

> It is an unstoppable pressure. Some people just want to ask questions. Anyone who is around me can observe and learn about my child through social media; I mean our classroom accounts. I get many unnecessary questions as well. It makes me angry; I don't need to discuss my child's progress with them. I don't want to compare and compete with children, but I can't stop them as well. Why do they care about my child's education? No idea. [Esma]

Parents considered that social media interactions with others carries the potential to have a negative impact on children's psychology. They accept that they sometimes post social media content about their children to impress others. They want to be in the public eye for several reasons.

The next section presents how the participants' social media interactions impact on the children at preschool.

4.2 Impact on the Children

At times, the participants reflected on the influence that their own social media interactions had on their children. With respect to the child, the following three sub-themes were identified from the data collected: increased communication, social-emotional effects and the education process. The next section looks at increased communication.

4.2.1 Increased Communication

One of the effects of social media interaction is placed under the heading of communication with children. The teacher noted that the use of social media between preschool and home has an effect on student-teacher communication. She also suggested,

however, that social media can still be used more effectively for communication purposes. The teacher gave an example about how her communication with students had increased.

> We know more about our daily and personal lives since they see me and what I do through their parents' accounts. I see their media on their timeline story too. It makes us familiar with each other. It leads to communication here in class. [Teacher]

Similarly, the parents claimed that the existence of social media had a positive effect on their children's communication at home (with family members), at preschool (with teachers and peer) and with the other friends. The parents stated that their conversations with their children were influenced by what the teacher had posted on social media during that week. In addition, communication at home could be shaped by the parents' posts. For example, one parent said:

> When I track the class social media, I can understand what my son wants to tell me at home better. For example, they did a lot of preparation and activities before Mother's Day. I witnessed that preschool life was reflected in my child's life at home. His interest was becoming more Mother's Day centred at that time and we discussed some other special days. We can find many posts related to specific days on our social media. Those give us a chance to speak about it in detail. [Muserref]

As highlighted by Muserref, the online observation revealed the sharing of a number of images related to Mother's Day celebrations (see Image 4.18). The teacher included questions with the first images in a bid to elicit guesses as to what they were about. Later, when Mother's Day was close, she shared some clear activities. The children painted a reusable bag for their mothers.

Image 4.18: Mother's Day preparation on social media

Indeed, the teacher shared related posts on other important national days, such as 29 October, Canakkale Victory Day and 23 April (see Image 4.19). Online observations revealed that these kinds of posts about national values got more reactions from parents (i.e. likes, comments, shares). Besides that, celebrating these days is compulsory in the centralised curriculum.

Image 4.19: Celebration of National Days with children's handcraft activities (October 29, Canakkale Victory and April 23 respectively)

The ways in which the children learnt about national customs and values at their preschool is visible on social media and there are several examples of the celebration of those days. One parent described how such posts on national festival days stimulated communication throughout the family.

> As you know, fathers are a little bit excluded from education due to work-related issues. My husband doesn't have time to go to these celebration days, but he saw all the activities on social media. So, several times they (father and daughter) had conversations about those celebrations. She told him about her dance customs, dance, activities. We are all happy with that. [Meryem]

The children also discussed social media content with their teacher, and they had the opportunity to revisit the activities posted on social media at any time under the guidance of their parents. Activities were shared through social media and this encouraged the

children to speak with their parents about their education. The children seemed to express their wishes and thoughts via this mutual sharing of ideas. The teacher was also able to take into consideration suggestions from the students, and the equitable atmosphere that resulted from this mutual communication helped the children to become involved in their own education.

> Social media sharing does not last a few seconds, it takes time. The posted content is seen both at home and at preschool by children. Parents (People) talk to the child about the content. Then, children share their concerns about the shortcomings or misinterpretations of the posted media and their thoughts as well. This leads to the formation of a mutable culture in the class. It increases communication with the involvement of children. [Teacher]

In this regard, the teacher's communication with students was increased, and the teacher stated that students' recognition among themselves increased as well. Moreover, the data indicate that social media interaction afforded a new way of making connections between children's experiences at home and school, which is especially important at preschool level. Another experience related to social media interaction was increased communication between siblings, as the quote below shows.

> She loves to tell the stories behind the posts to her sister, who is two years younger. She explains what they did, how they did it or where they went, what happened there. And her sister loves to listen to those stories. [Zehra]

Thus, while family members were able to obtain information on their child's learning and educational progress, the content of the social media posts also created a positive environment that facilitated interaction at home between the children and family members. Moreover, social media posts prompted conversations with teachers and helped both parents' and children's questions about their learning become more specific.

> They did a handcraft activity in class. A photograph was taken but it was a little bit far away. I could not get a sense of what it was. Although I asked him, he could not give a clear explanation. Then he said, 'let me ask my teacher'. And he did, he learned details and told me about that. [Ayla]

In brief, as can be seen through the participants' experiences, it was not only the teacher and parents, but also the children, who communicate with and influence each other through the teacher and their parents' social media interactions with each other. social media, therefore, helped to connect the children with others. Even though the children themselves do not have social media accounts, they had communication experiences under the supervision of their surrounded adults. They were able to experience through their social media interactions the feeling they were important. These connections included the people around them such as their teachers, siblings and parents; therefore, social media bridges home and preschool through increased communication.

4.2.2 Social-Emotional Effects

The teacher thought that the process of sharing the things the children have done on social media, combined with the positive reactions of their families to these, motivated the children in respect to school, the teacher and their education, and that this motivation is an important means for consolidating their education. The teacher explained that:

> I see that the use of social media reflects positively on the children. The documentation of the activities for the child is published, and then it is encouraged to talk about it in the house. The children feel a sense of being considered important. [Teacher]

Some parents agreed that the use of social media for educational purposes, both inside and outside school, helped to provide a positive classroom atmosphere and improved the children's interest in their schoolwork. Thus, it positively affected the children's motivation and made them feel privileged with regard to their education somehow. A parent stated that both the parents' use of social media and its active use by the teacher were effective in increasing positive attitudes towards school.

> It makes him happy that he has witnessed what he has done. In the meantime, you see your child's love for school. He does what he wants to do for himself. And he's proud to have succeeded in something there. [Ayla]

Furthermore, some of the parents also reported that such increases in excitement and motivation were directly reflected in success in their child's lessons. They thought that social media reinforced the children's positive attitudes towards school, and was useful in bridging the gap between preschool and home, especially in increasing the connection between children's learning at home and their learning at school. The children's engagement with the posted media helped them to feel more comfortable in the classroom environment. The children were able to connect more with the society surrounding them.

> I compare my children with other students from different classes. There is a high motivation in my child. There is a difference, and this is a positive situation. He's more interested in lessons. He is more willing. He likes it. [Muserref]

The teacher had similar ideas and experiences. She was telling them that pictures and videos she was taking of their work are for social media posts sometimes. She emphasised how the use of social media contributed to the creation of a positive organisational/cooperative climate and culture in the classroom. It also served to foster belonging and motivation.

> Social media usage by us (adults) is raising the sense of belonging in children and parents. They say, 'look, this is our class. We did these things... etc.' There is a positive atmosphere for activities in class, because of the strong connection between the families and me. The children are comfortable. They offer their own ideas in many cases. [Teacher]

Thus, the effective communication established with parents through social media affects the students' positive attitude and confidence towards school.

> More or less, social media interaction has increased transparency. Parents see my work in a transparent way. So, parents develop trust and confidence in my work. And that affects the children's attitudes towards preschool too. [Teacher]

Parents often stated that their children felt 'privileged' as a result of their (the children's) involvement in education and seeing and showing themselves on social media. A parent stated that there was a great deal of interest and curiosity in this class and that the children derived satisfaction. The use of social media in the classroom also appeared to be

important in terms of increasing the children's curiosity and skill in technology, in addition to their development. This in turn developed the students' self-confidence.

> Social media has improved their self-confidence. My daughter has increased self- confidence. Because of the social media usage, she feels a little different. She feels privileged and flattered. [Esma]

Some parents, however, thought that social media interactions may also have negative consequences if misused. The views of the parents were therefore also evaluated in the context of the social-emotional problems that can be created through social media interactions. According to the parents, it has been evaluated that technologies provide an isolated environment later in life and have the potential to push students into antisocial behaviour and miscommunication. In the longer term, the emotional effects of children's use of social media, and feeling 'flattered' by attention mediated through social media, could be the start of an unhealthy process leading to addiction to social media and associated depression.

> My children almost built up a tablet addiction. [Esma]

Another parent highlighted the issue of recording.

> Is it OK that children are recorded, documented almost every day? Personally, I did not find the answer. I think if they were of consenting age, they would not like it. But for now, they are not fully aware and seem happy. [Damla]

The use of social media in the process of education has been criticised in relation to the potential for it to be overused and become a barrier to socialisation.

> The excessive use of social media negatively affects social relations. Every good thing has its downside. There are also the disadvantages. Human relationships have changed a lot. The alienation caused by the technology. Children should be protected from overuse. [Zehra]

The parents considered that the way to protect children from harmful content was by monitoring social media.

> Social media may create many problems from now and in the future. Like ads, cyberbullying, sexting ... Adults (teacher and parents) should monitor it carefully. [Esma]

Thus, social media interactions between the teachers and parents might be the wrong role models for the children. One parent suggested that the use of social media impacts negatively on education as it can be time-consuming. As such, some of the parents found that social media could be negative too. Another parent expressed this negative view in detail as follows.

> Time should be used efficiently. Social media could be a waste of time if the resources are not prepared beforehand. Social media is a medium that distracts people. Like it does with adults. [Rukiye]

There was also concern that any current use of social media might lead to problems in the future. The parents' specific concerns were around misuse, harmful content and intensive use.

> Now social media is anywhere: at home, a part of life in preschool. And there is content that is extremely maleficent. Children should be protected as much as possible from objectionable content provided by social media. [Aynur]

While the teacher only shared the positive attitude on using social media interactions on children social-emotional well-being, the parents considered that social media interactions can be effective with children if used properly at both home and preschool. Even though social media interactions increased the children's motivation and self-confidence towards education, the parents still had concerns relating to the social-emotional effects on their children. There was a concern that the children were too young to be able to protect themselves from harmful content and that they would be exposed to such content. It was also thought that indiscriminate use could be harmful and may lead to addiction at a later age.

The next section looks at the education process.

4.2.3 Educational Process

Parents indicated little data related to the impact of social media on the educational process experienced by their children. Thus, this section is mostly based on the data

obtained from the teacher and from classroom observations. It can be said that the use of social media has effects on the education process and students directly. These can be seen through the impact of increased social media skills on the professional development of the teacher and through the visual documenting of education. In addition, the teacher reported that this led to increased responsibility, self-expression, research skills, motivation. Thus, the teacher expressed positive opinions with regard to the change in students' opinions. Furthermore, classroom observations showed that additional audio-visual materials were sourced from social media content. Having previously worked for three years as a preschool teacher in a middle-class public school, I can say that the infrastructure and resources of public preschool classes are deficient in terms of traditional media. The teacher made the following comments on the positive change in the students:

> The children are interested in the lesson. Their attention is drawn quickly. It can be because of music, images and videos. These make lessons more interesting. And, my wide social media networking makes it very easy to access all of these with a low amount of money and labour. [Teacher]

Another change observed in the students by the teacher relates to their sense of responsibility and their success: "Children have an increased sense of responsibility. They give additional information about the activities to their family." As regards the change in the success of the students, the teacher said: "The success is high since the students' motivation is high." The data on the teacher's experiences and perspectives on how the use of social media contributes to the education process will be presented below through the sub-themes of enriched content with materials/resources, professional development and visually documenting learning.

Enriched Content with Materials/Resources. The teacher expressed how her interactions with others helped her to use child-based social media at preschool to enrich the quality of lessons content. She gave different examples of materials she had obtained through her wide communication and networking, including videos, animations, songs, exercises, audio storybooks, music, mathematical studies and sample activities, as well as access to more resources and supplementary interactive materials. Thus, she was able to access materials through her social media interactions. She provided examples of the

supplementary materials she accessed from other preschool social media groups that were found to enrich the content of lessons:

> The additional resources/materials are increased, such as we listen to classical music in class and at leisure time for social-emotional development. We listened to Chopin's Raindrop, which I found in a preschool social media group, and children drew raindrops. When I asked the children what they were feeling, they related their emotions. Their feelings changed with that classical music. [Teacher]

Visual content which had been sourced as a result of her networking on social media was used to contribute to the education process during the lesson. During classroom observations, it was seen that previously prepared examples of this type of content were widely used. She connected with foreign preschool educational groups to improve the quality of materials and resources for education. The social media interaction with others, therefore, helped in the development of a variety of content used in lessons, and demonstrates in a practical way how interactions can occur with outer people.

The interactive nature of social media has also made a difference in comparison to traditional media. It was observed that Web 2.0 technologies enabled the teacher to raise queries on any important points she did not fully understand in relation to the material obtained. She then received answers to her queries on social media. This demonstrates how the knowledge, decisions and attitudes of the teacher's social media networks influenced her own knowledge, decisions and attitudes.

> For example, on April 23rd, we should learn other foreign cultures together with our own culture. I searched keywords with a hashtag (#) in those languages, such as #kindergarten. The children saw and had the chance to witness what children do in those countries. They drew those countries' children in peace and friendship (see Image 4.20): 'Peace at home, peace in the world' (in reference to a well-known Ataturk quotation). Then, I asked my followers what type of music I should use with our national festival dance costumes. Some of them gave me suggestions. Later on, I mixed those suggestions. [Teacher]

Image 4.20: The world's children living in peace and friendship

In the classroom observation, the teacher used a projector linked to the social media to show videos to the students on a big screen, and she asked questions about the topic. While this was happening, the students were observed to be listening carefully to the lesson and enjoying it. Having access to such additional resources and materials supported learning by enriching the content. The teacher stated that the innovations that come with social media have increased the number of daily activities. The teacher's interactions with social media has enabled her to 'open the door' in the classroom to other environments, and this has enriched the processing of lessons to some extent.

Professional Development. Besides enriched content through collaboration with the wider community, the teacher stated that she is not only a consumer of social media, but that she also creates and shares content with others. In this sense, she emphasised the nature of her individual characteristics and interests: "To be a producer is the most valuable experience for me." She pointed out that she was also educating herself through the use of social media for teaching purposes, and that problem-solving skills were developed in educational activities: "I should use many other tools and applications." She showed all applications which are used to manage social media interaction to me. Those applications varied by their functions. Thus, she believes that this has had an impact on the quality of her teaching. Unlike parents, the teacher stated that parents who showed a negative attitude to technology seemed to be motivated to use the technologies after having been shown what they could do with social media interaction. She thought her

professionalism thus helped to involve others. It seems she did not give attention to parents' opinions and options. A sample of the teacher's view about the acceptance of social media is given below.

> Some of the parents also had a concern at the beginning. They had thought in the past 'is social media really necessary?' Later, they fitted in harmoniously when they saw what had been done; how children had been affected positively. [Teacher]

The teacher said the benefits of using social media for herself centred on a decreased workload and improved technological competence/proficiency. She explained that based on her experience, her workload had decreased. The teacher saved time and effort in meeting the needs of the students and parents. With these technologies, the teacher can easily gain access to many sources about a subject, thereby saving time for all.

> It is very easy and fast to reach the source by social media. My workload is getting smaller. It does not bring extra burden. [Teacher]

On the other hand, one parent agreed that children have the opportunity to confirm and recall their learning and to revisit previously documented activities.

> When the children are needed, the teacher shows and explains what they have done, how they have done it and why they have done it previously. [Ibrahim]

Together with the use of social media, the teacher stated that she had become more competent with technology. This situation had also led to a differentiation in her status and teaching approaches. The teacher stated the following in this regard:

> My technological ability has increased. I have learned a lot of things. I feel that I am special and different with teaching. I feel that I have a responsibility to use educational technology innovations or to fit those technologies in education. I try to use all possible useful sources for teaching. Social media helps me to do this. [Teacher]

The teacher and parents considered that their social media skills and professionalism have been influential in the process of children's education. The teacher was the who mostly emphasised this section. She felt that her seven years' experience of using social media in the education process has enhanced her teaching and believed that it has also enabled her

to develop a positive attitude towards technology. However, some of the parents had some concerns towards social media usage process. Through the opinions expressed by the teacher, and during the classroom observations, it could be seen that the teacher did not take consider parents views and has adopted a top-down driving position in some cases with regard to the use of social media for preschool education.

Visually Documenting Learning. The teacher indicated that any activities which she shares via her class social media have to relate to the curriculum guidelines for preschools, and social media posts help to make this education process visible to parents. Customs, national festivals and the centralised curriculum often shape the learning. The teacher has to ensure that a place is given to those events. However, she mixes those obligations with a range of child developmental areas. For example, the National Festival can be celebrated and incorporate motor development, while World Book Day can be used for language/literacy development (see Image 4.21).

> As usual, the children, parents and me myself are so excited about the coming National Festival (23 April). We have been rehearsing our dances almost every day since the end of March. But the activity itself can support children with targeted outcomes; children express themselves through and develop an appreciation of creative movement and dance which supports their motor development. They do rhythm work using their body, objects and percussion instruments. All of the related content is documented. Education and children's outcomes are visible on social media. [Teacher]

Image 4.21: Celebration of April 23rd. by children on social media

Indeed, the social media content shared by the teacher helped the parents to communicate more effectively with their children at home, while also increasing the parents' trust in the education their children were receiving. The parents often mentioned Turkish national cultural values and considered that social media interaction could help them to talk about those values.

> It's nice to see there are some activities on universal values and national culture as well. New Year and Mother's Day are celebrated worldwide, but the day of 29 October Republic Day belongs to us. The children did many activities on national festivals. As you can see, there are many examples in the social media. We were able to see events and activities from social media. Then, we had a chance to talk about them at home. It was much easier to talk with my child about these important days. These national days are the values that make us united. We must live our culture. [Asya]

The preparation of the children for the immediate future was observable for parents through images, and this also helped to make the children visible and acknowledge their value and talents. It encourages communication within the preschool community.

> … we went and explored a bookshop. We read and drew there. I think it was quite useful for the children's language/literacy outcomes. Perhaps I will encourage the children a little bit more in that because I love books.

> The coming week was World Book Day. A children's bookshop owner invited us. One of the students chose this book to read after an investigation in the bookshop. They are so keen on fiction books. It was about a dragon that lost a tooth when it fell down in the park. The title of the book (The Dragon whose Tooth Fell Out) gives an idea to understand what it is about. The book contains an analogy for children who are close to losing their own first teeth. I gave information to the children about their milk teeth while reading the book. This is a preparation for the future. I can add that the next year these children will start primary school. So, they will be more exposed to books, reading, writing. This visit can prepare them for their immediate future. The social media post has made this process clear and transparent (see Image 4.22). [Teacher]

Image 4.22: Visiting the children's bookshop

Finally, the teacher emphasised that one purpose of using social media in preschool is to provide a source of documentation that teachers, parents and students can revisit anywhere and at any time. Children learn by looking again at their activities with their parents.

> Anyone – including children – can revisit the content learned on social media. It is easy to recall and remember subjects later on. [Teacher]

Similarly, Ibrahim said:

> In recalling the events and activities before, social media is contributing to the children. [Ibrahim]

Making preschool activities visible is seen as part of the educational process with social media, and this is one of the areas where there has been a change arising from the

implementation of social media. Activities remain to be seen. Social media makes education more accessible for children and parents. The teacher view was that making learning visible rendered it deeper and more permanent.

Collected data show how the posts that the teacher shared were created, and their relationship to the types of resources obtained through her interactions on social media. The teacher was able to make her lessons more visual and understandable by including her social media interactions, was also able to facilitate the educational process, and increase its impact, by appealing to children's multiple senses. The teacher developed her social networks through social media, connecting with other individuals or groups related to preschool education. The interactive nature of social media helped in this regard since it makes it easier to access suggestions, help, feedback and comments. Likewise, the teacher and children (with other users/parties) benefit from the content generated through social media interactions, including text, posts, comments, photos and videos. The data also demonstrated that rich student outcomes are aligned with rich interactions and that social media networking of the teacher and resources could be aimed at rich and functional child-centred learning with diverse and developing characteristics. Use of the tools provided by social media has been found to contribute to the professional development of this teacher.

4.2.4 Summary

Overall, the participants' experiences show that the quality of child communication improved, together with children's involvement. The children's social and emotional wellbeing were affected both positively and negatively, however. Moreover, the teacher believed that social media leads to the active use of other technological equipment (e.g. mobile applications, camera) throughout the education process. The use of interactive media with visual content makes learning more interesting and enables questions to be answered more easily. The classroom activities conducted by the teacher through social media made the lessons more solidly embodied and understandable. Usage of audio-

visual materials which are found by hashtags (#) research appeals to multiple senses in the classroom, thereby facilitating education. Improved teacher professional skills and the ability to visibly document activities were other advantages of the use of social media on the educational process. Thus, the teacher thought that social media helped to motivate children and improve their involvement with their education.

Another theme that emerged from the collected data was how the legal framework affected participants' social media use in a preschool context. This is explored in the next section.

4.3 Influence of Legal Framework

Participants often indicated that the legal framework governing social media was an important factor affecting their use of this technology. Their concerns were different, however. The teacher expressed that she was troubled by the lack of a clear framework for the use of social media with children. She shared her fears concerning the legalities in this area, especially the lack of a clear legal framework, emphasising the negative effects of the ambiguity in the legal context.

> At the beginning of the school year, I got permission letters from all of the parents allowing me to post about the children in an educational context. Some of them had hesitations. I explained my purposes clearly. And I showed them what I had already done. They were persuaded. I understand them somehow. But, if they think that social media is not beneficial at all, they can say that, and I will withdraw their children's content. [Teacher]

The parents, meanwhile, raised privacy and security concerns around child protection. They criticised social media content and the framework of social media according to their experiences. This was highlighted by Zehra, who is currently a public primary school teacher.

> The use of social media for educational purposes is based on a legal framework by MoNE. However, it's not currently clear what the

> regulations, codes, rules are. I know that because I am a teacher as well. [Zehra]

The teacher shared related documents with me on the use of social media. We discussed the current framework, which was deemed to be vague and uncertain. It says, legal proceedings will be initiated, within the framework of the relevant legislation, against those found to have uploaded and shared all types of audio, image and videos that would have a negative impact on the psychological and social aspects of the persons (MoNE, 2014). She was unsure of what would constitute a negative impact on the psychological and social aspects of the person. Additionally, she was not aware of any potential sanctions that she might face. She intends to continue using social media over the coming years as long as there are no legal problems in doing so. It was the legal issues that gave rise to the most scepticism regarding the teacher's use of social media. She did not know exactly how to deal with this matter.

> Really, I don't know what the best is for all. Will I have some sanctions imposed by MoNE and the law? Should I meet a disgruntled parent? It is an enigma. [Teacher]

Another parent was not comfortable with regard to the legal framework surrounding social media use involving children, yet at the beginning of the academic year she had signed and given permission for content with her child to be shared. She explained that there is still something beneficial for everyone.

> Even though there are many negative sides to seeing my child on a publicly accessible social media page, I did not refuse to sign the permission form at the beginning of the academic year. The teacher does this for the benefit of everyone, including children. Because I know that there is not any official framework in public schools, I should appreciate it when the teacher does. There is no other option. [Funda]

It can be said that the start of the year was the moment when some parents felt/experienced a top-down power relationship, leading to them using social media unwillingly to get information only by online platforms and somehow please the teacher. Yigit agreed with Funda on the legal framework around social media usage by schools.

> If the education policies make it compulsory or at least offer a general framework, then it may be more prevalent. Then, it can affect my social media usage actively. I mean, I feel like I have to appreciate what the teacher does now. Because mostly other teachers do not. Whenever this becomes compulsory for public education policy, then I can be more comfortable there. It's like a favour for us right now, although the teacher never said that. [Yigit]

Damla highlighted a further aspect of the legal factors concerning child protection.

> The sharing of social media content with children in it must be addressed. I want to be more active, but I have serious fears about security and privacy. It would have been different if I was in a country where children's rights were taken seriously. For example, I do not think the laws are strict enough to prevent misuse here. [Damla]

The parents do not consider that the law protecting children's rights on social media to be sufficiently robust currently. This can also lead to abuse of children's rights and ethical issues. A legal framework is needed to protect children from any misconduct.

In conclusion, the teacher's reflections on the legal framework focused on protecting herself from any future problems. The legal framework and ambiguous laws surrounding the use of social media by the teacher represent a potential risk. Parents, meanwhile, were concerned about the risks for their children and the quality of the protections available. Nonetheless, they had all signed the permission letter at the beginning of the academic year allowing content with their children in it to be shared on social media, for the aforementioned reasons.

4.4 Summary

This part of the analysis combined interviews and observations with the data obtained from the participants. Participants' interactions through preschool social media were investigated and evaluated.

For the parental involvement, the teacher facilitated the frequent involvement of parents on social media. All three groups of parents explained that they found the social media

interactions beneficial in many respects. They indicated that there were almost no barriers to them being involved in social media compared with other types of involvement. They suggested that 'traditional communication' is one-way, whereas social networking is multifaceted and provides multilevel information about children and education. Besides this, what the parents said suggested that an important effect of social media interaction was a strengthening of family involvement and that this had long-term benefits for children. They were able to learn more about their children's abilities, skills and knowledge while spending time watching their preschool activities with their children and sharing quality time together to strengthen the parent-child connection. Social media interactions have the capability to place educators and families in the same place regardless of physical closeness or time limitations. Social media interactions further offer the transparent collaboration that many preschool-home situations lack. Therefore, preschool has become accessible to the whole learning society in a digital way with the entrance of social media interactions into daily life. Social media interaction with the family assisted with time efficiency and direct communication, which contributed to breaking down some of the barriers to involvement. Social media interactions encouraged a clear communication system in which the parents felt their voices were being heard and answered. Thus, social media helped both the teacher and parents in relation to Epstein's types of involvement, except decision making, where parents still felt excluded. On the other hand, the teacher led/controlled parents from the outset as she began to involve them in social media interaction. This attitude raised some questions.

This was important. I was investigating a technology that allows for much more parental initiation of action than the traditional Epstein model. It was evident, though that the teacher was focused mainly on her own side and benefits. She ignored parents' wishes on some points, and she was using social media interaction essentially as she felt best. The data showed that parents were not fully comfortable in using social media, and there is thus a sense that they were coerced into it by the teacher to some extent. Thus, while the findings show some suggestions at how the use of social media in a preschool context can address critiques of Epstein's model as being too dependent on the teacher and school

initiation of action, and insufficiently cognisant of the role of community, the findings also show that in this particular case study there remained a sense in which the teacher dominated the interaction. In short, while parents were conscious of the greater opportunity through social media to raise matters with the school and the teacher, in terms of helping each other, helping the teacher understand their interests, concerns, providing resources, etc., it did not work that way consistently. This issue discussed in the next chapter in section 5.1.1.1.

Concerning the wider society, the level of participants' collaboration with the local community was linked to the rich and educational community surrounding this case study school. Participants were aware of the opportunities in the surrounding environment and acknowledged that social media could be used more proactively to support the education of the children in preschool. Barriers to wider community involvement can be reduced through the use of social media. This enabled a process in which the teacher was able to influence approaches to preschool education among her wide cohort of followers at the same time as gathering useful feedback and accessing professional services that helped her to improve her own practice. In addition to this, she claimed that the advertisement of her products has a positive effect on the parents, children, herself and society. The parents accepted that there was some negative influence on them to use social media and that the effects were harmful for children. Although collaboration and communication with the extended community was improved, but comparison and competition had less constructive impacts on both the parents and children.

Furthermore, in terms of the impact on the child, the parents' reflections focused mainly on the role of social media interactions in bridging preschool and home through the increased communication that was facilitated. These social media interactions led to the building of familiar, comfortable and strong relationships between the children, their family members and the teacher. The parents considered that interaction with the teacher through social media helped in the construction of relationships and helped their children adapt to preschool. Knowledge of the social media interactions motivated the children

since it made them feel privileged. They displayed increased curiosity, interest and self-confidence towards preschool. Some negative aspects of social media interactions were also identified, however, in the form of the potential for overuse, antisocial behaviour and miscommunication. The education process was affected by the teacher's use of social media. Social media interactions permitted an advanced level of content sharing through the use of multimodal media types, and the improved topic content helped to embed the education process. Social media interactions made education more visible both for parents and children. Making learning visible is seen as part of the social media interactions and the education process. Children benefitted from the visual documenting of their learning by revisiting and recalling materials as well as through the opportunities this provided for them to access further support (e.g. from their parents at home). The teacher acknowledged that social media interactions provided another medium for learning to take place and made education more accessible for this reason. Her professional skills were improved, and this ensured there was more quality teaching. Furthermore, the children benefitted in terms of their social-emotional effects in the education environment through the role of social media interactions in connecting the preschool and home settings. Thus, social media interactions created a positive classroom organisational/cooperative climate and culture. There were also clues that social media interactions increased communication between the teacher and the children.

Besides this, the use of social media at the preschool education level was affected by the legal system. Although the teacher had obtained permission letters from the parents, she highlighted her fears and concerns with regard to potential future issues. The legal framework and uncertain laws rendered the use of social media by teachers difficult. On the other hand, the parents accepted and signed the permission letter, they underscored their security and privacy concerns.

The next chapter will discuss these findings.

Chapter 5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study were presented in the preceding chapter with the themes as they emerged from the participants' views and experiences about social media use at preschool, with no associated interpretation provided or effort to integrate them with the literature.

In this chapter, I will interpret and make sense of the data presented in the preceding chapter through a discussion that seeks to integrate the findings of this research with the current knowledge summarised in the literature review in Chapter 2. Interpreting and contextualising research data involves a full understanding of the opinions of the participants. In addition to the existing literature, it is necessary to consider the characteristics and content of the area in which they are collected (Smeyers et al., 2015). Understanding the data and discovering what the voices of preschool teachers and parents may tell us about their opinions and practices of using social media in preschool required an attempt to understand, contextualise and give meaning to the collected data. I therefore tried to recognise and understand the conditions and elements that shaped and affected the participants. To enrich this analysis, I reflected on my previous role and experiences as a preschool teacher in a school, similar to the case study school, where I worked for three years. Moreover, as Gibbs (2007) points out, it should be recognised that qualitative data has more than one reality or interpretation, and therefore a flexible structure is needed to explore how people interpret their experiences, build their worlds and the meanings they attach to those experiences.

In this section, the discussion focuses on the important arguments that appeared from the findings. It became clear that there were three central sections under which I should categorise my discussion chapter. The first section focuses on parental involvement

through social media. Here I will discuss the teacher's and parents' experiences of their social media interactions. The second part looks at issues related to the use of social media at preschool for parental involvement. Thus, the legal framework governing social media use at preschool and the teacher's media use in this preschool are examined. The third section discusses the impact of those social media interactions on children.

5.1 Social Media as a Tool to Support Parental Involvement

> *Without partnerships, educators segment students into the school child and the home child, ignoring the whole child. This parcelling reduces or eliminates guidance, support, and encouragement for children's learning from parents, relatives, neighbors.* —Epstein (2001; p. 5)

The interaction between preschools and families is critical to building trusting interactions that encourage parents' involvement. However, there is only a short history of the use of social media for such interaction. The following section provides an exploration of the participants' views and experiences related to parental involvement through social media. The teacher's and parents' data will be discussed together.

Although family involvement in children's preschool education is critical, it can be difficult for schools to find ways to reach out to parents, and there are many barriers to the inclusion of families (Erdoğan & Demirkasımoğlu, 2010). One of these factors is that it is difficult to arrange face-to-face interaction between parents and teachers. This study illustrates that the use of social media for home–school communication has the potential to address such time and space limitations. A further advantage of social media is that families themselves can interact to pool their skills and content knowledge to help children. Also, social media interactions between the teacher and parents can become important in relation to supporting student outcomes. Overall, therefore, social media interactions can provide families with more ways to become involved in their children's schooling.

If families are not communicating about the development and academic success of the school and its children, and if the children are not interested in their homework at home, there is a problem. This increases the value of parental involvement (Huang, 2017). Thus, researchers have proposed ways for educators to take a more active role in the development of interactions between schools and families (Alazemi, 2017), and social media may help in developing a plan for teachers and parents to organise online involvement. Two-way communication between the preschool and home may have a positive impact on the child's development and academic success. The teachers and parents interact with respect to the interests of the child and in the context of the school. In this research context, therefore, teachers and parents form interrelationships with each other through social media.

Moreover, the findings show that the use of social media at this preschool proved to be beneficial by creating a new approach to the relations between preschool stakeholders, especially by facilitating connections between families and the community. Parents were actively involved in the education of their children without having to visit the preschool itself, thus encouraging the broad supportive environment that is critical during preschool. This study also shows that social media interactions could significantly improve parental involvement and remove certain barriers. It might therefore be said that social media interactions have the power to develop that relationship by providing uniquely powerful, easy, efficient and effective methods of involvement. In addition, the increase of social media technologies means that more preschool parents are using social media tools in their day-to-day activities. The parents in this study appreciated having access to the day-to-day processes of the preschool, along with the ability to remain connected to their children's work. Although parents were not able to be physically present due to their job, transport, babysitting, etc., social media interactions created an opportunity for them to discuss and see their children's education even from afar.

The context of the wider community interaction explored how the participants mediate interactions with the local community. It is possible for local neighbourhoods to influence the development of children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Thus, there might be positive and

negative effects on parental involvement and preschool education according to the way in which the neighbourhood affects the teacher's and parents' social media interactions. Specifically, the social media interactions from these people close by affected both the teacher and parents, and their behaviours directly affected the students. As previous literature has suggested (Karlie, 2009; Moore, 2016), collaboration and communication with the local/wider society through social media might be effective in the kind of donation, field trip, collaboration undertaken, etc. Another direct effect is the communication that families have with each other. For example, parents who see alternative educational perspectives from social media may come to revise their attitudes and behaviours, thereby also affecting the child.

The interaction between the child and the surrounding environment includes the people with whom the child interacts in a bi-directional relationship in daily life, such as home and preschool (Franco et al., 2010; Alazemi, 2017). This has an influence on the development of the individual, and offers the closest relationship to the child, consisting mainly of family and teachers for younger children (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Changes may occur in connection with the changing developmental situation and needs of the child and, thus, in the immediate people who have a direct impact on the individual's development. This may also affect an individual's beliefs, attitudes and assumptions. In this study, the beliefs and opinions of the teacher and parents about their experiences of using social media, and how their relationships with children are affected by these, all take place within a child's close settings. The developmental and educational outcomes of the child benefit if there is a positive relationship between the constructive and supportive teacher and family involvement in the preschool (Thompson, 2008).

It can be seen how, in this context, communication technologies that are influenced by the immediate life space (surroundings and relationships) of the preschool and home may have an effect on children (Johnson, 2010; Zywica, 2014). For example, Zywica (2014) previously investigated relevant aspects of children's close settings with respect to social media usage to support family involvement in preschool education. She found that social media interactions empowered education settings by connecting the home culture (funds

of knowledge) and increasing communication, and social media was found to be an effective tool for increasing the involvement of families in their child's academic learning. Zywica also indicated that parents had opportunities to be involved in new ways because of social media interactions between home and preschool. Social media provided access to families' culture, which helped to contextualise the education process in the classroom and increase communication between stakeholders, while social media in turn strengthened the preschool community.

As introduced in the earlier literature review chapter, following the Epstein model has revealed the diverse types of parental involvement. Because of these variations, adults who are interested in the care of a particular child might pay close attention to the behaviour and quality of the connections that exist between the adults (parents, teachers, neighbourhoods) in preschool settings. The effects noted in Epstein's spheres could be seen to affect the participants' social media interactions with each other at preschool. This demonstrates the importance of the interconnectedness of the Epstein Spheres of Influence.

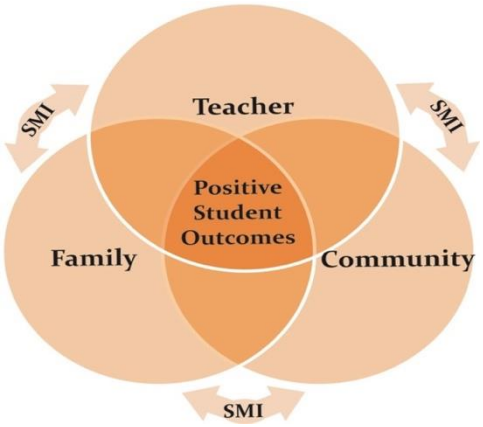


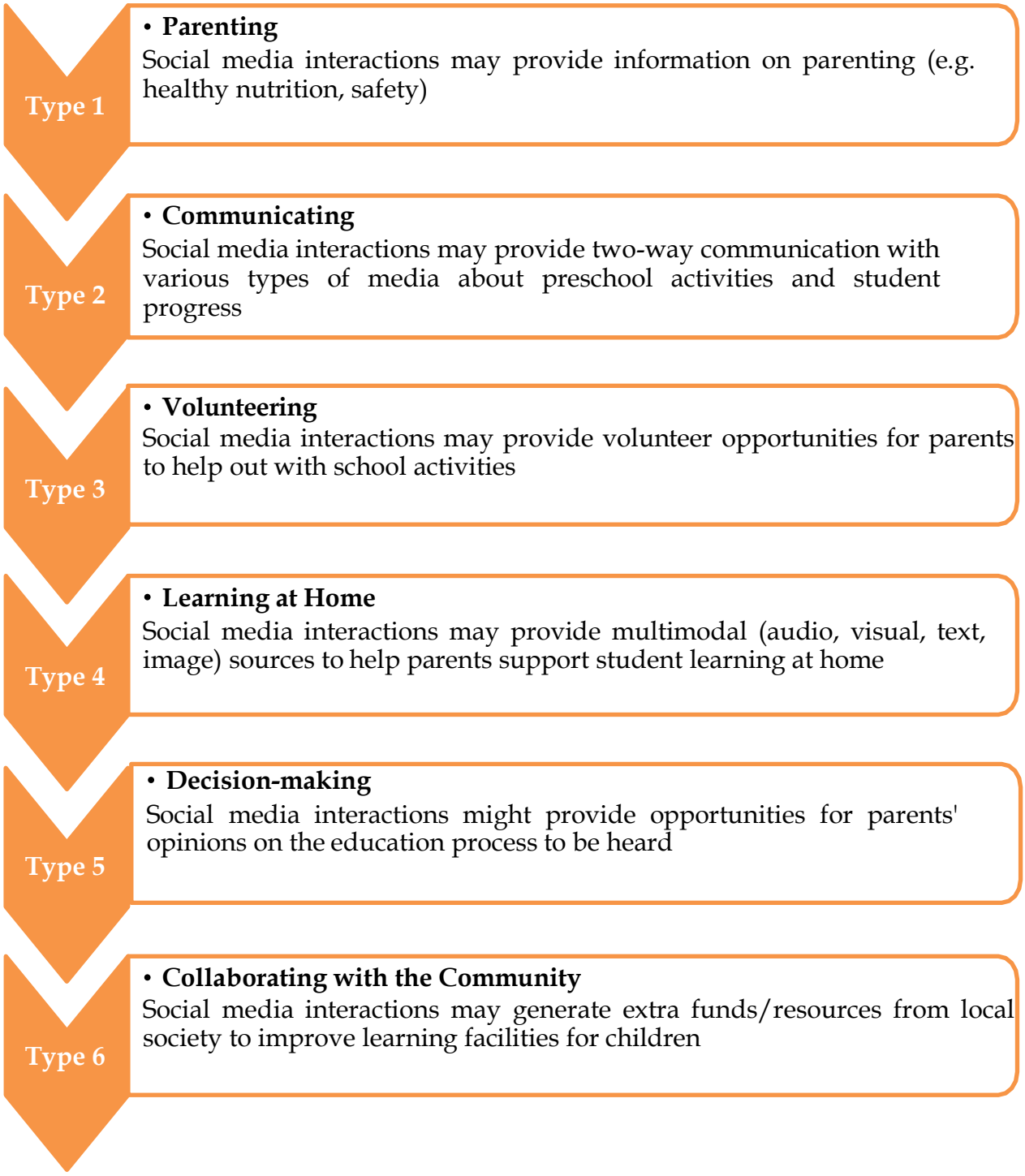
***Figure 2**:* Epstein's 'Spheres of Influence' interactions with social media

Other, similar studies on how social media can be used to involve the families of young children proposed a similar result, whereby social media interactions can offer a place for families to be involved in children's educational activities (Zhao, 2013; Zywica, 2014). Despite the fact that involvement has been made simpler by the technological advances of the twenty-first century, it is important to understand what does and does not work in

respect of the use of social media interactions as an opportunity for increasing parental involvement in the educational context. Although social media interactions are valuable in terms of promoting involvement through the ability to reach a larger community rapidly, teachers must recognise the dynamics of parental involvement and social media interactions in order to build non-traditional involvement and contemporary forms of interaction between school and home.

The prior studies informed us (in the literature review chapter) that a lack of interaction is one of the difficulties. By thinking outside the box and expanding new interactive multi-way interactions, such as social media interactions, teachers can create an encouraging preschool environment that welcomes, honours and respects collaboration with parents and society in a clear and collective way. While some parents may feel comfortable and have the flexibility to participate in activities offered in preschool education, others can rely on alternative options to access the same information directly. Such access may come in the form of social media platforms. Table 5.1 shows how social media interactions were used to complement all six types of parental involvement considered in this study.

Table 5.1: Social Media Interactions through the Lens of Epstein's Model



Firstly, social media interactions provided parenting-related content that may be helpful in increasing the parents' understanding of their children's needs. Other research has shown that when families are offered developmental knowledge about children, there is an

increase in the parents' belief in their own ability to help their children at home (Vural & Kocabaş, 2016). In line with this, social media can help inform parents about child development using a range of media types (articles, videos, photos) and thus can be used as a shortcut to search for and locate sources that parents can trust (e.g. nutrition, safety-related issues, health-based information). This type of content may allow parents to understand their children's development better, and to receive support at home. As the literature has indicated, however, social media interactions alone are not sufficient to deal with specific individual issues, especially where there is a need for privacy and face-to-face engagement. It should not, therefore, be the only source of information to learn about parenting.

Secondly, the study data on communication suggests that social media interactions were being used regularly to communicate with parents and the community. Social media platforms made such communication easier and more effective. Besides, multimodal and frequent communication was an important part of creating involvement. In this manner, social media interactions can provide fast and interactive communication (e.g. with the opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback) and may increase a family's satisfaction. Nonetheless, individual/private issues should be discussed either through face-to-face communication or via a direct messaging facility. Taking these views into account, social media interactions between preschool and home are very important for encouraging parental involvement. Furthermore, this communication is not limited to traditional forms nor does it need a specific time and space commitment, as others have also indicated (Blau & Presser, 2013; Hampton, 2016).

Thirdly, the findings show that social media interactions work well at highlighting opportunities for parents to volunteer and also encourage them to do so. Parental commitment to the preschool and a reinforcing of the interactions between the teacher and parents can be built through a high level of volunteering. Parental involvement and teacher–parent relationships may be influenced by volunteering activities, and social media interactions may help to overcome barriers to parental involvement. Social media interactions may provide volunteering opportunities and encourage parents' involvement

in various activities that take place both within and outside the direct learning activities. The use of family volunteers primarily for chaperoning, for example, is similar to that described by Christianakis (2011) in a discussion of how families are used to helping inside and outside the classroom.

Fourthly, most parents are interested in the development and success of their children and recognise that helping them at home is an important means of supporting their learning. Social media interactions provide parents with knowledge and understanding of how they can achieve such tasks, such as developing student study strategies, assisting with homework and participating in learning activities. While some parents already have these skills, others rely on educators to develop and support these features. There is an opportunity for growth in the use of technology to provide parents with information, education and assistance. While many educators struggle to attract parents or provide information on such opportunities, technology can offer options to encourage parents to interact at a time and in a place suitable for themselves. These opportunities can increase the number of parents prepared to work with children, and thus encourage better involvement.

Fifthly, the findings highlight that social media interactions have a limited ability to improve parental involvement in the context of the decision-making process. Social media interactions did not provide a medium in which parents were meaningfully engaged in decision-making. The teacher was not open to discussing certain educational decisions through social media interactions, such as in respect of the curricular aspects fixed by MoNE. Hence, the parents did not feel that they were being involved in decision-making through social media interactions. The parents in this study do not have the authority to decide what the children and/or preschool need. Previous literature supports that, in Turkey, public preschools are not effective in involving parents in the decision-making process (ACEV, 2016). This study reinforces Mitchell et al.'s (2009) findings in respect of indicating that decision-making was carried out mainly by educators, regardless of the avenue used to engage parents in preschool education.

In this study, however, while the teacher thought she had offered many opportunities to contribute to decision-making, and that the parents' voices were being heard through social media interactions, the parents did not necessarily feel they were being fully included in that process. Although this related partly to the teacher's social media usage, MoNE's centralised structure was another significant factor. The teacher had not communicated those parameters clearly in her social media interactions and the parents did not understand the points on which the teacher was trying to consult with them and did not understand where they could contribute (regardless of MoNE restrictions). Nevertheless, this could be solved by providing more information to parents about the ways in which they could become involved in the decision-making process and a means of communication was needed with regard to how parents could be involved in that process. Nonetheless, social media interactions might still be considered as a method to enhance involvement in the decision-making process. For example, approaches like online surveys and polls could enable concerns and suggestions to contribute to the decision-making process. Surveys can provide anonymous input and suggestions if the parents are not comfortable with expressing such ideas directly to the school administration.

Finally, aside from building preschool and home interactions, the teacher and parents can be active in collaborating with the community and its institutions through social media interactions, as the results have indicated. They reached out to community members on social media and through the posted materials, and the community could see what was happening inside the classrooms and therefore also became involved. Hence, it can be said that collaboration and public relationships mediated through social media allow teachers, parents and society the opportunity to share ideas. It must be recognised, however, that although social media provides new ways to reach the wider society, if this potential is to be realised then the right preparatory steps need to be taken by social media users. According to Fiore (2016), educators who have experience in social media lead that public opinion, parental involvement, community and media relations. Likewise, Bavusu (2016) found that social media interactions in a preschool have the potential to extend to the wider community and encourage its members to collaborate.

Epstein's model has been criticised for modelling how teachers include parents and the community as a one-way process (Schutz, 2006; Yamauchi et al., 2017). The data on parental involvement in this study, however, showed that social media interactions partially reduced this gap. Web 2.0 tools promote bi-directional interactions. Thus, it is important to state that the study's findings show a strong connection between the use of social media interactions and interactive parental involvement. As a conclusion, social media interaction may be practised by preschool stakeholders more proactively with regard to all the types of involvement advanced in Epstein's parental involvement model.

5.1.1 Issues Related to the Use of Social Media

The study has highlighted various ethical issues and responsibilities with regard to children's well-being, privacy and rights. Even though the adults (parents, teacher) responsible for the children's well-being and protection were generally aware of such issues, they did not attach a great deal of importance to them, for various reasons. It is known, however, that while the digital rights of children are an ongoing and well-discussed topic in some countries (Livingstone & O'Neill, 2014), this is not an issue that has received much attention in Turkey (Okumus & Parlar, 2018). On the one hand, this led to a situation where the teacher was able to use social media content to advertise her own products. However, she did not perceive this to constitute either a barrier to communicating with parents or that it had a negative aspect with respect to any conflict with her parallel use of social media for preschool education. Although social media can afford teachers opportunities, not only as a communication and educational tool but also as a professional marketing tool, I identified this as an ethical matter. Researchers in other fields (Klososky, 2012; Friesen & Lowe, 2012) have stated that entrepreneurial activity is helpful in motivating the individual and encouraging innovation through social media interactions to build relationships with communities. In the context of preschool education settings, however, marketing undertaken on social media can overshadow the benefits of educational outcomes and lead to the teacher's aims and motives being questioned. There

is a risk of the children becoming guinea pigs/vicarious advertisers for the teacher's products. Also, the teacher's attentions may become more focused on doing things in the classroom that can then serve as advertising for themselves and which are less focused on the needs of the children. She did not pay attention to the safety of the children in this regard.

On the other hand, parents use social media to compare, compete and illustrate their life/learning style. This suggests that, even though the children in this study did not use social media due to age restrictions and their ability, they could still be affected by issues arising from this comparison and competition. Given the popularity of social media in today's society, the use of social media interactions in preschool education raises various concerns, unwanted aspects and ethical issues. These include the potentially negative impact on children's psychology arising from social media interactions, which may temper any benefits that arise from such interactions. Preschool stakeholders should therefore avoid inappropriate behaviours and content, such as comparing children with others in the wider community.

This kind of behaviour on the part of parents is commonly cited in previous studies. Social media users tend to compare their lives with those of their friends and social media influencers (Hewson et al., 2015). People become motivated to portray themselves in a particular way (as the teacher did in this study) and hence things posted to social media often reflect an optimistic or 'rose-tinted' perspective on people's lives. This causes readers to question why their own lives are not as good as others appear to be, which the teacher in this study did to an extent. This can lead to unhappiness and other psychological problems for both onlookers and the posters themselves, as they feel they will not be good enough for their friends or family unless their lives are as exciting as they are made out to be online (Hawi & Samaha, 2017). Comparison on social media has serious effects on physical and mental health (Stefanone et al., 2011), with social media creating a negative feedback cycle of comparison followed by feelings of frustration when it is perceived that social accomplishment has not been reached, leading to more comparison (Holland &

Tiggemann, 2016). Satici and Uysal (2015) claim that people who spend more time on Facebook are less satisfied with their lives.

In addition, Rushkoff (2016; p. 44) says, "digital industrialism turns human data into the new commodity". In 2018 (March), we learnt of the Facebook–Cambridge Analytica data scandal that involved the gathering of personally identifiable information from 87 million Facebook users (Kang & Frenkel, 2018). Cambridge Analytica, a political consulting firm that combined data mining, data brokering and data analysis with strategic communications during election processes worldwide, was reported to have begun collecting a much greater volume of data in 2014 (Hern, 2018). Later, Mark Zuckerberg, as the owner of Facebook and Instagram, the use of both of which are investigated in this study, testified. The US Congress and EU Parliament stepped forward to protect their citizens in the context of other recent and similar cases of data misuse and misconduct (BBC, 2018; 2018a). However, the participants in this study did not consider datafication and dataveillance (surveillance) to be a problem. The children were not provided with the right to be out of social media due to its possible long-term issues. Since these terms are relatively new, it can be said that the participants may not have had sufficient information about the possible future deficiencies of social media usage with their children.

Ethical concerns highlighted that the role of the teacher and legal framework governing social media use in preschool are crucial to balance these requirements. The following section discusses the teacher's role in respect of social media interactions.

5.1.1.1 The Teacher's Role

Both the teacher and parents emphasised the teacher's role in using social media interactions at preschool. The teacher's motivation, attitudes, skills, beliefs and aims were the prime influencers for her use of social media in the preschool setting. Thus, she played an integral role in the creation of an inviting overall preschool climate in which some parents felt encouraged, while others thought it was almost compulsory to lend their involvement.

At the beginning of the school year, the teacher introduced and explained social media accounts. This affected expectations and influenced the parents' experiences and motivation, thereby increasing their awareness of social media use. Without this pressure from the teacher, it is hard to see how enhanced interaction could be sustained or effective. As the previous literature has emphasised (Ihmeideh & Alkhawaldeh, 2017), the use of digital platforms for interactions is strongly influenced by teachers' motivations. In a similar vein, Epstein and Lee (1995) discussed that if the teacher did not communicate with parents and did not provide guidance and information, then the parents would not regularly discuss or monitor their children. In this case, however, bringing about the consistent involvement of all parents appeared to entail an element of pressure that sits uncomfortably with voluntary consent. A top-down hierarchy was evident and the teacher's personal motivation to use social media for preschool education was instrumental in pushing parents towards its use as well. This accords with Ciftci et al.'s (2013) work, which showed that class teachers regarded their motivations for using social media interactions as the most important force (or barrier) to the implementation of social media interactions.

Aside from this, various studies have shown how preschool teachers shape the attitudes of parents in respect of the use of social media interactions in preschool contexts (Blackwell et al., 2013; Heitner, 2016). The skills, confidence and attitude of the teacher can guide and deliver a shared vision which for social media interactions is a key component in this process. There should be a shared meaning that underscores social media interactions across preschool stakeholders. Thus, successful social media interactions depend on shared visions. While setting the goals and objectives, educators can frame and communicate a vision that affects both parents and their class. While discussing their experiences of social media use, parents particularly mentioned the beginning of the academic year, which some thought was essential in order to have a positive attitude towards the use of social media. For other parents, however, using social media offered an easy way of obtaining information on their child's preschool education and to connect with the teacher directly. Besides this, the start of the school year was the time when some

parents felt/experienced a top-down power relationship, when they had to obtain information mostly via online platforms and somehow please the teacher. From this perspective, it is possible to assume that some of the parents may have experienced pressure in respect of their interaction preferences. Although the teacher gained the explicit consent of every parent, as one of the parents remarked, some felt they were expected to use social media, despite having concerns regarding privacy, simply in order to remain connected, involved and interacted. For this reason, some parents opened a new social media account. All these efforts made by the parents indicate the pressure that they felt was applied to them. For some parents, however, this pressure from the teacher did not stop after they had opened and begun using social media. Parents found it difficult to adapt to/understand the teacher's style. This took time, and these experiences indicate that it is important for the teacher to be alert to parents' needs and conditions.

On the other side; attitudes, beliefs and technological skills also influence how technology is applied or practised in preschool pedagogical contexts (Lindahl & Folkesson, 2012). Myers and Halpin (2002) stated that teachers' positive intentions regarding the use of technology in the classroom are a strong factor in their effective use of technology. Generally, beliefs and ideas were often listened to and acted upon. Overall, the findings of the research undertaken for this thesis broadly support these contentions, since it was evident that the use of social media interactions in preschool was important for the teacher's personal role: seven years of working with social media, positive attitudes towards including social media interactions, awareness and her willingness to use social media all improved her other skills related to social media interactions. In the opposite, discussions with parents revealed that the teacher's self-advertisement was one of the significant motivators for her to use social media. My observations were consistent with the parents' responses in that self-advertisements were visible. These went hand-in-hand with other useful information, however, and the parents had to ignore the content that they did not find useful or appropriate.

Furthermore, social media interactions can be an easy and convenient way for preschool stakeholders to get to know one another. The communication was also two-way (mutual).

If teachers do not know parents' goals for their children, however, they cannot understand the information parents need to be more efficient in their parenting skills, home learning and other types of involvement. Thus, similar understandings among educators and parents concerning the use of communication technologies are key for preschool education (Livingstone, 2009). Creating an agreed structure for parental involvement between preschool and home can help in this regard, and previous research supports the notion. Dornbush et al. (1996) found that certain specific differences in the structural arrangements in parental involvement contributed to a weakening of educational collaboration. For example, when parents expect more consideration on a specific topic (such as child well-being and privacy, as in this study case), teachers must provide support and effective communication to ease parents into using social media appropriately for parental involvement.

The satisfaction of parents and increased rates of parental involvement with the efforts made by educators help to support education settings, empower parents and establish relationships built on trust (Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002). To build this trust and confidence, teachers must act beyond old-style methods and connect more innovatively with parents to help their children's achievement. However, the teacher in this study, for example, paid attention to her attitudes, beliefs and benefits that promote effective communication. Positive results can be achieved when teachers, families and the society cooperate to respond to the different interests and needs of children.

5.1.1.2 The Legal Framework Governing Social Media Use in Preschool

The legal framework and its possible deficiencies were raised as an issue by the participants. The twenty-first century is a hyper-connected era (Floridi, 2015) and policies often suggest that teachers can use various avenues to ensure they are promoting dialogue with families, with social media being one such option. Indeed, social media connections make our everyday lives easier and have ceased to be a luxury for many people in a multitude of countries. However, this also creates its own problems in the areas of privacy, safety, rights and democratic citizenship. Although the teacher believed that her use of

social media had no negative impact on the psychological and social aspects of the children, she was nonetheless troubled by the lack of a clear framework for the use of social media with children, articulating her confusion and uncertainty regarding the impact on herself of the legal framework governing the use of social media at preschool. In her opinion, the vagueness of the legislation had a negative impact on her use of the technology. It was the legal issues that gave rise to the greatest scepticism regarding the teacher's use of social media, and she was unaware of how exactly to deal with this matter. Thus, she asked for the parents' written permission so as to protect herself against any potential sanctions that she might face. Unlike in the revealed data on legal issues, the literature emphasises that child safety concerns are a challenge because of the lack of policies on child safety online (Baule & Lewis, 2012).

To illuminate this uncertainty, relevant documents were reviewed in detail. It was found that MoNE issued circular letters in 2014 and 2017 on the use of social media in schools. Furthermore, the Turkish Penal Code (No. 5237; articles 135, 136, 137, 138) states that any person who illegally records personal data shall be sentenced to imprisonment for a period of six months to three years, while a person who illegally gives personal data to someone else faces imprisonment for between one and four years. If the offence is committed by a public official, the penalty shall be increased by half. From the legal perspective, therefore, it is understandable why the teacher had concerns for herself and why she obtained signed permission from parents. The parents' concerns, on the other hand, centred on the children's safety and privacy. Parents did not consider there to be a strong official law protecting the rights of children in social media interactions. Thus, it can be said that a legal framework and guidelines are needed to protect children from any misconduct. Despite this scepticism with regard to the potential for abuse of children's rights and ethical issues, all of the parents signed the permission letter, which was a big contradiction. It can be explained, however, if it is recognised that parents saw social media as the best way for them to become involved in their children's preschool experience.

The legal system that encompasses the framework of social media usage is regarded as a force that shapes preschool social media interactions. In other words, the factor of the legal framework determines the environment in which preschool social media usage occurs. This affects teachers and parents, and their behaviours also affect students (Hammed, 2014). Moreover, misuse and the sharing of inappropriate content that results in harm to children will incur legal sanctions at this level (Barboza et al., 2009). Thus, it is evident that there is an urgent need for regulations on the use of social media interactions in preschool education settings. Such reform is likely to support the further spread of social media interactions in preschool education. Additionally, notwithstanding the frequency of safety worries, researchers have found that they can be mitigated through focused practice (Carr, 2011; Finardi & Veronez, 2013) underpinned by clear social media policies and a focus on the role of the teacher (Balcı & Tezel-Sahin, 2016, 2018). Some, such as Vandewater et al. (2007), regard the safest approach as having a well-prepared legal framework in the form of a social media policy. Others have added that when privacy and security concerns are taken seriously, information communication technologies can be a cost-effective tool to support involvement for parents (Shin, 2015; Thomas, 2016). This means that the role of the teacher is crucial in terms of balancing these requirements. MoNE needs to redesign the related laws in order to protect the security and confidentiality of the parties.

5.2 Impact on the Child

It is reasonable to suspect that social media interactions between teachers and parents can influence children within both preschool education settings and at home.

The data indicated that social media interactions in a preschool setting can be used positively between stakeholders to support connections between preschool and home in order to create new forms of interactions for educators, families and children to access their 'funds of knowledge'. While the teacher and parents in this study have similar practices and opinions regarding the ability of social media interactions to impact on

children, the parents in particular highlighted their concerns regarding the potential harmful social-emotional effects on their children. Besides that, the teacher's experience was that social media interactions were helpful with regard to the educational process. This could be seen through the impact of the increased visual documentation of the education process and the enriching of the content and materials/resources. Thus, the teacher expressed positive opinions about the changes that occurred in the classroom, while a number of the parents, for their part, harboured concerns.

Researchers and practitioners are increasingly keen to connect formal and informal learning so as to attract students, boost enthusiasm and create more methods of learning (Ito et al., 2013). Similarly, Chesworth (2016) states that "pedagogical practice informed by dialogue with children and their families may enhance professional understandings of how children's interests emerge from the everyday practices of homes and communities" (p. 305). Likewise, the findings derived from this research show that the use of social media to access children's home experiences can offer more opportunities to connect with children on a more personal level. Thus, social media interactions can help the teacher to learn more about the children and their families, which leads to individualised dialogues based on their interests. Such teacher–parent–child interactions serve to link the formal and informal contexts. These kinds of connections between preschool and home learning are necessary in order to close the gap between what children do at preschool and what they do outside of school. Social media interactions, therefore, have the potential to make pre-schooling and the curriculum more related and interesting to students and their lives (Zywica, 2014). Closing the gap can prove difficult, however (Grant, 2009). The results of this study are important to illustrate that social media interactions may prove to be an accessible tool for use in this respect, and that social media experiences can be used effectively to bridge preschool and home. This is interesting in the context of preschool social media research since there is some work to show that teachers can use knowledge of children's home culture and experiences to contextualise academic content (Moll et al., 1992). Indeed, the evidence collected in this study also includes some examples of the teacher using her knowledge of the children's family lives, which she had gained through

social media interactions with the parents, for the purpose of improving preschool education. Thus, social media interactions may provide a real context for bringing together preschool children and families' different perspectives in the twenty-first century.

Furthermore, social media interactions can be useful in helping to generate a positive classroom atmosphere in which the children are more interested in learning activities. In this sense, social media may help to create an environment in which preschool children are more able to contribute to and be active participants in their (own) education, albeit within the confines imposed by their age. Their participation in education can increase their confidence, and they can feel privileged and important as a result of that participation and of seeing and expressing themselves in social media interaction. This can also lead to increased trust, transparency and motivation among parents. This effect has often been cited in the literature (Seferoglu, 2011; Wilson, 2011).

The findings also suggested that preschool activities were valuable for children, parents and the teacher. Similar to Wilson (2011), this study shows that social media interactions offer visual proof of children's education and worked as a prompt for the children to recall and re-think what they had learnt. Social media interactions may enrich opportunities for further dialogue between children and parents since families can see what their children are doing throughout the day. Although children no longer need to ask their parents (specifically fathers) to visit the class to see their activities, they can still feel/see their parents' enthusiasm about what they are doing at school and that their daily activities are important to their family members. Thus, children have the opportunity to look at social media with their families and this allows families to review the day (week, month) with their child. This can be a useful way for children to review their school activities or prepare a story about special events. As described by Boardman (2007), this helps to reassure children that they are valued and listened to. Also, these practices can enhance the involvement process, because it is known that when children are involved in developing their learning outlook, they become motivated spontaneously rather than being overly focused on performance (Carr, 2001). When the teacher makes preschool

activities visible through documentation, she is also providing feedback to children and families that she values their learning.

Moreover, children are able to remember and retell their preschool education activities to others within their larger society. Thus, social media interactions can be a context within which evidence of preschool education and involvement is made visible to a wider community. With this approach of valuing children and children's education through social media interactions, and drawing in a larger community (including relatives who are living in different places), children are empowered to value themselves as students.

Despite these progressive outcomes, there was a level of ambiguity within the ideas of the parents. When we look at the changes that the use of social media interactions had created for the students in preschool, it can be said that there were both positive and negative changes. The parents also expressed their concern about possible future problems. Notwithstanding the prevalence of safety concerns, however, researchers have identified that these can be solved through the creation of professional practice. These contradictory positions echo those identified by Gursul and Tozmaz (2010) in research they conducted with teachers into the effective use of current technology. They found that interaction established with the family on Web 2.0 platforms was a positive feature in terms of increasing students' interest, although some brief teacher training on this issue might be useful. I think that, as with any new technology in an educational environment, it is clear that there is a need for more research over a longer time frame in order to better observe these changes.

On the other hand, while parents did not indicate any data on the preschool education process, the teacher found social media interactions helpful for the teaching-learning process. This is also supported in the literature; for example, Wilson (2011) says "families found evidence of learning in far fewer places than what teachers believed they were providing" (p. 86). Despite this disparity, Wilson found social media interactions to be beneficial within the home in the sense that they contribute to the professional development of the teacher at the same time as providing both the parents and children with a clear understanding of the learning process and enriched content.

The interactive nature of social media, such as including text, publications, reviews, photos and videos, makes it appealing to children and parents and enhances the ability to obtain suggestions, help, feedback and comments. Thus, it was evident that social media interactions offered an alternative medium for making preschool education accessible to children, parents, communities and others. Making classroom activities accessible is a way of promoting communication and participating with learners. The literature indicates similar findings. Balci and Tezel-Sahin (2018) found that social media can certainly be a place to make preschool activities accessible, and it may also provide extra opportunities to revisit those processes and build new common knowledge in a different setting. Celen et al. (2011) stated that learning environments can be enriched by the use of interactive technologies. In this regard, changes to the educational process engendered by social media may also result in benefits for the children. These can be in the form of enhanced content in respect of the activities to which they are exposed, an increase in the use of social media and professional competence and the positive contribution of this process to student outcomes. Social media may therefore directly affect the education process by improving and enriching the activities that make up that process.

5.3 Summary

In summary, this chapter has focused on the interpretation and discussion of social media interactions between teachers and parents at the preschool level. In particular, efforts were made to reveal what we could learn about social media interaction practices at the preschool level.

Based on Epstein's model of parental involvement, it can be said that parental involvement concerns not only interaction between teachers and parents but also includes the wider society. It is critical to consider the broader setting of social media interactions. The different settings of influence of social media experiences in the child's close environment (teachers and parents) also affect one another. This means that the use of social media by

teachers and parents is not something that takes place in isolation from children but rather is a transaction conducted within children's life space. A teacher's and parents' interaction with each other, and the levels of these interactions, continually affect the child's outcomes. In addition, the characteristics of the teacher's and parents' social media experiences, pedagogical skill and knowledge of the curricula and learning outcomes will influence how social media technologies are implemented (Lewthwaite, 2011; Alazemi, 2017). Thus, understanding the effects of a child's environment provides conceptual support to the understanding of the role of social media interactions between teachers and parents in the education of young children.

Many elements may incentivise the use of social media interaction at preschool, but only if the teacher is willing to use social media interactions. In this study, the teacher assumed the responsibility of facilitating social media interactions, adopting a centred position in the use of social media interactions for parental involvement and preschool education. The pressure of the teacher had an impact on the parents' belief that their involvement was both welcome and valued. However, parents added that they could play an important role in their children's education with a shared vision. It can thus be concluded that, just as with traditional types of involvement, the responsibility for building involvement between preschool and home rests mainly with the teacher, as other research has also shown (Olmstead, 2013; Epstein et al., 2018) and as policies stipulate (MoNE, 2013a, NAEYC & Fred Rogers Center, 2012).

Overall, the research has emphasised that there are various effects related to the utilisation of social media to enhance the involvement of children, their parents and teachers in the preschool education settings and process. Also, the results show that the use of social media interactions in preschool remains controversial, complicated and ongoing.

Chapter 6 CONCLUSION

The previous chapter discussed the major findings regarding the participants' views and experiences of using social media at preschool. In this chapter, I present a conclusion in respect of those findings by revisiting the research questions. This is followed by a summary of the main contribution of this study, its limitations and the recommendations arising from the research. I conclude by reflecting on my own role.

6.1 Research Questions and Summary of Findings

This study expands Epstein's model of parental involvement by considering the use of social media interactions as a specific interaction tool in the twenty-first century. As such, it provides new information about context and concept. And, while this research has focused on the use of the interactive multimodal and multidirectional interaction opportunities that social media interactions offer in today's preschools, the teacher is viewed as the primary driving force within preschool education.

Research Question 1. RQ1 asked 'In what ways do parents' and a preschool teacher's social media use shape/influence parental involvement in an urban preschool?' To answer this, the study investigated how social media interactions are currently used for family involvement. Epstein's parental involvement model was used in this analysis. Both the teacher and parents experienced that family involvement was improved through social media interactions and that social media was used in their interactions with each other. Indeed, the data collected show that the parents were involved in the components of the

process, and that social media added to traditional forms of parental involvement in several ways.

On the other hand, it is possible to say that some parents experienced pressure regarding their interaction preferences. The teacher obtained the explicit consent of every parent. However, some of the parents felt they were expected to use social media, despite concerns about privacy, in order to remain connected, involved and interacted. Self-advertisements by the teacher were visible. Nevertheless, parents tended to ignore any content that they did not find useful. Further discussion with parents indicated that building strong interactions through social media was achievable when the teacher was willing. Thus, it can be said that in order to maximise the benefit of social media interactions in preschool, it is important for the educational partners to find unity and common purpose regarding their social media interactions. Therefore, parents could take an active role in the preschool education process. In this sense, the integration of social media interactions into the educational process can be accomplished by engaging with parents. At this point, there appears to be scope for significant potential advantages to be obtained by supporting preschool education through social media interactions. These advantages include expanding opportunities for education and transforming the role of homework; improving the communication and cooperation between the preschool and the home; and increasing the success of students by increasing the involvement of their parents.

Research Question 2. RQ2 was 'From the viewpoint of parents and teachers, in what ways do their social media interactions impact upon the preschool children?' As the literature (Dixon, 2012) has shown, reciprocal interaction is an important concern in education; and social media is an economical and reasonable method to achieve this. It was necessary, therefore, to explore how social media use between the teacher and parents influenced the children at preschool. In particular, to answer RQ2, I investigated how the teacher's and parents' social media interaction practices affected the children. The findings show their practices to be effective in supporting preschool children's educational experiences and communication practices. However, the teacher and parents interacted according to their

individual motivations, rationales, necessities and interests, and these had an impact on the children.

This study sheds light that the dynamics of social media use would be considered essential by teachers and parents. The findings suggested that the teacher's and parents' respective uses of social media at preschool work in cooperation with each other. The results of this case study confirm that social media interactions can create new sources of information for the primary stakeholders (teacher and parents) in the preschool. Social media made the class visible to parents (also for children). In fact, social media enables educators and parents to enter the classroom in ways that were not possible previously: not just through picture and video images but also through the ability offered by social media for the parties to interact and collaborate. This provides a new dimension of communication between parents, children and teachers in preschool settings.

In conclusion, various factors were investigated in this thesis in order to gain a more comprehensive empirical understanding of the practices of social media interactions. The social media interactions between teachers and parents should be investigated as a system of elements; in other words, the key factors that interrelate to determine the achievement or failure of the social media interactions (i.e. teachers and parents in the context of this study). In this respect, the Epstein model provides a detailed understanding of the interactions between the affecting elements. Consequently, the factors gathered using Epstein's perspectives were appropriate in providing the researcher with an understanding of the experiences of social media interactions.

6.2 Research Contribution

The literature review chapter showed that there have been few studies seeking to understand the use of social media at the preschool level. This research therefore offers both a conceptual and practical contribution. This study provides a valuable empirical and conceptual contribution to academics and practitioners by observing and interviewing

some preschool partners (the teacher and parents) about their practices regarding social media interaction. In In this regard, my study contributes to the related body of knowledge, as shown in the previous chapters, which provided the conceptual background of this research and the literature within which the study is placed.

The findings provide an important contribution to the otherwise sparse knowledge base related to the use of social media in preschool environments in Turkey, as well as reflecting on more international concerns linked to social media interactions. These results will inform policymakers and education planners of the present circumstances in our ongoing global journey to take advantage of social media in preschools. This has several key consequences for the professional development of teachers around the world, and it brings out the main dynamics that need to be pushed forward to support teachers and parents to utilise social media in a meaningful way in preschool education, especially in respect of encouraging both communication with and the involvement of parents. In addition, the results provide suggestions for the international preschool research community as a whole, since, as well as context-specific analyses, a range of broad and flexible advice is recommended to help preschool teachers, parents and policymakers understand more fully how they interact with social media in the framework of their society. Concerning the international preschool research community, it has been shown that an integrated theoretical framework drawn from Epstein's parental involvement model can offer a model for exploring the multilevel and multidimensional nature of social media interaction.

Epstein's model has been criticised for modelling the way in which teachers involve parents and society as a one-way process (Schutz, 2006; Yamauchi et al., 2017). The data in this study concerning parental and communal involvement have shown, however, that social media interactions can partly mitigate this shortcoming since the very nature of Web 2.0 tools encourages two-way interactions, and the study's findings do indeed show a strong connection between the use of social media interactions and proactive involvement. Thus, another contribution to the methodology of research in this area is the application of Epstein's parental involvement model to understand the social media

interactions at a preschool. This provides a new, multi-layered research approach to users' interaction with surrounding individuals, and how these interconnect to influence the child's environment in the digital age. The application of the Epstein Model of Parental Involvement was useful in many respects. Much of the previous research that has applied the model has tended to focus on traditional approaches to parental involvement. This study therefore makes an important contribution by extending the Epstein model to online, particularly social media, contexts, thus updating it for the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Furthermore, this study offers a broad picture of existing experiences and procedures, which include particularly helpful, effective or challenging elements. The results of the study are important for pre-schoolers, researchers, policymakers, teachers, parents and children. Although the research findings presented here cannot be generalised to other preschool contexts, this case study highlights a number of issues concerning the characteristics of educational policy and practice with regard to the Turkish education system. For instance, the research findings have exposed the vagueness of the legal framework. Alongside its potential for informing preschool education policy at the national and international level, the originality of this research lies in its comprehensive overview of the experience of social media interaction between a preschool teacher and families through an explorative case study.

Consequently, the results and recommendations of this framework are multidimensional and cover a variety of strata that may be of interest in terms of informing the design and implementation of future interaction strategies by practitioners globally. Thus, it is expected that this research could have a potential to be a trigger for future study on educational and technological challenges and preschool circumstances that require additional consideration. Through this study, preschool stakeholders have had the opportunity to make their opinions heard. It is also hoped that this research will provide policymakers with the understanding that can be reflected in the making of better-informed decisions when dealing with social media usage at preschools in Turkey.

6.3 Limitations

This study is significant since the results may be used to improve parent–teacher communication within a preschool environment. The findings may be of value for preschools with similar socio-economic backgrounds and resources. Educators who rely primarily on social media to communicate with parents might also benefit from this study. As with all studies, however, there are limitations.

As mentioned in the Introduction chapter, my position as a former preschool teacher in a public urban school (in the same city as the research case) potentially put me in a position of power with respect to the teachers and administrative staff of the case study school. Also, having noted my interaction with preschool staff members, the parent participants may have felt inhibited in their answers, fearing they may in some way be jeopardising their communication with the teacher. Indeed, they did appear at times to be careful in their answers. I should note that, conversely, the teacher was observed to be more assured when discussing topics. Furthermore, I asked the participants to consider me as a visitor-researcher and to clarify whatever they assumed a visitor should know. However, the participants', specifically the teacher's, awareness of my former practices at a preschool might have affected their reflections. This may, in turn, have affected the authenticity of the data.

In addition, the subjectivity of my interpretations is a possible source of limitation. In the process of understanding the data, I was aware of the impact of my role as an investigator, counting the potential effects of my understandings as a previous preschool teacher who used social media interactions. I was aware of the limits of my statements about the data. Since I had to study with participants from preschool, I accepted that my attitude towards using cutting-edge technologies and social media at any stage of the educational process might have had an effect on my interactions with my participants. In other words, my positive stance as an investigator might have had an impact on the approach in which I recognised and established a relationship with the study participants or upon the kind of data I collected. As a qualitative investigator, I did my best to use the context under

review as well as my knowledge of social media interactions to argue and interpret the study findings in a useful, critical but also verifiable way. Thus, I would like to say that the findings I have offered here are open to various interpretations.

This research is a single case study of one classroom in a middle-class environment within a major city, with a teacher who is highly active on social media. As previously indicated, only 60 per cent within 5 years old children attend preschool education in Turkey. In the sense, therefore, that preschool education itself is not widespread in Turkey. In this research, I do not aim to achieve generalisability or representativeness. Rather, this research's merit lies with uncovering deep and nuanced meanings and practices that arise from the voices of some key stakeholders of pre-school education where parents and teachers in this context. It may however be more generalisable to other urban preschools within Turkey, at least as a template for how social media use in such schools could develop with support from teachers. Further studies will need to understand better the current position of the wide range of preschools in Turkey vis-à-vis social media use, and to determine whether the barriers and potential identified in this study also appear in the wider context.

Furthermore, I collected data through observations over a specific time frame, and since all the participants were aware of this they could have been motivated (especially the teacher) to go to extra lengths to demonstrate their best selves (and the best use of social media). To overcome this limitation, I have used observation and Interview data collection methods triangulate the data. I aim to understand the differences between the discourses and practices of participants by using these methods. Time constraints were another dimension that can be considered a limitation in my study. I had to start the data collection at the beginning of April, which is close to the end of the academic year in Turkey. I therefore only had ten weeks to complete the stages. The need to complete the fieldwork before the end of the academic year also created other issues since the participants were busy with festive occasions and formal events, thus making it difficult to fit in the data collection. Although I had sufficient time for the interviews, I believe that a

longer period of time would have permitted a more comprehensive programme of observations – both in class and online.

Besides, preschools are hesitant to use social media due to concerns about privacy and a lack of understanding. For the most part, educators neither use social media nor are they comfortable using it to interact with other stakeholders. Social media remains a new means of communication for many people and has yet to be widely adopted by members of the older generations. This meant that the sample for this study was purposeful and not representative, consisting of a teacher with prior experience of using social media tools in the field. By design, I chose to highlight a preschool teacher who was very active in her use of social media, on the basis that this research is an initial detailed investigation of a fairly unexplored phenomenon.

Finally, due to the limited sample size, the findings are not widely generalisable. More research will therefore be needed to (a) examine actual practice, facilities and attitudes in a much wider array of preschool contexts; and (b) consider how the best practice identified in this study might be delivered in this wider, real context. These are discussed in the following section.

6.4 Recommendations

Here I make some suggestions based on the main discussion of the findings and the conclusions. They comprise suggestions for the development of social media interactions within the context of the research that would enable preschool teachers and parents to practise effectively. Even though the findings could not be generalised, lessons from a case can light the way for others and therefore the suggestions from this research could first assist MoNE in their continuing efforts to make social media interactions useful. This research could help policymakers at MoNE understand the educators' and parents' experiences, along with the issues they are recorded as having encountered. The findings suggested important factors that play a role in teachers' and parents' practices with social

media interactions that should be considered when planning. In addition, this research showed that a qualitative approach was helpful in understanding the experiences behind social media interactions. Nonetheless, further qualitative and quantitative study is advised in a wider range of settings in order to gather more data and understand preschool-oriented social media interactions better.

Recommendations for practice. The study identified a relationship between opportunities for parental involvement and the level of parental involvement itself.

Existing research indicates that parental involvement occurs as a direct result of the efforts made by preschool staff to gain parents' support (Martinez, 2004). Research has demonstrated that invitations issued by key members of the preschool community (teacher and parents) are the most significant motivators for parents to become involved in their children's preschool because such invitations indicate to the parents that the preschool values their involvement. Thus, there is likely to be a positive association between invitations from teachers and parental involvement through social media interactions, noting that invitations issued by teachers are strong predictors of parental involvement in both preschool and home-based activities.

Since parents are important stakeholders in the practice of school–home social media interactions, any awareness-raising meetings held with them at the beginning of the school year should ensure that all aspects of social media are introduced to encourage the better involvement of this important stakeholder group.

The findings of this research have identified that social media interactions may be used to promote a bi-directional construction between preschool and home. Social media can overcome barriers such as distance, schedules and time when attempting to foster communication with parents and affords parents and students a range of opportunities for learning within the home environment. Educators therefore need to evaluate these opportunities and determine the possibilities available for improving parental

involvement and community collaboration. Active engagement with the wider community can help to gain resources/knowledge to share with parents.

Recommendations for policy. Current policies on the use of social media at preschools were found to be limited and vague. Social media interactions create challenges and ethical concerns that policymakers must take into account. These include concerns about privacy and safety. Thus, it is vital that policymakers draft a framework for the use of social media in state schools to ensure that it works in a way that is useful for all. Policymakers are advised to develop policies and practices that encourage teachers to communicate frequently with parents about the various opportunities for families to become involved. Teachers must ensure that they make consistent efforts to keep parents abreast of the activities and events taking place within the preschool through a variety of methods. Therefore, all educational stakeholders will need to be aware of students' rights. Public access to media involving children will need to be covered well when policymakers look to design social media policies and usage guidelines. This could then enable otherwise hesitant stakeholders to become involved, having the reassurance that a policy exists that affords them a degree of protection in the event of misuse by a member of the community. Knowledge/training for preschool stakeholders on how to practise social media interaction professionally and effectively can also be used to help counter safety and privacy fears. Such a policy should also address whether preschool social media groups should have open public access; balancing the greater opportunity for community engagement arising from public access with concerns about child privacy and teacher advertisement.

Once a draft social media policy has been drawn up, stakeholders should monitor its implementation and encourage feedback to ensure that the policy complies with the goals and objectives and that it identifies any mistakes. Once the policy is accepted, educators must train and notify all policy users through educational actions. Stakeholders should focus on learning how to use social media and how to protect their privacy when they use social media. According to Hampton (2016), only one hour of professional training about the potential risks and dangers in social media can avoid many problems from the outset.

Thus, all stakeholders should be aware of security rules and understand the features of social media platforms as well as the ethical use of online technology.

Recommendations for future research. While earlier studies have acknowledged that family involvement tends to improve children's outcomes at preschool, the incorporation of social media interactions into a preschool interaction strategy nevertheless remains a relatively new phenomenon, particularly in Turkey. Considering social media interactions in preschool from the perspectives of the children and families, there is evidence relating to the role social media interactions can play in increasing interactions between preschool and home (Zywica, 2014). Further research to explore the function of social media interactions in providing interactions between preschool and home in Turkey would be valuable. In addition, I recognise that a longitudinal study would be of great interest in terms of understanding whether social media interaction increases the benefits for students as they progress through preschool.

Findings by various authors indicate that parental involvement is positively associated with achievement in the educational, psychological and physical development of children. Not all findings are positive, however (Moore, 2016). Validation of the social media interactions used between teachers and parents is necessary. Although such quantitative analysis is beyond the scope of this study, it is an important element of future work. This work could be supported by the findings of this study, which hypothesises that increased and improved teacher–parent social media interactions have a positive influence on children's achievement. This impact on student achievement could then be measured quantitatively. Prior to undertaking quantitative studies, however, qualitative studies are vital to contextualise the perceptions of teachers and parents on the use of communication technologies (Johnson & Puplampu, 2008).

A larger sample that includes teachers using social media platforms to interact with stakeholders throughout the province of Istanbul could be beneficial, especially if this were able to encompass a more diverse group of families and communities; alternatively, an investigation of a specific city in which social media platforms are currently being used

to interconnect with a preschool community may also produce a better analysis. A study of the preschool community based on the types of interaction they prefer or the kinds of social media they select could be useful for educators seeking to improve communication with their stakeholders.

6.5 Reflexivity

The self of the researcher has an effect on the research. In this sense, any investigator should reflect on every step carefully, thinking about and justifying decisions from the start to the end of their research. At the beginning of the thesis, I identified my position and explained how I began to carry out the study. Now, I explain my reflexivity when I look back at my PhD journey from my experience during and after this research in terms of what I did and what I learnt.

Although I was already familiar with the UK university research setting from my MA, the experience of undertaking a PhD is vital for a full appreciation of the research ethos. My academic experiences during this research led to me developing a deeper knowledge of research, the research field and research skills. Thus, I believe that this doctoral journey has notably improved my knowledge of research as well as the field of social media interactions and parental involvement. Throughout my analyses and understandings of the pertinent literature, I came to the realisation that study on social media interactions and parental involvement is likely to become an increasingly important field for both educators and researchers.

On a personal level, I learnt a lot about my own social media skills by following the digital footprints. I adopted multiple social media tools in my own life and found myself practising the details of contemporary social media technologies from scratch. This experience also allowed me to become a more conscious investigator of the phenomenon I was working with. In addition, my time management and self-motivation skills improved throughout this journey. I learnt how to develop myself in terms of taking the time to

manage the different needs of life. If I were to conduct this study again, however, I would think ahead of time so as to plan even more thoroughly.

In brief, I stepped into this journey to become a better researcher, and there is always scope for enhancement for both research and the researcher. Through it, I have learnt to deal with challenging circumstances and improve myself both academically and personally. The experience of conducting a long piece of research has certainly greatly improved my abilities as a researcher.

Despite many difficulties, I have not lost my interest in what I want to complete. Notwithstanding the moments when I may have doubted my reasons for commencing a doctoral degree, I did not lose hope of attaining a better intellectual capital and academic proficiency. The encouragement from my large family, friends and my supervisors supported me to remain with it. Now I would like to state that this was a pleasant voyage and that I made the right decision to obtain my Ph.D.

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