

**T.C
SAKARYA UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**INTERCULTURAL IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE FOR
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THEIR EDUCATIONAL SITUATIONS:
THE CASE STUDY ON AFRICAN STUDENTS IN SAKARYA UNIVERSITY**

MASTER'S THESIS

Mateso BASHINGWA

Department: Cultural Studies

Thesis Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Ahmet ESKİCUMALI

MARCH-2021

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**“This thesis exam was held online on 19/03/2021 and was unanimously accepted by the jury members as
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AFAM** : Association of Researcher on Africa
- AUM** : Anxiety/Uncertainty Management
- ESOL** : English to Speakers of Other Languages
- IERN** : International Education Research Network
- QDA** : Qualitative Data Analysis
- QSR** : Qualitative Research Software
- SAÜ** : Sakarya Üniversitesi (Sakarya University)
- SNNs** : Social Networking Sites
- TÖMER** : Türk Dili Öğretimi Uygulama ve Araştırma Merkezi
(Turkish and Foreign Languages Research Application Center)
- USA** : United States of America
- YTB** : Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı
(Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities)

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Sakarya University
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<p>In this contemporary world, technology in general and social media in particular play a significant role in adaptation process of international students in their educational situations. This thesis examines intercultural impacts of social media usage on African students in Sakarya University. Analyzing intercultural impacts of social media usage, empirical data have been collected from African students of Sakarya University during the 2019-2021 semester through different methods of qualitative research. Primary sources were notably collected from interviews and secondary information sources to work on this study. With the analysis based on cross-cultural adaptation theories, three key findings have emerged in this research. In academic adaptation, the cultural capital theory which promotes cultural mobility was utilized to analyze learning environment. It has been discussed that language barriers lead African students to the stress and frustration in their education. Thus, social media usage determines pedagogic and communication means to learn Turkish language. In psychological adaptation, the AUM theory which illustrates uncertainty and anxiety in the host culture was also used to improve cross-cultural interaction skills. As a result, social media usage alleviates the feelings of homesickness in educational milieus. In socio-cultural adaptation, the acculturation model theory was utilized to portray the conditions of cultural changes in host environment. It has been confirmed that social media usage is a positive strategy in cross-cultural contacts to provide effective communication among students. Finally, it has been concluded that social media usage plays a considerable role in the educational adaptation process of African Students in Sakarya University.</p>			
Keywords: Social media, intercultural impact, African student, Sakarya University, Cross-culture,			

Sakarya Üniversitesi
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Özeti

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Tezin Başlığı: Sosyal Medya Kullanımının Eğitim Ortamlarında Uluslararası Öğrenciler Üzerindeki Kültürlerarası Etkileri: Sakarya Üniversitesi'nde Öğrenim Gören Afrikalı Öğrenciler Örneği			
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<p>Bu çağdaş dünyada, genel olarak teknoloji ve özelde sosyal medya, uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim durumlarına uyum sürecinde önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu tez, sosyal medya kullanımının Sakarya Üniversitesi'ndeki Afrikalı öğrenciler üzerindeki kültürlerarası etkilerini incelemektedir. Sosyal medya kullanımının kültürlerarası etkilerini analiz etmek için, farklı nitel araştırma yöntemleriyle Sakarya Üniversitesi'ndeki Afrikalı öğrencilerden 2019-2021 eğitim-öğretim yılında deneysel veriler toplanmıştır. Birincil kaynaklar özellikle görüşmelerden toplanmış ve ikincil bilgi kaynakları metodolojik olarak incelenmiştir. Kültürler arası uyum teorilerine dayalı analiz ile bu çalışmada üç temel bulgu ortaya çıkmıştır. Akademik uyum sürecinde, kültürel hareketliliği teşvik eden kültürel sermaye teorisi, öğrenme ortamını analiz etmek için kullanılmıştır. Sosyal medya kullanımının, Sakarya Üniversitesi'ndeki Afrikalı öğrencilerin özellikle eğitim amaçlı kültürlerarası ortama uyum sağlamasına yardımcı olduğu tartışıldı. Dil engellerinin Afrikalı öğrencileri eğitimlerinde strese ve hüsrana sürüklediği bulunmuştur. Sosyal medya kullanımı, Türkçe öğrenmenin pedagojik ve iletişim araçlarını belirlemektedir. Psikolojik uyumda, ev sahibi kültürdeki belirsizliği ve kaygıyı gösteren AUM teorisi, kültürler arası etkileşim becerilerini geliştirmek için de kullanılmaktadır. Sonuç olarak sosyal medya kullanımı, Afrikalı öğrencilerin bir yabancı ülkedeki vatan hasreti duygularını hafifletmektedir. Sosyo-kültürel uyumda, kültürleşme modeli teorisi, ev sahibi ortamdaki kültürel değişikliklerin koşullarını tasvir etmek için kullanılmıştır. Kültürler arası temaslarda sosyal medya kullanımının öğrenciler arasında etkili iletişim sağlamak için olumlu bir strateji olduğu doğrulanmıştır. Son olarak sosyal medya kullanımının eğitime uyum sürecinde önemli bir rol oynadığı sonucuna varılmıştır.</p>			
Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal medya, Kültürlerarası etki, Afrikalı öğrenciler, Kültürlerarası adaptasyon			

INTRODUCTION

During this age of digital communication, social media usage has transformed humans perception in their lifestyle. Internet has emerged the drastic change of communication media in the world for connecting technology devices to become part of our daily lives. From this context, the development of new technology has been considered as an accelerating force which trends globalization in human society. Besides, impacts of new media are demonstrated in the aspects of cognition and social effect which are characterized by the new form of aesthetics which is involved the educational sector. In this connection, the deluge of information threatens our daily life because billions of messages are exchanged around the world every day. Social media usage is taken as a multitask tool which permits a favor of publishing and sharing information. It is used as a self-learning, teamwork communication for both students and pupil-teachers whose feedback gives access to other source of information. It facilitates constructivist learning and collaborative learning in contact with students in their educational situations. Social media networks are an integral part of our everyday life both in the offices and private issues because people are continuously connected one another through technological devices. Overall, this introduction mainly focuses on topic, aim, purpose, method, problem statement, significance, scope and delimitation and organization of the study.

Topic of the Study

The topic of the present study is to investigate intercultural impacts of using social media on African students in Sakarya University. Analysis of social media usage implies the socio-cultural theoretical framework and the context of content analysis taken into consideration in this research. Regardless of the approaches, the study mainly focuses on adaptation process through social media usage in educational context. The prior basis of communication processes is also developed through social media usage when the latter makes possible types of channels that are described as online personal communication from sending a text message to posting. Consequently, social media usage plays a great role in intercultural adaptation in educational situations when it develops relations between international students through types of electronic communication. The study has discussed that social media usage enables African students to adapt in academic, psychological and socio-cultural processes in educational situations. In other words, the

research reflects on contributions of social media usage when international and local students have interaction among themselves by integrating cultural awareness that help them to overcome negative experiences such as culture shock and culture bumps.

Aim of the Study

This study aims at analyzing intercultural impacts of social media usage on African students in Sakarya University. Understanding intercultural adaptation in educational situations, it would be better to analyze how African students could adapt in multicultural environment by using social media. From that context, social media platforms have a key purpose of spreading information which helps African students to build social supports and maintain adaptation skills in the new social environment. Therefore, African students of Sakarya University use social media to learn knowledge and strengthen their relationships not only with classmates but also with their home country relatives. Social media usage is a key factor that influences communication to enhance intercultural adaptation. Because it establishes communication and interaction which are significant points in educational milieus. From these perspectives, this research specifically aims at:

- 1) Analyzing intercultural impacts of social media usage in cross-cultural adaptation process on African students in Sakarya University;
- 2) Examining social media usage as a social instrument that strengthens students' relationships in their educational situations;
- 3) Illustrating social media usage as a strategy which enables African students to learn Turkish language in multicultural environment.

Purpose of the Study

Social media usage is an essential force to accelerate the trend of globalization for transforming the most of all aspects of human society to changes the perception of what a community is defined through the meaning of cultural identity and civic society. Digital media are essentially focused on keeping on changing the way that people think, act, and live in a new way of intercultural interaction. **The purpose of this study is to develop positive attitudes towards international students through other cultures.** It also attempts to show how social media can permit the extension of unlimited audience for spreading information to larger number of people. Thus, it strengthens students' friendships in

educational situations by keeping in contact with families and friends in their home countries. Using social media in relevant education is considered as a way to provide socio-academic supports to help African Student of Sakarya University to adjust in the host environment through transnational social networks which establish and maintain good correspondence among international students.

Significance of the Study

Using social media in educational situations can create mutual understanding among students. International students help providing a basis for developing the skills, habits, and tools of intercultural effectiveness that will support respectful and substantive interaction in Turkey. Therefore, analyzing impacts of social media usage for international students specifically for African students in Sakarya University is an important task for the researchers whose intention is based on finding out social impacts of technology in educational milieus. Moreover, the effects of social media usage as a process of cultural adaptation which depends upon intercultural communication through the model of cross-cultural adaptation. Positive effects of social media usage are determined by the existence of cultural adaptation. The number of international students who come to study in Turkey is considerably increasing because Turkey is one of the countries in the world that receives many international students every year¹.

Therefore, social media usage, through technological devices, could increase intercultural communication and cultural diversities in the educational situations. Social media are becoming the most dynamic applications which enable students not only to socialize with friends but also interact with lecturers. The present research seeks to demonstrate how international students could handle impacts of social media usage for intercultural adaptation in their educational situations. Firstly, this study investigates how social media is perceived by African students while studying in Sakarya University. Secondly, it examines how social media usage strengthens students' relationship in their educational

¹Based on the report provided by the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) which was established on 6 April 2010, it is illustrated that the last 10 years, the number of international students studying in Turkey in higher education institutions has increased by 75% according to current figures. Turkey welcomes approximately 110 thousand international students and 25 thousand are scholarship students. It aims to host 200 thousand international students by 2023 (www.ytb.gov.tr/en/international)

situations. It finally illustrates socio-cultural adaptation in multicultural environments in educational situations.

Method of the Study

This study is conducted through qualitative methods to examine intercultural impacts of social media usage to African students of Sakarya University. Method is included interviews with African students of Sakarya University, group discussions and in-context observations which were conducted through telephone via zoom meeting on internet. This method has been utilized to achieve research purpose of examining intercultural impacts of social media usage in education. It also deals with book factors in-depth such as understanding African students' learning experiences about adaptation process. Sampling has been pursued as internationalization strategy to focus on education, psychology and socio-culture. Data collection has always been considered as a vital part of social science researches because it deals with collecting and gathering information for a research. Data are collected through qualitative method research such as a semi-structured interview which is one of interview types whose aim is to help collecting and gathering deep data in qualitative research. Interview information in conversational style is a comprehensive and subjective interpretation of participant respondents.

Problem Statement

This study analyzes intercultural impacts of using social media for intercultural adaptation in educational situations, the problem statement is based on way that social media enable African students to interact with others for relevant educational purposes. From that context, social media usage is very important that media platforms are key sources of information for international students, which help them build a sense of connectivity. Nowadays, individuals have more alternatives and more choices concerning their media production and consumption. Intercultural impacts of new media are the effect which denotes a specific and individual appeal to allow audience to access for creating message as it is wished to be produced. This was not provided by traditional media. Social media usage is actually becoming a channel which is not only for personal purpose but also for organizational communication. There are endless uses for digital media that enable exchanging messages which can be considered as a way of being a practical tool

in the spreading of messages. Social media can create new forms of multicultural relations that deals with intercultural adaptation of African students in Sakarya University.

However, many African students face various challenges in their process of adaptation to the new cultural environment at school. Making friends with students from the host culture is a difficulty that most international students encounter. Thus, good friendship among students could be a better way to reduce homesickness in educational milieus. In the same direction, the multicultural world whose experiences of sojourners can be successfully enhanced by the transition from one culture to another. The social challenges are mainly related to intercultural adaptation problems whose consequences are portrayed in cultural differences which may negatively impact students in their educational situations. These can cause many mental and psychological problems. Thus, social media usage can academically establish relationships between local and international students.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The framework of the study is based on African students of Sakarya University and this research actually focuses on African students who studied 3 academic years. So, it covers the academic years from 2019 to 2021 because Sakarya University is one the best Turkish Universities which receives many international students including African students who come from various African countries in the purpose of continuing the studies in Turkey per year². Regarding the context, a research field is potentially appropriate for socio-cultural analysis about intercultural adaptation impacts on using social media in educational situations. This study analyzes intercultural impacts of social media usage about intercultural adaptation for African students in Sakarya University. The African students from different academic backgrounds cover this study by providing information about using social media for adapting new cultures. The cultural learning takes place in international education leads to the world conflict reduction. Thus, Sakarya University is typical scope of the study.

²The report of Sakarya University provided in the academic year of 2019-2020 indicates that the number of international students is obviously increasing because hundreds of them are Africans. More than 580 African students are studying in Sakarya University and they come from 42 African countries. They are actually registered in the Sakarya University (www.sakarya.edu.tr/tr/Ogrenciler/YabanciOgrenciler consulted from 28/10/2020)

Organization of the Study

The study comprises four chapters. The introduction gives the general information which is descriptively related with the topic of this research. Thus, it sets up the problem statement, the objectives, and the significance of the study. Furthermore, in this introduction, the main hypotheses are shown and then the scope and delimitation of the research are equally explained in details.

The first chapter deals with critical review of the literature. Indeed, it generally focuses on other researches that have been previously realized accordingly to this topic. In this chapter, the main points about influences of using social media in social situations are discussed. It is further demonstrated how social media are used for transnational connections and socio-cultural integration. Moreover, the social media usage in cultural perspectives is focused in the purpose of valorizing cultural identity, improving cultural interactions, and acquiring cultural experiences.

The second chapter concerns the methodology which illustrates the procedures of interview and techniques that are used in the research. It shows how to collect and analyze data for achieving the aims of this research. From that context, some methods are clarified as well as qualitative approach is mainly applied in this study. Indeed, the theoretical framework which is based upon cultivation and socio-cultural theories including the samples and samples coding are also a part of the study.

The third chapter is dedicated to the findings and analysis which concern essentially the collection and analysis of primary and secondary sources. From that context, the data are collected from some African students in Sakarya University. In addition, the study of African students whose criteria are based on different ages, genders, races, religions, departments and faculties. This chapter empirically reveals the intercultural impacts of social media usage. It also discloses the discussion about the data that has been gathered and is explicitly show intercultural impacts of social media usage in various socio-cultural dimensions.

CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media usage is one of the ways that strengthens social relationships among international students. Many studies have focused on the role of social media usage in educational situations. In this case, it is important to re-evaluate some academic works whose theme is based upon social media usage in socio-cultural dimension. In fact, this chapter attempts to examine the social media usage through a thematic literature review in descriptive contextualization about social influences. Intercultural communication as well as transnational connection and socio-cultural integrations. In this chapter, impacts of social media usage in cultural perspectives will be discussed. Finally, it illustrates how social media usage valorizes cultural identity and improves cultural interactions for international students to acquire cultural experiences in a foreign setting.

1.1. Influences Of Social Media in Social Situations

The social media usage with new technology devices has demonstrated an outstanding explosion in the design and diffusion of information to communication technologies. Indeed, these new technologies have fundamentally changed the nature and scope of our media usage as well as our communication system. Actually, human-technology interactions have increasingly changed the way of our life style. Communicative intentions have just established a joint attention to international students about using social media in educational situations. Due to the popularization of smartphones and other digital technologies such as laptops and tablets are considered as new generation digital natives on which, most of international students, are relied in their daily days. They provide a considerable basis for both understanding and designing utterances in conversations. This part of study will analyze influences of social media usage for international students in social situations such as:

- Social media usage in intercultural communication;
- Social media usage in transnational connections;
- Social media usage in socio-cultural integrations.

1.1.1. Social Media Usage in Intercultural Communication

The social media applications characterize the way that international students learn from others in socio-educational situations. Cultural varieties are considered as aspects that can

allow international students to gain self-confidence among themselves in a diverse student population. Intercultural communication is defined by Jandit, F., E. (2001) as a face to face communication between people from different cultures. In addition, it is considered as a message producer who is a member of one culture and the message receiver from another culture (McLuhan, M. 1964) Indeed, intercultural communication or cross-cultural communication deals with different cultures in social groups and how culture affects communication. Therefore, Ledwith & Seymour (2001), Cushner & Karim (2004) state the cross-cultural contact offers students an opportunity to improve their cross-cultural communication skills. It also describes the wide range of communication process which is included social problems that naturally appear within an organization in social context made up of individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

In fact, the study of Neuliep (2014) illustrated that intercultural communication plays a significant role in intercultural contact when it is used between people of different cultures and ethnicities. From that context, students from various cultures communicate by using social media to adapt with new cultural environments. Concerning the intercultural adaptation, international students use social media to learn about their host countries. They establish and maintain relationships, and stay informed with events in the countries where they came from. It is reasonably admitted that “social media platforms are a key source of information for international students, which help them build a “sense of connectivity with what’s happening around them (Binsahl et al. 2015).” Social media usage is also taken as a system of communication which brings human society in cross-cultural arena. It develops cultural diversities while students are exchanging among themselves. This fact shows how intercultural communication functions in social situations. In spite of the fact of communication, it is concluded that “cross-cultural contact had not only transformed students into global citizens but the acquisition of culture specific skills had also enhanced their employability, equipping them to operate in an increasingly globalized working environment (Dr. Lorraine, 2012).” Social media usage, in intercultural communication, facilitates international students to acquire effective cultural skills that allow them to be global citizens in their educational situations.

However, international students get some social challenges based on intercultural communication because there are distinctive communicative features of new media that

have brought them to the level interconnection. This demonstrates the existence of technology communication which is not specifically in the traditional sense because social media usage influences the form and the content of information/message. Intercultural communication usually occurs in verbal and nonverbal in educational situations. Consequently, code exchanges are used in interpersonal communication; “Students who study in a different country should learn intercultural communication idioms and gain intercultural competence during the period between culture shock and intercultural adaptation (Aysen Temel E., 2016).” Thus, it is possible to agree that two students from different cultures can understand each other when they communicate on the basis of grammar and lexical meaning. It is evident that misunderstandings and communication deficiencies could occur in the time of communication. Therefore, message content which depends on cultures, in intercultural communication, is considered as a major factor that determines what a speaker or receiver intends to express in accordance with cultural contexts.

For understanding communication impacts, it can be argued that language and culture define a great impact of intercultural communication as it is explained in this work “The discrepancy between language and culture also applies to social situations, such as perceptions of humor, which can be dramatically dissimilar. International students may feel frustrated when beautiful sentences come out prosaically because of the loss of cultural background (Zeyuan & Zeng, 2017).” Then, intercultural communication and cultural awareness may result in interacting with students from different cultural backgrounds. The intercultural communication misunderstanding may create a negative stereotype about international students who may have a different culture, history, belief system, identity, and language and gender definition. Furthermore, the diversified practices through social media usage, including inter-personal communication such as postings and information seeking, tend to examine the socio-cultural contexts and implications within which these practices are embedded. Social media usage ceases to follow the ‘one-too-many’ paradigm that dominates traditional media. Instead, the intercultural communication “centralizes users who are now creators of online content and facilitates the emergence and/or maintenance of human connections through two-way communication (Xinyu, Zhao, 2016).” Despite the diversity of ways to conceptualize

social media, cultural backgrounds remain a major fact to determine what one wants to mean in communication.

1.1.2. Social Media Usage in Transnational Connections

Social media usage is considered as the way which international students can exchange their life experiences and school activities. Hence, social media usage is a reliable and valuable source for seeking connections for intercultural adaptation processes. It is indeed underlined that “Social media offer interaction and conversation platforms for international students and sojourners to help them remain in contact with local and abroad individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Rui & Wang, 2015).” Through social media, international students can strengthen, build, and maintain social relationships whether in school classes or outside of schools. This relationship is also considered as a contingent on students’ own considerations of the social contexts in which they are embedded. Thus, social media usage in transnational connections plays a great role in strengthening their relationships. Therefore, there is a close correlation between social media usage and the maintenance of transnational connections in educational situations.

According to Ellison, N.,B., et al. (2011), it is underlined that the use of social media facilitates international students to keep in touch with friends and family in their home nations. This contributed to the formation of “imaginary bonds with their homelands” and offered them “virtual home-based support networks. From that situation, the use of social media in educational situations plays a positive role when “Social media help students exchange various types of knowledge and facilitate relationship development and maintenance when used as better alternatives to Face-to-Face communication (Mana Ece., T., 2003).” Consequently, an overview of the extant studies which has been provided on social media usage among international students within educational contexts and in their wider everyday lives reveal that transnational connections widen students’ wellness in their cultural diversities. Then, such connections and relationships assist in overcoming adjustment challenges and establishing a sense of belonging to the host community (Spencer-Rodgers, J., 2001). Indeed, to define social media usage in transnational connections, is to tackle distinct platforms from traditional media that reveal the identifiable perspectives on social media’s relevance to the lived experience of international students in their societies.

Therefore, international students who take part in cooperative and group-oriented programs within the university and local community tend to report more positive views about cultural diversity as well as personal and social development. Inter-student programs help international students to socialize among themselves. As a result, they learn to search for warmth, comfort, and affection with their fellow compatriots. In addition, Shanti Robertson examined international students' everyday lives in the context of the education-migration. It is pointed out that the fact that social media usage as modes of communication that were utilized by the student-migrants in Australia helped them to maintain and mediate global social networks. The result is that "Among the various modes, social media was widely adopted for social contact with globally dispersed friendship networks (Robertson, 2013b)." Considerably, the real-time interaction that was offered to use social media enabled them to be always updated about what was happening with their friends and family. The social media conveniently facilitate them maintaining and mediating student-migrants in their relationships.

As a matter of fact, the research of Suseela, M., et al. (2011) who revealed that to connect with the home nation through social media to maintain an aspiration for transnational mobility after graduation. Additionally, this allows students to keep track of their friends and family through social media in order to be always updated with what happen around them specifically in their homeland, even in overseas. The social media usage offers the students a kind of mediated intimacy which substitutes the need for a real presence of their family and friends in their countries of origin. This transnational connection boosts their decision to live a mobile life. However, the transnational connections facilitated by social media and other mediated communication modes are not without pitfalls. Robertson's (2013b) research findings suggested that the simultaneity and convenience facilitated by digital connectivity could possibly as result of a sense of what has been neglected and postponed or forgotten. The intimacy mediated by digital technologies could be a poor substitute for real-world interaction."

1.1.3. Social Media Usage in Socio-Cultural Integration

Social media usage in socio-cultural integration is a better way that allows international students to express their own thinking about what they feel in their everyday lives. There has been substantial researches on the potential of social media usage which illustrates

how it facilitates integration of international students into their host societies. According to Gomes (2015), social media offer students a unique way to “fit” into a society. The above study particularly intends for those international students who created Facebook accounts after their arrival in a host country. In the same research, it has been shown that they believed in a regular communication feature for Facebook accounts which explain integration process that facilitates interaction.

Also, other works have confirmed that confirmed that “cross-cultural contact can lead to the deconstruction of negative stereotypes (Hofstede 2001) and to the development of a culturally relativist mindset which has important implications for future intergroup relations (Martin and Harrell 2004).” Reasonably, it is clear that digital media’s potential is to transform the students’ sense of locality and belonging from the dichotomy of here/there to a syncretic co-presence of homeland. In addition, it was equally reported how international students inhabit through the use of social media in educational situations influences them to the spirit of locality. In other words, the locality which is experienced by international students is no longer considered as a singular form but a constant shift from one place to another.

Pitts, M. J, (2009) argue that intercultural adaptation is made possible through using both local and transnational media where simultaneity and connectivity are offered. This situation has been provided as empirical evidence which suggests the potential of social media usage which aids international students to adapt with new cultural environment. Also, it was investigated that “American and international students perceived and interpreted social media as well as its impact on their lives in the United States (Sandel, 2014).” It was also revealed that there were cross-cultural differences in the effects of behavioral disengagement on social adjustment, goal commitment/institutional attachment, and overall adjustment depends upon social media usage. Furthermore, seven American students and sixteen international students, in same research, it was suggested that online and mediated communication, “enhanced the students’ experience, providing help with socio-cultural skills, informational needs, relational bonds, and psychological well-being. As conclusion, “social media helps students alleviate stress and feelings of homesickness during their sojourn (Özoğlu M. G. & Coşkun, İ., 2012).”

Therefore, the social media space substantially provides information via networks to prevent them from stress and loneliness in their schools and homes. There are exclusionary features of social media that may impede international students' socio-cultural integration into the host society. In the Leask's work (2009), it has been found that socio-cultural integration is also included in a social friendship "which requires a campus environment and culture that motivates and rewards interaction between international and home students in and out of the classroom. Additionally, focusing on a particular group of international students in social integration, it might be applied the conventional way of viewing the social integration which is based on their interaction with the host society that is quite hidden and invisible "when viewed from the perspective that assumes a dominant, mainstream campus culture (Chen & Ross, 2015)." Thus, social integration is motivated by the social atmosphere which is found in the school milieus such as classrooms and campuses.

For more details, international students primarily built and maintained relationships with those from the same country because it has been discussed that "different social ideologies and moralities disconnect many international students from their previous identities, while the different cultural environments continue to confound them (Aksoy, Z., 2012)." This issue is further exacerbated when international students prefer home country social media platforms to those in the host country. There are differences that were discovered such as effects of religion and positive reframing on personal/emotional and overall adjustment in socio-cultural integration.

The effect of active coping from other students' cultural backgrounds was significantly found different on academic adjustment of first-year of international students. From this context, it was equally concluded that "international students who have a number of friends from the same country as well as the host country, who share accommodation with other students, and who take part in different student organizations are more socially integrated and do better academically (Croucher, S.M., 2011)." Thus, social media usage and student school organizations positively encourage international students to be accessible resources to socio-cultural integration. Interaction, transnational practices and social integration among international students have become the research interests.

1.2. Impacts of Social Media Usage in Cultural Perspectives

Social networking sites are associated with cross-cultural adaptation among international students because it beneficially implicates them to cultural diversities when they exhibit emotional restraint under social circumstances. Based upon the cultural perspectives in educational situations, using social media can be observed as “building on international diversity as a resource to engage with content knowledge providing different cultural perspectives on topics shaping projects around countries (Diana Y. et al. 2015).” While using social media in educational contexts, international students share life experiences. With the effect of social media, geographical borders are overcome by individuals when two persons from different cultural backgrounds are shared. Therefore, this section will analyze the cultural impacts of social media usage in educational situations such as:

- Social media usage as valorization of cultural identity;
- Social media usage as improvement of cultural interactions;
- Social media usage as acquirement of cultural experiences.

1.2.1. Social Media Usage as Valorization of Cultural Identity

Throughout the intercultural adaptation, social media are also used to learn about cultures and implementing relationships among international students. They allow them stay connected with the events that occur in their home countries. From that aspect, cultural identity is referred to a group of people whose adhesion is based upon a given cultural background. Thus, as M.G. Moris (2000) asserts that cultural identity is conceptualized as a fact of having an international sense of identity, briefly speaking assessment and structure that should be attributed to identify the nature of sojourners themselves when considering the status of psychological adjustment. For example, as long as students live in their mother culture environments, it is not easy, among them, to realize their own cultural identity. It is worth arguing that social media are utilized for “establishing and sustaining cross-national interactions, (Morayo O. A., 2013)” valorize a cultural knowledge in the powerful space where the various ethnic groups within the self-identified Third World community had the critical mass and political will to demarcate rigid boundaries. It shows that social media is a social major area where both domestic and international students learn about cultural values from various ethnicities. It is also

about gaining knowledge, attitudes and skills that are needed for effective intercultural communication that increase cultural self-awareness.

In fact, the significant conclusion of the above study confirmed that “a possible explanation could be that the more contact students make with the host country, the more they develop local connections and understand their host’s culture; in turn, this propels them to acquire more adaptive social skills to aid adjustment to the new status quo (Zeyuan Zeng, 2002).” Additionally, it can be explained that “Exposure to other cultures led to a growth in tolerance and acceptance of new practices and values: the words open, open-minded, understand and tolerant were used often to describe how students felt their outlook had changed (Hofstede, 1991).” This helps them to see one’s another culture as a social treasure. This means that learning about cultures is a skill that many students take as a grant. Even though cultural contacts could be important to valorize cultural identity in social milieus. In the same study, it is illustrated that cultural relativism³ as recognition that no single culture has the absolute criteria for judging another.

However, when the personal motivation is considered as a necessary condition for learning from cross-national interactions, it is perceived that many domestic and international students lacked the motivation to consistently engage in cross-national encounters in their educational situations. The study of Çetin, Y., et al (2017) has “described a range of helpful instructional practices that support cross-national interactions, including creating explicit expectations for interaction among all students, integrating cross-national interactions into classroom activities and assessment (e.g. via group assignments).” To promote the cultural values among international student, cultural valorization is made in classrooms for “ensuring comprehension of activity goals among international students, and building on international diversity in the classroom as a resource to engage with content knowledge (Olugbemi, J., J., & Glen, S.,A., 1999)”.

This is done because it was discovered that international students face two main problems consisting of unfamiliar culture and academic environment. Some international students get stressed because of the differences in teaching and learning styles as well as the

³It is defined as the idea that a person's beliefs, values, and practices should be understood based on that person's own culture, rather than be judged against the criteria of another. It was established as axiomatic in anthropological research by Franz Boas in the first few decades of the 20th century and later popularized.

problems resulted from cultural differences (Sabrina, Z, 2008). It shows that cultural factors affect overall adaptation and the cultural problems that have a negative effect on academic success and learning. To use social media for valorizing culture could be one of the solutions that could avoid cultural shocks.

1.2.2. Social Media Usage as Improvement of Cultural Interaction

Interaction through digital media illustrates the contingent impacts of information communication technologies on the lived experiences of both domestic and international students. From that context, it is witnessed a large growing academic interest in the role of the new media in particular social media developments in international students' lives. Based upon educational situations, social media usage absolutely improves cultural interactions among students. Thus, the research of Wendy S. Nielson et al., (2007) which highlights the learning outcomes, through social media, of both domestic and international students. The outcomes can articulate the importance of trust in the relations between teachers and students when serving them on building and maintaining stability of school culture.

Moreover, there is a research that investigates about impacts of campus internationalization. It sought to identify contributions of international students to teaching and learning by using social media on campus. "This study was to document domestic and international students' experiences as they interact both inside and outside of the classroom at university (Dr. Hsia Owen, H., 2011)." The findings illustrate how much. It is important to use social media in education perspectives. It is worth agreeing that "social media connect people across space and time allowing them to find like-minded communities and participate creatively in public life as never before. Moreover, social media promote the interconnectedness and interdependence of our culturally diverse world. The convergence of new media and globalization that have shrunk the world into a smaller interactive field where students can improve their learning outcomes confirm. According to Özer, M. (2012), that "the outcome of improved cross-cultural skills is a benefit of the sojourn that is too frequently hypothesized."

Therefore, it is credible that international students interact with others within the context of inter- and intra-cultural environments to facilitate contextually a deeper understanding of cultural backgrounds. Some research works have addressed the issues that have

emerged in multicultural and diversity education research in regard to cognitive, effective and behavioral learning benefits associated with diverse students actively engaging in a series of purposeful interactions. This justifies that international education plays an integral role to benefit from various contacts with cultural “others”, as a way to promote beneficial cross-cultural interactions (Andrade & Evans, 2009; Leask, 2009).”

1.2.3. Social Media Usage as Acquirement of Cultural Experiences

As the number of internet users is rapidly increasing, it is credible that social media have actually become more popular in our daily lives. Social media usage provides a common way of linking people together through knowledge, behavior, attitudes and a sense of belonging to a greater social network other than one’s own local community. Cross-cultural experience in term of cultural skills that are relatively sensitive for conductive acquirement whose adaption is connected with a new culture. It is obvious that cultural experience is acquired through previous experiences which are associated with socio-cultural adjustment in the host environment. Thus, the importance of cultural experiences, through social media usage, enhances a mixed-nationality context which allows existing knowledge to be called into question for a first-hand contact between different cultural group set alongside word of mouth.

Thus, Peshkin’s (1988) process-oriented which is based on the cyclical model of intercultural suggests that intercultural attitudes such as respect for other cultures’, openness, curiosity and discovery can help students develop the capacity to engage with and benefit from others’ cultural perspectives.” Thus, cultural experiences in the various subcultures allow success to cross the borders in social context. The evidence of existence as a unique subculture can be found in many analysis levels: individuals teachers’ beliefs and attitudes for students’ subcultures and community cultures. It is worth noticing that cultural experience is acquired while community values are given to students as socialization aspects to strengthen students’ solidarity. The learning environment levels affect what goes on in the school. Therefore, this study emphasizes on “the type of experience each person in the school encounters, and how the community’s values are transmitted and young people socialized (Wendy S. Nielsen & Samson Madera Nashon, 2007).”

In fact, studying in a new cultural environment, enables international students to be considered as cultural ambassadors when interacting with others. This may require maintaining an open-mind and positive attitude toward people from different countries in return. Hence, positive attitudes toward students whose cultures are different, could maintain their relationships. This research confirms that “International students may contribute to the cultural diversity of the host country and institution with their home culture and ethnic experiences including, beliefs, traditions, language, food, clothing, music, and so on (Wiseman, John, M. 1995).” It is worth stating that cultural diversities may help the local community or university to develop their cultural awareness with worldview by interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Even though the entire works assert those international students, it may offer cultural benefits, many of them are still subject to prejudice in educational situations. For example, investigating on attitudes toward international students may consider international students as a threat to their liberty, education, beliefs, values, physical wellbeing, and social life. This shows experience cultural clashes in cultural environment when international students react negatively for differently adapting what happens in their social milieus. The study asserts that “some students may find equilibrium between their previous ethnic identity and current cultural identity and therefore survive in the new environment successfully, while other students may find the difference between the two identities confusing and frustrating; at times they may even reach a dangerous mental health state (Furnham, A. et al., 1995).” Therefore, cultural identity plays a focal role in multicultural environments. The different aspects of social media usage have been discussed.

The present research intends to contribute to the literature concerning intercultural impacts of social media usage on international students in general and on African students of Sakarya University in particular. This chapter essentially concerned the thematic literature review of social media usage in educational situations that was studied by some scholars. It thus sets up the form and process in which intercultural impacts of social media usage will be specifically understood. The next chapter will be centered on the methodology describing research techniques that will be applied.

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodological approach which is applied in this study. It gives more details about research design through qualitative dimension which is based upon methodology used in the research. It also outlines theoretical framework that analytically explains the methods utilized to collect and analyze data. As it is underlined by Bellenger and Greenberg, (1978), it is said that “good research is empirical; it implies that research is related basically to one or more aspects of a real situation and deals with concrete data.” From this reason, main and sub-research questions are developed. Finally, the presentation of samples and their coding will be used to provide concrete data for the research validity.

2.1. Research Questions

Bordens and Abbot (2011) point out that “developing good research questions consists of both in asking answerable questions whose intentions are based on being answered through the scientific methods and asking important questions.” In this research, to analyze the intercultural impacts of social media usage for African students in Sakarya University, some key issues need to be addressed.

2.1.1. Main Research Question

- To what extent does social media usage by African students of Sakarya University impact their intercultural adaptation particularly in educational situations?

2.1.2. Sub-Research Questions

- How does social media usage help African students to adapt with others in Sakarya University?
- How do social media platforms improve socio-cultural interaction among students in Sakarya University?
- How can social media usage enhance African students to learn Turkish language in Sakarya University?

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Social media usage is one of the ways that strengthens social relationships among international students. There are studies which focus on the role of social media usage in

educational situations. In this case, it is important to re-evaluate some academic works whose theme is based upon social media usage in socio-cultural dimension. In fact, this chapter attempts to examine the social media usage through a thematic literature review in descriptive contextualization about social impacts based on theoretical framework. According to Coakley (2015:26), “theories provide the means to see things from new angles and perspectives.” In this regard, this study is guided by four theoretical approaches namely the Acculturation Model, the Cross-Cultural Adaptation Model, AUM Theory and the Cultural Capital Theory. These four approach models give a framework of how African students in Sakarya University live in their new social environment and how they try adapting the new culture by using social media in their educational situations.

2.2.1. Acculturation Model Theory

The concept of acculturation model theory is used in various networks for the social contacts in different societies within the cultural assimilation and modernization forms. According to Berry (1997), acculturation model theory describes a condition where a group of people, from different cultures and customs, come in direct contact with each other due to socio-cultural purpose. This contact leads them to the cultural changes from side to another. Besides, the acculturation model theory helps comprehending social phenomena whose result is based on group of individuals who have different cultures in continuous as first-hand contact (Koester, J. et al., 2003). The subsequent changes can be considered as original culture patterns of both group of people to illustrate ways of cultures that come into direct contact and enhance changes in both two sides of cultures.

However, acculturation is also considered as a double procedure that influences individuals from two social gathering to adjust each other. Regarding this statement, Berry (1997) attempts to describe how acculturation happens in different social forms while stating:

Many kinds of cultural groups may exist in plural societies, and their variety is primarily due to three factors: voluntariness, mobility, and permanence. Some groups have entered into the acculturation process voluntarily (e.g. immigrants) while others experience acculturation without having sought it out (e.g. refugees, indigenous peoples). Other groups are in contact because

they have migrated to a new location (e.g. immigrants and refugees), while others have had the new culture brought to them (e.g. indigenous peoples and national minorities (Berry, 1997).

Acculturation is assumed as a ground where an individual from host experiences can mentally change by drawing with another culture in collaboration with host environments. Also, acculturation includes an emotional change in which an individual has to choose when embracing another culture or custom through individual's character and choice due to changes lied on social and mental qualities.

Nicholson, M.W. (2001) illustrates the immersion that can encompass different characteristics which make the individual's immersion process actual and successful, such as, political participation in the host environment, social relation, learning the language, changing religion, attending schools, working in the market, and participating in the host environment's activities. The idea of immersion is also taken as another vital factor for the degree and results of acculturation.

It characterizes the actual penetration and absorption for individual migrant into another social, cultural, and economic life of the host environment as well. In short words, this concerns the gathering which individuals who are living depending upon length of time of staying in the group, lastingness of contact of permanent settled into process such as sojourners, international student's asylum seekers and guest workers.

2.2.2. Anxiety and Uncertainty Management Theory

The Anxiety/Uncertainty Management theory was developed by William B. Gudykunst whose aim was to define effective communication in society based on anxiety and uncertainty. Intercultural communication is successfully fit in intention of reducing anxiety/uncertainty that occur in social situations. From that caption, The AUM aims to explain effective intercultural interactions in the cross-cultural adaptation. It is utilized to explain the "cross-cultural adaptation by sojourners which refer to temporary visitors in another culture (Gudykunst, 2005)." All in all, the Anxiety/Uncertainty management theory portrays the quality of contact which can reduce uncertainty and anxiety in social

life. Using Social Networking Services (SNSs)⁴ in educational situations can operationalize communication among international students in their social contacts.

According to Kim (2001), “AUM Theory is applicable to international students because it focuses on international students stay in the host country after they graduate, very few internationally planned so when they first arrived.” It is fitting with effective communication for intercultural communication which exhibits great potential for international students. Moreover, multicultural world can be enhanced by experiences of sojourners who make successfully the transition from one culture to another. This emphasizes that acculturative stress is associated with cross-cultural adaptation. The SNSs facilitate largely to information exchange and provide ample opportunities that maintain relationships as well as develop new social ties in educational situations.

In summary, the AUM theory is constructed on two cores: uncertainty and anxiety. Uncertainty which is dealt with behaviors and values embodied individuals from a host culture. Anxiety concerns essentially communication with host nationals. Regarding this context, the AUM theory describes intercultural adaptation which involves cognition of both host and nationals. It also supports an additional dimension in adaption in which individuals are defined in the general well-being for emotion satisfaction. In summary, this theory concerns the perspective of social media usage for international students to adapt in a multicultural environment.

2.2.3. Cultural Capital Theory

The Bourdieu’s theory which is known as the Cultural Capital Theory was developed by the French sociologist whose is Pierre Bourdieu. This theory is constituted around the concept of habitus⁵ which is based on considerable influence of social sciences. The cultural theory intends seeking social agents to develop strategies for adaptation structures in the social worlds. In the same angle, Curry (2008) defines cultural theory as competencies of being a student. In other words, it means that a student’s performances entail how s/he is actively involved in different ways of studying. The capital theory is

⁴Social networking service is an online platform which people use to build social networks or social relationships with other people who share similar personal or career interests, activities, backgrounds or real-life connections. Social networking services vary in format and the number of features.

⁵The Bourdieu’s argument which is the reproduction of social reproduction of social structure results based on social habits, skills and dispositions that individuals perceive the social world around them.

interpreted as highbrow culture that human skills are increasingly expanded to focus on education environment. According to Grayson et al. (2010), the cultural capital theory is an echo in the sociology of education particularly with the respect in the performance of students from different class backgrounds. Briefly, the cultural capital is a concept which can be referred to assets that are inherent to individuals' proficiencies and abilities to promote cultural mobility.

The cultural capital theory is effectively considered as a value and disposition that drive individuals to a successful navigation of the education system for the purpose of adaptation process (Ryan, J. & Hellmundt, S., 2005). Utilizing capital theory contributes international students' transition to learn from another environment. This theory is used to analyze students' acculturation as cultural capital which tends to contribute educational practices in multicultural setting. The same analysis will provide useful lens to grapple students' wider experiences in overseas. Morosanu, (2010) asserts that cultural capital theory helps international students to settle down cultural challenges in a host environment. Overall, this is actively involved while learning to acquire knowledge in different ways through experiences and analysis related with application of ideas. Thus, this theory is appropriately used to narrow how learning in multicultural setting is important for both local and international students.

2.2.4. Cross-Cultural Adaptation Model Theory

The theory of cross-cultural adaptation is considered as a demand which helps to make a cultural adjustment for setting and keeping up a moderate steady to correspond associated with host environment. Individuals or sojourners may act or adapt as locals in a host milieu in order cope with local cultures or customs. This involves the cultural interaction with local people to adapt a new culture in the focal point. According to Kim (1998), cross-cultural adaptation model theory is "a dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to new, unfamiliar, or changed cultural environments, establish (or re-establish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with those environments."

In fact, this theory illustrates adaptation which can be broadly categorized into two sides such as psychological and socio-cultural adaptations. The socio-cultural adaptation is labeled as cultural adaptation process in social situations whereas psychological

adaptation deals with psychological adjustment which enhance a person from a new social environment with/without stress or psychological problems. Both sides concern describing sojourners' conditions in which they leave from one culture to another. Moreover, Kim (2010) portrays the cross-cultural adaptation process as important mechanism in communication between local and immigrant people. This conveys strategic tool which strengthens intercultural communication based on cultures and customs of the host environment. This social system allows acquiring new knowledge and information which consist of adapting quickly for social life betterment.

As fact of matter, many international struggle to cope new cultures to become more active members in the communities in order to adapt to the new culture in the host environment. They intentionally learn host culture to familiarize with the new culture. This helps them behaving in the same way as local people to socialize easily in the new environment. The cross-cultural adaptation is the mechanism for an individual to get a better place in the host environment by adapting the culture, customs, and norms of the local people, even though the capability of cultural adaptation of individuals is different from person to person. Furthermore, even though communication is an essential way of the intercultural adaptation process, the individual capability of communication can affect the way people adapt to a new environment. People who have outstanding personal communication capabilities can easily communicate with the local people and adjust to the new environment easily compared to others as it is cited below:

Strangers realize successful adaptation only when their internal communication systems sufficiently overlap with those of the natives. The capacity of the personal communication system serves as the innermost dimension in the structure of cross-cultural adaptation, enabling strangers to organize themselves mentally, motivationally, and emotionally in and with their socio-cultural milieu, developing ways of seeing, hearing, understanding, and responding to the environment appropriately and effectively (Kim, 2001).

This type of communication is host communication competence which is an ability to communicate in the way that host environment's culture is practically suitable. This is what Kim (2001) defines as "the overall capacity of the stranger to receive and process

information appropriately and effectively (decoding) and to design plans to initiate messages or respond to others (encoding) in accordance with the host communication system.” In summary, the cross-cultural adaptation model theory facilitates a stranger to successfully acquire the host communication competence.

2.3. Research Sample Population

2.3.1. Sample Coding

The sample population as African students of Sakarya University from different cultural backgrounds is considered important to carry out this research. They were purposely selected. The potential participants were fully informed about the procedures that are involved in this study. Kothari (2004) defines coding as a process of assigning numerals or other symbols which help us to answer in a way that responses can be put into a limited number of categories or classes. The overall purpose of the study in detail, they were asked to their consent for participating and giving the right to be interviewed. To collect data, the participants were also asked to reveal their names in the research but the real names were not used for protecting the confidentiality and anonymity of participants' names and recognizable data. African students per country who are officially registered in Sakarya University.

Sample coding goal is to make participants confidential about their information that they provide in the research settings. It is emphasized that “sample coding incorporates a probability for self-selecting sampling procedure to achieve a representative sample of students” (Creswell, J.W., 2007). Indeed, it is used for a purposive and systematic sampling procedure for African students in-depth interview to examine intercultural impacts of social media usage, this research has been conducted through interview to African students in Sakarya University. With an interval of 3 months, respondents were contacted with e-mails as reminders to increase rate of participation. Therefore, it is noted that the total of 66 respondents participated in this current research based on the interview questions which are mentioned above.

Table 1: Illustration of Interview Questions For African Students in Sakarya University

Number	Interview questions
1	How does social media usage help you to develop your intercultural adaptation in Sakarya University?
2	What do you gain from social media usage in aspect of intercultural adaptation in Sakarya University?
3	What do you gain from social media usage in aspect of intercultural adaptation in Sakarya University?
4	How does social media usage contribute to adapt with other students in Sakarya university?
5	How does social media usage help you to create friendship with other students in Sakarya University?
6	What are advantages of using social media by strengthening relationship in educational situations?
7	How often does social media usage help you to overcome social challenges with your school friends?
8	How does social media usage help you to organize school activities?
9	What are relevant school topics that you learn from social media platform?
10	How does social media usage help to learn Turkish language?

Source: Made by the author and approved by the supervisor of this research

These interview questions were made by the author in collaboration with the advisor of this thesis. Afterwards, they were submitted the Ethic Committee in Sakarya University to be ethically analyzed and approved. After their approval, they were sent to some participants as sample before starting real interviews. It was eventually concluded that they fitted with the research. This operation was made to demonstrate the richness of collecting and analyzing data including coding through valid methods, in this study, the sample population is practically made up of sixty-six (66) of international students who are originated from African countries. The research particularly focuses on African students from different academic and cultural backgrounds who are still studying in Sakarya University. The code names are attributed to informants because their personal names will not appear. But the abbreviation coding of their respective countries are shown in the presentation of the data.

This study intends to analyze intercultural impacts of social media usage. After all, exploiting efficiently the data which are collected from African students, the informants' identities are confidentially protected by proceeding to the coding for research participants. Eventually, the informant groups are technically coded as follows:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) BDI (For Burundian students) | 15) MADG (For Malagasy students) |
| 2) BEN (For Beninese students) | 16) MAL (For Malian students) |
| 3) BURK (For Burkinabe students) | 17) MALW (For Malawian students) |
| 4) CAM (For Cameroonian students) | 18) NIGE (For Nigerien students) |
| 5) CHAD (For Chadian students) | 19) NIGR (For Nigerian students) |
| 6) COM (For Comoros students) | 20) RCA (For Central African Rep. students) |
| 7) DJB (For Djiboutian students) | 21) SIERL (For Sierra Leonean students) |
| 8) DRC (For Congolese Democratic students) | 22) SOMA (For Somalian students) |
| 9) ERT (For Eritrean students) | 23) SUD.I (For North Sudanese students) |
| 10) ETHI (For Ethiopian students) | 24) SUD.II (For South Sudanese students) |
| 11) GUIBS (For Guinea Bissau students) | 25) TANZ (For Tanzanian students) |
| 12) GUIEQ (For Guinea Equatorial students) | 26) TUN (For Tunisian students) |
| 13) IVOR (For Ivory Coast students) | 27) UGA (For Ugandan students) |
| 14) KEN (For Kenyan students) | 28) ZIMBW (For Zimbabwean students) |

Eventually, the sample coding which is constituted by 66 samples from 28 African countries. In this study, the personal names or identities will not appear due to the academic confidentiality. The data are just coded by the above coding African countries.

Table 2: Demographic Information of Interview Participants

N°	Country of origin	Respondent coding	Gender		Level of education			Participant number
			Male	Female	Under-graduate	Master	PhD	
1	Burundi	BDI	7	2	5	1	3	9
2	Benin	BEN	1	0	1	0	0	1
3	Burkina Faso	BURK	1	0	1	0	0	1
4	Cameroon	CAM	5	1	2	3	1	6
5	Central African Republic	RCA	3	0	2	0	1	3
6	Chad	CHAD	1	0	1	0	0	1
7	Comoros	COM	1	0	0	0	1	1
8	Democratic Republic of the Congo	DRC	3	0	1	1	1	3
9	Djibouti	DJB	1	0	1	0	0	1
10	Eritrea	ERT	1	0	1	0	0	1
11	Ethiopia	ETHI	1	0	0	0	1	1
12	Guinea Bissau	GUIB	1	0	1	0	0	1
13	Guinea Equatorial	GUEQ	1	0	1	0	0	1
14	Ivory Coast	IVOR	3	0	2	1	0	3
15	Kenya	KEN	2	1	1	1	1	3
16	Madagascar	MADG	3	3	4	0	1	5
17	Malawi	MALW	1	0	1	0	0	1
18	Mali	MAL	1	0	1	0	0	1
19	Niger	NIGE	2	0	1	0	1	2
20	Nigeria	NIGR	1	0	0	0	1	1
21	Sierra Leone	SIERL	1	0	0	1	0	1
22	Somalia	SOMA	2	0	1	1	0	2
23	North Sudan	SUD.I	1	0	0	1	0	1
24	South Sudan	SUD.II	2	0	2	0	0	2
25	Tanzania	TANZ	6	1	3	2	1	7
26	Tunisia	TUN	0	1	1	0	0	1
27	Uganda	UGA	3	2	4	1	0	5
28	Zimbabwe	ZIMBW	1	0	1	0	0	1
GENERAL TOTAL			56	10	39	14	13	66

Source: Made by the author based on the data collected from interviews

2.3.2. Sampling Method

Selecting participants in the qualitative method, sampling method was used to fulfill the objectives of the study. From that option, a purposeful sampling is considered as one of the technique for on-probability sampling which enables the researcher to get useful information. In this study, particular characteristics of the research population were not made from the sample. As the purposeful technique which is homogeneous sampling has been utilized for African students in Sakarya University. In fact, among the total number of participants are the students who are registered in Sakarya University. 66 African students participated in the study (participation rate 11.04%) In our study, one of the sampling techniques which was applied for the selection of research participants is purposive sampling whose aim was to select respondents purposely and deliberately so that the need information on the topic can be appropriate.

According Creswell, J.W., (2007) say that “The purposive sampling technique, also known as judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of the participant due to the qualities the participant possesses. It is a nonrandom technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of participants. It is clear that purposive sampling is implemented when the researcher wants to know in-depth information about the study problem. This generates a more profound understanding of the problem. Therefore, participants who are selected through purposive sampling are those whose ambition is to transfer their thoughts in good manners.

Purposeful sampling has also been to refer to the intentional selection of the participants for having a better understanding of intercultural impacts of social media usage. In order to develop a comprehensive perception, it is mentioned that “purposeful sampling was used to provide multiple perspectives of African students to comprehend the social phenomenon”(Creswell, J. W., 2007). 66 African students as interview respondents were purposefully selected to participate in this research. However, due to the Covid-19 outbreak, this research did not unfortunately balance the participants in terms of gender and numbers. Most of responses were carried out from the minority respondents rather than the majority respondents. Availability for participation refined respondents for time and place of interview representation.

Due to the study population where the participants were selected. For the research, the participants have been chosen purposely depending on the information and the data that they could generate for the study. Because of this, the sampling method implemented in this research is purposive sampling. This is very useful to select the participants who have in-depth information and interest in the research. The researcher tried to select participants purposely who are very active and have enough information on the research problem. In addition, the selection process was based on the selection of students from different countries in order to make the data more diverse and comprehensive.

Table 3: Summary of Research Participation

Countries	Gender		Level of education		
	Male	Female	Undergraduate	Master	Ph.D.
28 African countries					
Participants: 66 (11.04%)	56 (84.84%)	10 (14.15%)	39 (59.09%)	14 (21.21%)	13 (19.69%)

Source: Made by the author based on the collected data

This study was conducted through the online interviews due to the pandemic of the Covid-19. Indeed, 66 African students from 28 African countries participated in the interviews whose questions are listed below. From the total participants, 56 (84.84%) were male, 10 (14.15%) were female, 39 (59.09%) were studying in undergraduate programs, 14 (21.21%) were studying in Master programs and finally 13 (19.69%) were enrolled in PhD programs. All of them were selected from the different faculties and departments in Sakarya University. This case study intends to bring the understanding of the complex issue of using social media whose impact is dealt in the research field. From that context, focusing on intercultural impacts of social media usage, African students of Sakarya University are chosen as the study case. The table below gives detailed information of those African students who participated to the present study.

Table 4: The Number of African Students in Sakarya University (2019-2020)

Rank	African countries	Number of students
1	Somalia	55
2	Egypt	40
3	North Sudan	37
4	Morocco	18
5	Algeria	18
6	Tunisia	14
7	Cameroon	14
8	Chad	13
9	Uganda	13
10	Tanzania	12
11	Burundi	12
12	Equatorial Guinea	12
13	Ethiopia	11
14	Niger	10
15	Mali	9
16	Ghana	8
17	Djibouti	7
18	Zimbabwe	6
19	Guinea Bissau	6
20	Central African Republic	6
21	Kenya	6
22	Madagascar	6
23	Nigeria	5
24	Republic Democratic of Congo	5
25	Mozambique	5
26	South Sudan	5
27	Senegal	5
28	Ivory Coast	5
29	Sierra Leone	3
30	Mauritania	3
31	Libya	3
32	Togo	2
33	Republic of Congo	2
34	Gambia	2
35	Benin	2
36	Burkina Faso	2
37	Zambia	2
38	Liberia	1
39	Gabon	1
40	Sao Tomé and Príncipe	1
41	Malawi	1
42	Rwanda	1
	TOTAL	390

Source : <http://about.sakarya.edu.tr/tr/Ogrenciler/Ogrenciler/YabanciOgrenciler> 15/10/2019

Table 5: The Number of African Students in Sakarya University (2020-2021)

Rank	African countries	Number of students
1	Somalia	127
2	Egypt	103
3	North Sudan	47
4	Morocco	27
5	Algeria	25
6	Chad	18
7	Tunisia	17
8	Ethiopia	16
9	Uganda	15
10	Cameroon	14
11	Mauritania	14
12	Equatorial Guinea	12
13	Mali	12
14	Niger	12
15	Burundi	12
16	Tanzania	11
17	Kenya	8
18	Zimbabwe	8
19	Guinea Bissau	8
20	Nigeria	6
21	Madagascar	6
22	Djibouti	6
23	Ghana	6
24	Central African Republic	5
25	Mozambique	5
26	Libya	5
27	Democratic Rep. of Congo	5
28	Republic of Congo	5
29	Senegal	4
30	Ivory Coast	4
31	Sierra Leone	3
32	Togo	2
33	Gambia	2
34	Benin	2
35	Burkina Faso	2
36	South Sudan	2
37	Liberia	1
38	Zambia	1
39	Eritrea	1
40	Sao Tomé and Príncipe	1
41	Rwanda	1
42	Malawi	1
	TOTAL	582

Source : <http://about.sakarya.edu.tr/tr/Ogrenciler/Ogrenciler/YabanciOgrenciler> 20/11/2020

2.4. Qualitative Approach

In this study, the design of qualitative research is appropriately used to seek understanding a research problem based upon intercultural impacts of using social media in educational situations. Additionally, qualitative research is important because it reflects perspectives of social media usage that involves international students in Sakarya University. International students actually use social media a lot. It is also effective to obtain culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations. That is why qualitative research's strength is based upon its ability to provide a complex description of people's experiences within the framework of a study.

Therefore, Bryman, A. (2004) confirms that qualitative research collects data qualitatively, and the method of analysis is also primarily qualitatively. This method is effective to identify intangible factors such as social norms. Moreover, Denzin & Lincoln (2000) illustrate that "qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible". Also, qualitative research is considerably analyzed in scientific research as the approach which consists in:

1. Seeking answer (s) to question(s);
2. Using systematically a predefined set of procedure to answer question(s);
3. Collecting evidence;
4. Producing findings that were not determined in advance;
5. Producing findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study.

According to Whitehead, D. (2013) most important characteristic set of qualitative research is that it involves a close relationship between the researcher and the participants. Qualitative research helps us to interpret and better understand the complex reality of a given situation and the implication of qualitative data. It also helps us to obtain a rich and complex understanding of a specific social context or typically takes precedence over eliciting data that can be generalized to other geographical areas or populations.

2.4.1. Research Method

This study is conducted through qualitative methods that examine how individuals perceive and experience the world. It is typically utilized for exploring new social

phenomena that capture students' thoughts and feelings. For interpreting this process, qualitative methods include:

- Participant observation: it is appropriate for collecting data on naturally occurring behaviors in the usual contexts.
- In-depth interviews: it is optimal for collecting data on individuals' personal histories, perspectives, experiences while topics are being explored.
- Focus groups: it is effective methods for eliciting data on the cultural norms of a group and in generating broad overviews of issues of concern to cultural groups or subgroups represented.

2.4.1.1. Methods of Data Collection

Data collection has always been considered as a vital part of social science researches because it deals with collecting and gathering information for a research. In this study, data collection is made through qualitative method research such as a semi-structured interview which is one of interview types whose aim is to help collecting and gathering deep data in qualitative research. This kind of interview collects details information in a somewhat conversational style. Semi-structured interviews are often used when the researcher wants to delve deeply into a topic and to understand thoroughly the answers provided (Harrell & Bradley, 2009).” Therefore, the collected data through semi-structured interviews are comprehensive and subjective interpretation of participant respondents. Moreover, this research has provided semi-structured questions to generate enough data and to understand the participants' responses in a better way. The interview was applied in English to generate responses from respondents. Thus, from the total 66 participants, the interview with each students approximately took 25 minutes on average to express their ideas.

Analyzing intercultural impacts of social media usage on African students in Sakarya University, data are collected essentially from primary and secondary sources. According to Blandford (2013), interviews are the best suited for understanding people's perceptions and experiences. Interviews of African students of Sakarya University have successfully been realized through internet. Broadly speaking, interviews are realized through internet and telephone channels because “the primary reason that one might conduct a qualitative interview is to reach a sample population that is geographically diverse locations (Berg,

2001)”. The telephone interviews have been adopted because some African students of Sakarya University live in other regions due to the pandemic of the Covid-19. Therefore, all interviews have been recorded with the prior permission of informants. Then, transcribed verbatims⁶ are tape-recorded and transcribed.

Open-ended questions have been utilized during the interviews because they allow respondents to express themselves freely about using social media in their educational situations. They are used, without presumptions, to see which aspect to stand out from the answers that could be interpreted such as fact, behavior, reaction, etc. African students felt free to describe their routine about using social media in Sakarya University. In addition, open-ended questions have been chosen because the aim of this study is also to seek attitudes, opinions and perceptions about social media usage in Sakarya University.

For Kothari (2004), primary data are those which are collected afresh and for the first time. Therefore, they are original in character. Whilst, secondary data are those which have previously been passed through the statistical process. Primary source is appropriate for collecting data on naturally occurring behaviors in the usual contexts. Interviewing is also optimal for collecting data on individuals’ personal histories, perspectives, experiences while topics are being explored. Other sources are provided through documents, government publications, articles, researches, journals, books, periodicals and mass media such as reports in newspapers, magazines and internet. Overall, both of primary and secondary sources are systematically used accordingly the qualitative research.

2.4.1.2. Methods of Data Analysis

Data analysis is methodically organized according to qualitative content analysis which is common for qualitative data analysis. Speziale & Carpenter (2007) claims that “regardless of the methodological approach is utilized with the goal of analyzing the data to illustrate experiences of those who lived them by sharing the richness of lived experiences and culture”. The qualitative content is used in terms of credibility, dependability, conformability, transferability and authenticity which broadly intend to understand a wide range of themes such as social change and cultural symbols. Thus, the

⁶Verbatim transcription is considered as the art of converting spoken words into text in such a way to capture exactly the message that has been spoken.

trustworthiness of qualitative content trends in the theoretical content of different notions as mass media content and nature of news coverage of social issues (Yin, R.K., 2011).

From that perspective, content analysis is practically utilized in this research because the advantage of this approach to content analysis is gaining direct information from study participants without imposing preconceived categories or theoretical perspectives (Tesch, R.,1990). The content analysis is a method commonly used in social sciences and is therefore a viable choice of this research. The goal of content analysis is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon that describes the content reference to the meanings, contexts and intentions contained messages to these basic steps for:

- (a) developing a research question;
- (b) defining the population;
- (c) directing a research design;
- (d) gathering data;
- (e) interpreting the evidence.

With the statement of Tesch, R. (1990), it is illustrated that “using qualitative content analysis in a research focuses on the characteristics of language as communication with attention to content or contextual meaning of the text”. Taken as a whole, content analysis is all about making valid, replicable and objective influences about the message on the basis of explicit rules. According to Kerlinger (1973), content analysis falls in the interface of observation and document analysis. It is therefore defined as a method of observation. The material for the content analysis can be letters, diaries, newspaper content, folk songs, short stories, and messages of radio, television, documents, text or any symbols.

2.4.2. Nvivo as Qualitative Data Analysis Software

In this research, interview data are also analyzed by Nvivo as a qualitative research software. Nvivo is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) software which was created by QSR International Pty Ltd. Thus, it is a qualitative data analysis program commonly used by educational researchers and its goal is to organize and analyze numerical data (Don Caster, V., 2008). It helps to organize the materials into categories so that it becomes easier to analyze the data. It furthermore operates with a lot of analysis on small or massive volumes of information. Indeed, Bazeley, P. (2007) pointed out the Nvivo’s role

such as to support the inputting, to code, to categorize , to edit, to search and to output of multiple types of data files.

In fact, Don Caster, V., (2007) explains that the node, through qualitative analysis, contains information into a particular way during data analysis in qualitative research. The Nvivo's record is transcribed as document form input into software and nodes. This involves factor in which interview is coded by implying coverage. It also helps differing coverage in interview data from respondents. Therefore, the coverage depends on amount of discussion on factor based on interview data collected by expressing the percentage form. Overall, the data analysis software such as the Nvivo helps researchers to identify analysis which is conducive for improving the rigor of qualitative data. All in all, this chapter has showed the different theoretical and methodical approaches that have been utilized in this study. It is discussed that methods and theories which are effectively related with topic has taken into consideration to illustrate intercultural impacts of social media usage in educational situations.

CHAPTER THREE: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the study is dedicated to the data presentation which were collected from primary sources. Also, the analysis will focus on impacts of social media usage in three dimensions such as academic adaptation, psychological adaptation, socio-cultural adaptation though social media usage. Findings and discussion reveal about using social media for educationally relevant purposes leads African students to engage learning process and improve their academic performance to mobilize them into a more and active participatory role. Finally, this section shows contribution of social media usage to create friendships, learn Turkish language, improve intercultural adaptation process.

3.1. Contribution of Social Media Usage in Education

3.1.1. Social Media Usage For Organizing Academic Activities in Sakarya University

The participants illustrated different perspectives about social media usage to organize academic activities in Sakarya University. Most of them argued that they use social media to be informed about academic activities. In fact, it is well known that social media provide a positive contribution to them when they want to be informed about various academic activities. Therefore, it helps to improve interactions between African and Turkish students. BDI8 who used to participate in different online programs illustrated that, “Social media usage helps me to develop my intercultural adaptation in Sakarya University by offering us the opportunity to participate in different programs online such as meetings or events.” Social media usage does not only offer opportunity about academic activities but also develops intercultural adaptation in Sakarya campus. Regarding this opportunity, IVOR3 added that, “Through creating community sites,[platforms] we get online classes, this helps me to have chance to access easily my school’s programs. After all, I could organize my programs and meeting with students and teachers [in Sakarya University]. So, the student platforms help [me] to organize lessons.” School programs are announced through internet and they have an access to it to get academic information.

From this context, academic adaptation seems to be a burden which hardens them during the adaptation process. When they come to a new country for education purpose, they usually encounter problems based on communication and language. Curry (2008) illustrates the role of the cultural capital theory which conceptualizes the competence of

being a student in a host environment. This theory develops 4 concepts such as spatial, participation, curricular and institutional competences to negotiate new pedagogical practices in ESOL classrooms. The cultural capital theory is utilized to analyze African students' performance in a different cultural learning environment in the comprehension of cultural experiences which are based on academic aspects. Furthermore, the Bourdieu's theory refers to inherent assets for African students' abilities, proficiencies and competences to promote learning a new language in different cultural backgrounds.

Indeed, social media are also used to know academic activities that are published on Sakarya University website. NIGR1 pointed out that, "Through social media I usually get updated about class schedules, assignment submission deadlines. It is a key tool for organizing educational activities. A bunch of people can be easily notified of an activity with almost no effort spent." Therefore, organizing academic activities is seen as opportunity to proceed on the situations that happen in Sakarya University campus as MAD5 explained, "Personally, I get to know a lot about what is going on in class or campus through social media than official announcements by creating chat groups on the various social media platforms. I do discuss with my friends on matters related to academic fields." African students are informed much better in social media usage rather than official announcements. TANZ5 who, is usually connected on social media, said that, "Information about school activities can be shared on social media group for easy access by students. You have direct connection with everybody. It is easier to fix something because you can see how others perceive the activity." Social media usage allows them to know more about academic activities on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter rather than on SAÜ website.

From that perspective, they share information through social media platforms because they are almost connected instead, visiting official websites. Having access to online programs is a considerable advantage as CAM3 said, "Having information published at University website, or social media groups, this helps us to know briefly the course contents, it facilitates rapid insertion about students' knowledge in socio-cultural domains". In other words, it is worth saying that organizing academic activities through social media is helpful to African students about school schedules or published information. This shows how much organizing academic activities is more important to

them. Based on interview respondents, social media usage helps African students to communicate not only with their classmates but also with respective families in their home countries. Focusing on the interaction among international students from different cultural backgrounds and adaptation, the study of Hall Edward, T. (1990) shows how intercultural differences can determine the communication behaviors of societies within different cultures that could have also different skills of handling the information load.

Besides, Taylor, E. (1994) illustrates that social experiences such as beliefs, traditions, language, food, clothing, music and soon are included sociological aspects for students' adaptation. In fact, IVOR2 asserts that, "Social media help me creating relationships with friends in Sakarya University. I know that two persons can pass more time without seeing each other because of lack of time but thanks to social media usage, I can keep contacting with my friends [in Istanbul, Ankara, Bursa etc.]." That is why they live in peace with others as it is stated, "Social media usage helps me to cohabit with other nationalities in Sakarya and I learn Turkish culture. Through integration and communication via social media, it includes exchanges which are efficient for international students (BDI9)." Wiemann, John M. (1997) explicates that international students may help the local community to develop their cultural awareness and worldview by interacting with people from different backgrounds.

Organizing academic activities depends upon what are related with University's schedules. According to NIGE2, he believes that social media helps students adapting the campus life while doing coursework online. He reveals that, "Social media usage helps me to adapt immediately the campus life through social media posts. For me, social media are very important to students in a way of doing coursework and online lessons. It isn't always easy to fit in a new social environment. Fortunately, there are social media that could help us a lot to adapting ourselves in those situations". Social media are helpful for academic activities to African students of Sakarya University. Furthermore, "When I don't understand lessons in classes, thanks to social media it is an opportunity to ask them explaining clearly what was said in the class lessons (CHAD1)." Moreover, the purpose of organizing academic activities is also motivated by the interest of increasing intellectual creativity among students. Using social media to organize academic activities is taken as a lifestyle to African students in Sakarya university because they share

different opinions about their school activities that are being realized as it is written, “Sharing our daily lifestyle and opinions on social media [usage] has brought students together with the same interests that increase creativity between us (UGA3).” From this perspective, TANZ4 claims that, “In case where I missed school projects, interaction with my friends by using social media helps me to understand easily the activities that are going on around.” As a result, using social media in education purpose gives African students an opportunity to understand usefulness of academic activities in Sakarya University.

In Sakarya University, communication between many students with lecturers is limited to academic purposes as understanding class materials, finishing the assignments or doing thesis. Participants have revealed that they can communicate with teachers if there is an academic problem that needs to be solved. It is emphasized that, “Also, I can easily get to my teacher and friends for help if I got stock in my studies and needed help (CAM3).” From that context, the communication core is linked with academic affairs that are necessarily required to be done by the university lecturers such as signing academic documents which may be submitted to institute or faculty. BDI4 informs, “Because it’s already organized in social media platforms, if I need some urgent information to ask my teacher [lecturer], I immediately write to him/her so that I can get quick reply to my request. For me, advantage of social media is based on urgent message that I want to deliver to my prof.” Communicating depends on the language ability even though Turkish students understand very quick what a foreign student is speaking. In summary, academic integration through communication, using social media help them to adapt in their educational situations. African students must work hard to adapt the new academic standards because , on one hand, they have to improve their Turkish language skills and, on the other hand, they have to overcome cultural differences between Turkey and Africa. This will help them becoming able to take initiative for interacting with other students as well as lecturers to ameliorate their academic performance

However, African students use social media not only to be informed about academic activities but also about online business. This is the case of MADG1, “First of all, I would like to let you know that social media is kind of system which established for businesses but on the other hand it built to facilitate our life as matter of fact it’s depends on the way

we use it.” The fact is that there are some African students who pay school fees for themselves. Social media platform is also an access to advertise pictures of their small business for sale. This helps them getting little money for satisfying their daily needs. In short, social media usage creates access to know school programs and deal with some business online. This confirms social media advantage as this interviewee said, “I gain social benefits as interacting and improving my school skills. Social media can help me keep in touch with friends what I didn’t understand at school (BDI3).” Interaction between international students enable them to improve education skills and knowledge to keep them in touch with others as a step of adaptation process, “I gain knowledge and awareness of the people in the university thus making adaption and interaction easier with them. Social media enable me to be informed of everything going on at the campus and also to develop my Turkish level. I get to know people from different backgrounds, participate to interesting gatherings/meetings (RCA3).” It is supported that social media usage helps creating a bond correlation between students who come from different countries.

3.1.2. Social Media Usage as Facility to Learn Turkish Language in Sakarya University

Social media usage gives access on African students of Sakarya University to learn and improve Turkish language. In the interview, the respondents have agreed that using social media allows them learning Turkish language skills. In addition, learning Turkish language is one of the steps of cross-cultural adaptation process in Sakarya University. BDI7 confirmed that, “I learn Turkish language while I’m exchanging with my classmates [Turkish students], also social media usage helps me to learn Turkish language while watching Turkish news through social media.” Thus, watching news through social media facilitates African students of Sakarya University to apprehend Turkish language. Although learning a new language in the host environment is not easy, it is one of the most important steps to adapt a social milieu. During the interview, one respondent confirmed that while watching documentaries on social media, he improves his Turkish language skills, “Social media usage helps me learning Turkish language because there are different ways of learning [foreign languages] for example, I can watch documentaries through social media (CAM6).” Technology device enables them to improve their language skills. RDC2 emphasizes that, “While talking on video-calls, I sometimes find

myself speaking Turkish language with my Turkish classmates.” Learning Turkish language is a significant step in intercultural process. Therefore, social media motivated them to discover new techniques of learning Turkish language skills.

According to Grayson, J. (2010), cultural capital analyzes international students’ accumulation which contributes to educational practices in a multicultural setting whose analysis will provide a useful lens for grappling with students’ wider experience overseas to help in settling international students in their different cultural environment. Thus, African students’ language performance entails how social media usage could actively involve them in learning Turkish language. This is learnt to acquire knowledge which is useful for their life experiences. As a result, social media usage is to learn Turkish language skills which help African students to adjust in Sakarya University as Juncho et al., (2011) mentions, “Social media applications, especially Social Networking Sites (SNSs) have been an innovative and influential tool with which international students are engaged both in an out of classroom for learning purposes.” In short words, Cultural capital Theory plays a constructive role in education particularly with performance of African students in Sakarya University.

In fact, it is noticed that the majority of African students are impeded by language barriers to adapt in Sakarya University. Interviewed students have agreed to encounter academic problems which are based on language barriers and they lead them to frustration. Thus, language barriers are among challenges that hinder African students to academic adaptation. Learning a new language in a host country is not easy because some interviewees have confirmed that language is a key culture in the host milieu. From that reason, some participants argued to learn Turkish language to have cultural experience in Sakarya university. Social media usage is one of the tool that helps them to navigate it in Sakarya University. This line portrays that, “Social media usage helps me learning Turkish language because there are different ways of learning [foreign languages] for example, I can watch documentaries through social media (CAM6).” Social media play a considerable role in learning Turkish language.

This is more helpful when they are in contact with Turkish students or teachers. Although they do so, they sometimes find their Turkish language level insufficient to express themselves as free as they want. As a consequence, they are often unable to ask questions

in classrooms. This situation creates the sense of frustration when they cannot understand clearly what a lecturer is teaching in classrooms. When language ability is lower, African students get frustrated. But those who study in 3rd or 4th year may not have the same problem. Poor language ability has negative impact on their education. In spite of the different methods used in language learning, social media determine good means of students' sharing information in their educational situations. In summary, using social media constitutes an essential factor of learning Turkish language to understand and improve their socio-cultural experiences. African students of Sakarya University attempt to maximize their cultural capital through participation in a multiplicity of activities in host environment which is generally academic. Above all, interviewees have mentioned expectations in Sakarya University are likely to bring about hope in their future lives. Interviewed students have agreed to have adapted to social environment of Sakarya city. From the above analysis, it is obvious that in terms of academic adaptation.

3.1.3. Social Media Usage as Pedagogic Means

African students use social media as pedagogic strategy for learning process which enhances them to adapt to the pedagogic methods such as reading academic materials and assignment information. Most of interviewed students argued to use social media to learn lessons as an alternative means to revise their lessons and improve their comprehension. This is highlighted by KEN1, "Social media helps us so much for instance when you don't understand a lesson in the classroom, at evening you may watch some video courses through YouTube, you will understand more in the simplest way." However, there are other social specialized platforms such as Edx, Coursera, FutureLearn, LinkedIn and YouTube are likely the main sources of instruction which are usually utilized as a pedagogy mean by African students in Sakarya University. Likewise, using social media in education context is considered as lecturing which allows discussions among them to be less assertive in academic life.

In addition, in the interviews, participants have illustrated that using social media in the educational intention is still an advantage for sharing information with other classmates. COM1 emphasized that, "Through social media, students can communicate after classes for decisions and meeting with new people by creating a group of meeting among students. Moreover, through social media, some activities could be a chance to know each

other.” It is worth agreeing that studying in cosmopolitan setting is the opportunity to create multiplicity in learning environment. Thus, social media usage plays a considerable role in creating other alternatives for learning. The following participant agreed that social media facilitate exchange among themselves, “I have many friends at school, when I am in the class we can’t speak each other but through social media we talk very well without problems (SUD.I1).” Academic dimension is characterized by attitudinal changes to international students when they are learning to adapt new lives in their educational situations. The effects of social media usage in the processes of cultural adaptation depend upon intercultural communication. Lee & Bradley (2001) conclude that using social media to embrace cultural diversity issues in educational situations could be taken as helpful strategies to create an inclusive learning environment which helps international students to be comfortable in their education life.

In addition, practicing Turkish language which is taught in Turkish and Foreign Languages Research and Application Center (TÖMER) some of the interviewed students revealed that, “Generally, when I want to ask something about schools, I chat with my classmates who know languages different from mine, it is an opportunity to practice Turkish language that we learned from classes (MADG5).” Social media usage highlights understanding of Turkish language skills. “Social media helps us so much, for instance when you don’t understand a lesson in the class, at evening you may watch some video courses through YouTube, you will understand more in the simplest way (KEN1).” Using social media is an important step to improve Turkish language skills. When international students have just learned a new language in a host environment, they become more interactive and cooperative with others. Therefore, learning Turkish language consists of gathering cross-cultural adaptation skills which intend to strengthen educational situations as good cohabitation with different nationalities in Sakarya University. BDI9 supported that, “Social media usage helps me to cohabit with other nationalities in Sakarya and I learn Turkish culture. I use it only for revising my notes. Through integration and communication via social media, it includes exchanges which are efficient for international students.” The fact of learning Turkish language helps them to live in harmony with others for improving adaptation process.

However, apart learning Turkish language, MALW1 sustained that, “This [social media usage] enables me to know what to do when I meet [with] a certain people because I would have seen some of their cultures on social media. In short, social media has made it easy for me to adapt at Sakarya University because if anyone cannot adapt to intercultural, it will be hard for him/ her when pursuing her studies here.” Social media usage strengthens communication between international and local students because they can create media platforms where they can discuss about academic topics. Social media could be analyzed as an access in which they can share advices and life experiences. GUIEQ1 added that, “The advantage is that I learn new cultures, I meet new friends and the most electrifying is that I've been adopted by the culture somewhat due to social media. Learn how people greet, make jokes, stereotypes”. Hence, African students of Sakarya University learn cultural diversity to get information which can help them. All in all, learning Turkish language through social media helps them to integrate in the Turkish society because they can speak the same language.

3.2. Contribution of Social Media in Socio-Cultural Interactions

3.2.1. Social Media Usage for Creating Friendships in Sakarya University

Social media usage plays a constructive role in education because it facilitates interaction between international and local students. In this research, interview respondents confirmed positive contributions of social media usage in socio-cultural situation. The interviewed students have showed that social media create friendships with other students when they discuss about school topics. SUD.I.2 explains that, “Actually, I am able to create friendship through social media. But what it helps me [to] do is to stay in touch with those friends.” Saying connected with friends is a main preoccupation of students for doing school activities. This connection can strengthen fraternal links in their social environments, “Social media usage strengthens the link among students on campuses by creating a social environment for learning and understanding. I believe in this world there are constant things but what is indisputably true is a change as we are living [Sakarya] (SIERL1).” Indeed, multicultural environment is crucial to improve friendships among students. Thus, UGA5 claimed that, “The best advantage of social media is to stay in permanent contact with friends and teachers also the academic administration. But what I learn more from social media is Turkish humor and subtleties in the language. This helps me to exchange and discuss with my Turkish

colleagues.” Through social media, academic relationships are not only limited to students but also to the academic administration.

3.2.2. Psychological Adaptation of African Students Through Social Media Usage

Psychological adaptation refers to emotional reactions which involve degree of well-being in life satisfaction in the cross-cultural interaction process. Kim (1991) reveals that international students temporarily forget their own cultural habits and continue to accept new cultures until they will experience the process of psychological adaptation. International students adapt psychologically due to environment changes. As a result, the SNSs facilitate the cross-cultural adaptation which is based on students’ psychology when they foster intercultural contacts with others. In this case, the AUM theory conceptualizes the cultural-learning approach intended to resolve problems of cross-cultural adaptation to understand the host culture (Ward & Kenedey, 1999). Psychological adaptation is also operationalized by online communication which is facilitated by SNSs for education purposes because using new communication technology for intercultural adaptation is to exchange and view messages online newsgroups.

In fact, Boonchum (2009) revealed another major challenge for international students is based upon dealing with psychological changes. It is pointed out different psychological changes known as psychosocial adjustments which international student face during their educational endeavors. These psychological changes are portrayed in their inherent lives when they try to adapt in a new environment. These behavior/attitude changes may, according to Kegel (2009), create “difficulty in making friends that may lead to the feeling of homesickness which is considered as one of the frequent concerns among international students. One of the interviewed participant said that, “Social media usage helps me to calm down when I’m in stressful times at school. I’m connected to my close friends to benefit some advices from them regarding my life challenges (TANZ2).” The stress is one of problems based on adaptation of African students in Sakarya University. It is also a cause of “culture shock which refers to a type of anxiety that occurs to an individual when he/she arrives at a new culture (Oberg, 1960).” It is emphasized that behavioral changes, for international students, are mostly positive although there are times they could be negative due to individuals’ differences. Psychological adaptation process could be realized after paying a lot of effort and many factors might make the process very helpful

such as using social media. Thus, Hazuda , H.P., (1990) underlines that cross-cultural adaptation including psychological one has many challenges and obstacles when strangers are trying to adapt to the new environment. Furthermore, international students undergo unique and diverse psychological problems with special concerns.

International must recognize their representation as minority identity in the host environment to draw the different between psychological and socio-cultural adaptations which are influenced by various sets of variables. Thus, Ward, et al. (1990), asserts that psychological adaptation concerns essentially personal characteristics to copy strategies as social support and circle from a span of time of sojourners in the host culture. One of the interview respondents argued, “We are foreign students here [Sakarya/Turkey], we don’t have our families, so we tend to use social media to chat with parents or classmates to avoid going outside to places we don’t know. So, we keep on chatting with our relatives (DJB1)”. This illustrates how communicating with relatives has the tendency to change a group of individuals psychologically and culturally in intercultural contact.

Eventually, using social media is a helpful way to address psychological adaptation process in Sakarya University. The model of relationship between social media usage for adaptation purpose attempts to describe how using social media in relevant education is helpful. It creates connection and relationships for adjustment and friendship in educational situations. Psychological adaptation depends upon socio-cultural requirements found in the host country. From this connotation, the model theory of cross-cultural enhances ways of adapting psychological in school milieus as it is described the figure 4.

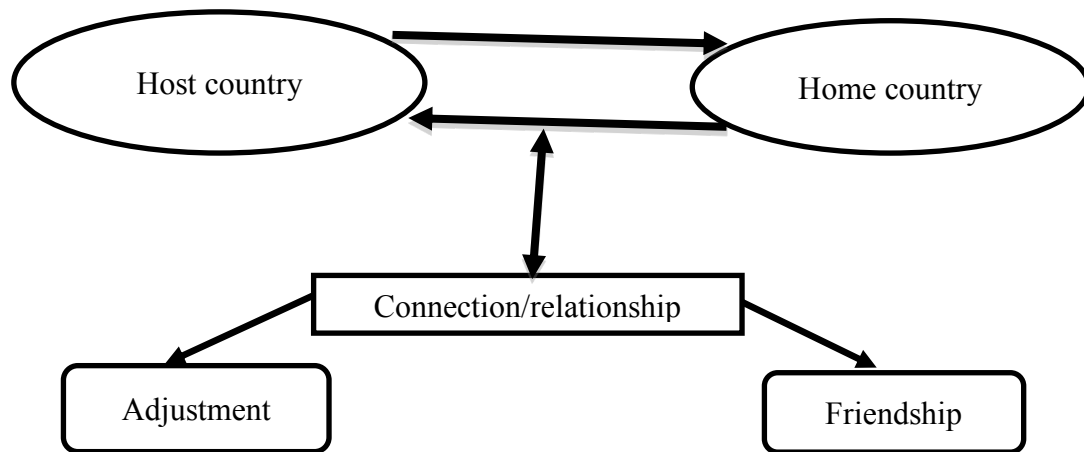


Figure 1: A Model of the Relationship between Social Media and Intercultural Adaptation

Source: Rebecca Sawyer & Guo-Ming Chen (2012)

Psychological adaptation deals with newcomer residents in a different cultural setting through a cross-cultural adjustment process which is considered as “the entirety of evolutionary process an individual undergoes vis-à-vis a new and unfamiliar environment (Kim, 2005).” In this model, international students need to recover from culture shock to adapt to the new culture in the 2 successful ways: contact in her/his home and host country. This helps them to improve (1) adjustment in educational milieus with people from his/her region, (2) friendship with local students from his/her classrooms. In other words, this model ends up with positive results as improving friendship and adjustment in a host country.

To feel comfortable in a host environment, RCA2, says that, “Social media helps me to develop my intercultural adaptation at Sakarya University especially in doing my homework and research activities. All of them I learn them from social media”. Social media usage plays a significant role in educational situations when the society as well as personal traits create a background where psychological adaptation is positively taken as result of adjustment and friendship. Furthermore, the first arrivals of international students in a host environment, they mostly fall into the crisis stage whose results is often characterized by culture shock. It is one of the worst times of a sojourner because the period of anxiety starts to confront him/her as consequence school failure. The honeymoon stage starts when international students start the new life experience in the host culture. They discover new things which are generally observed exciting in their eyes. This type of adaptation process is often positive to a sojourner. Anxiety period ends

when an individual feels comfortable in the host environment. Once overcomes culture shock after a long period of experience, they begin integrating in a host environment where stage is called recovery. As it is shown in the Lysgaard's (1955) U-shaped curve in the figure 2 then, the sojourners fall into the crisis stage (i.e., culture shock).

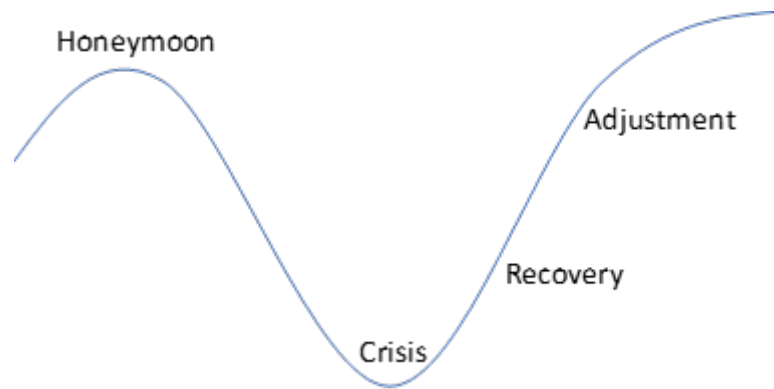


Figure 2: Illustration of Stages in Recuperation Model

Source: Lysagaad's (1955) U-shaped curve

Based on the study of Church (1982), some elements of culture adjustments were explained to illustrate adaptation involvement of international students. It is showed that majority of international students adjusts reasonably to new culture through institutional demands whose percentage satisfaction varies from a host country to another. This means that satisfaction with academic or professional aspects of one's responsibilities is generally higher than satisfaction with non-academic or social aspects. From this perspective, African students use social media to value good interaction among others as practical tool to spread message for adjustment information in educational situations. Eventually, the Rebecca's study has been demonstrated the impacts of contact with hosts and cross-cultural self-efficacy based upon international students' successful socio-cultural adjustment, which is a psychological model communication and interaction to emphasize the key factors influencing social media as intercultural impacts intercultural to psychological adaptation process (Rebecca, S., 2011). In total, social media usage plays an important role in creating new forms of multicultural relations.

3.2.3. Personality

Personality traits may determine psychological traits to a host milieu within stress management framework. In this case, Peterson (1980) illustrates that personality is characterized by psychological adjustment process when personality traits have impacts on cross-cultural adjustment in the scale of measurement. Personality traits and scale measurement are widely included in 5 dimensions such as emotional stability, openness, cultural sense, social initiative and flexibility. However, other personality traits are signaled to have impact on psychological adaptation process when they are linked with cultural and geographical aspects to define a person. From that context, some of the interviewed respondents affirmed excited and interested while using social media in Sakarya University. They spend time messaging one another as it is said by CAM3 said, “[Social media usage] creates a common platform like chat groups where one can get to meet other students from different cultures which define personality traits in background (SUD.I1).” Interacting enables personality traits to feel happy in social life at school.

Furthermore, during the interview some of African students have experienced exciting moment while using social media, “Life can’t be imagined without social media, it just creates a virtual free environment to talk whatever I want without fear and shy [shyness] (KEN3).” They had considerably understanding of Turkish culture before starting using social media. In terms of psychological preparation, their mindset was more peaceful because they did suffer from psychological depression. So, African students believe that personality is more conductive rather than a psychological adaptation. One the interviewees illustrates that, “[Social media usage] provides convenient platform for interaction because the more you’re on social media the more you get to know and understand others according to their culture, the way of behaving, thinking and acting differently from my own culture. So it helps how to get along with them (TANZ2).” African students adapt to Sakarya University due to new demands and roles found in the new culture. Pedersen (1995) concludes this makes them likely more academically performant and have better psychological stability.

In addition, “The usage of social media helps me to have Turkish friends and other foreigners [other nationalities] like me. So, the social media help us to communicate, to have information and also it helps us to learn different cultures which enable us to adapt

in Sakarya University (CAM5).” African students use social media to have connection with Turkish. For that reason, RDC1 added that, “Social media usage helps me in these aspects: (1) it helps me to be in contact with my Turkish friends by sending images [photos] and talking about our respective countries; (2) this solidifies our relations with friends who come from other countries”. Sharing visual images enlighten better cultures of people. In this context, both participants demonstrated that using social media contribute on cultural diversities. This also facilitates intercultural adaptation process as friendship. According to TUN1, using social media is a step of making new friendships with other students, “The usage of social media helps me stay informed of any events happening in the University, also it allows me to meet people living and studying here [Sakarya University], make new friendships and learn from foreign cultures.” Friendship improves school relations which enable students’ discussions to one another. Multicultural friendship is important as it is emphasized by BDI4, “By adhering in social media groups which are created for education purpose, I create easily friendships with other students of Sakarya University. Thus, social media usage allows students to help each other by being in contact at any time; by sharing rapidly information.” Sharing information rapidly equally creates friendships between students.

3.2.4. Social Support

Studying in a host milieu requires a social support to sustain in educational situations. It is usually considered as a kind of information that is received from a person to make someone feel happy, loved, respected in a given society. Social support describes how international feels belong in a social group whose responsibility is to give moral assistance provided by people of a host county. This helps to solve problems/ difficulties encountered by international students. The study of Ward & Searle (1990) reveals that social support has a positive impact on moral and physical well-being of international students. Cross-cultural adaptation of sojourners have more support networks that experience less stress. Overall, social support variables are thought to act as a buffer against the psychological effect of stress (Ward & Searle, 1990). Social support generally plays a key role to reduce stress and frustration of a sojourner. In this perspective, frequent interaction with nationals both from home and host country facilitate students’ adaptation in his/her educational situations.

From the results of interviews, some of respondents have mentioned that they are likely adaptable to Turkish community while interacting with them. This is the case of BURK1 who said that, “When I came here [in Turkey especially in Sakarya] for the first time, I knew no one but social media helped [me] to know many people and talk with them through different social media platforms. It allowed me to share with them together.” Social support, through social media, plays a key role in psychology adaptation. The participant emphasizes in this way, “For intercultural adaptation in Sakarya University, it is really a miracle because from social media I can learn more about these cultures [Turkish cultures] thus quickly adapt (CAM4).” African students believe that Turkish community is open-minded because they are usually invited to share tea known as “ikram” with them. Nevertheless, UGA5 adds that, “It’s a bit difficult to approach people you’d admire to be friends, but with social media usage you can make this [contact] a bit easier as you just got to drop them a request or follow them on social media even messaging them directly.” In this perspective, using social media give them access to befriend.

Social events that are organized by Sakarya University play a constructive role in the cultural process of African students. Before the eruption of Covid-19, African students of Sakarya University used to organize the activity known as “Afrika gecesi” (African night). Which was an opportunity to show African talents through cultural activities. This helped receptivity in assisting African students’ cultural adaptation. From this situation, UGA3 adds, “Sharing our daily lifestyle and opinions on social media has brought students together with the same interests that increase creativity between us”. This shows social support to alleviate psychological depression among African students as it is mentioned, “By this, I will be able to diversify to all cultures around the world. This will enable me to know what to do when I meet a certain people because I would have seen some of their cultures on social media. In short, social media has made it easy for me to adapt at Sakarya university because if anyone cannot adapt to intercultural environment, it will be hard for him/ her when pursuing her studies here (COM1)”. So, through the interviews, it was concluded that social support is significant for African students in the host environment during their psychological adaptation.

3.3. Social Media Usage for Developing Intercultural Adaptation in Sakarya University

Participants have proposed different observations about intercultural adaptation in their education. They confirmed that using social media helps them to develop intercultural adaptation in Sakarya University. It contributes as a key element to intercultural adaptation process which is facilitated by social media because cultural notions could be learnt as NIGE1 said, “More information about other food culture, addressing culture such as local clothes, this facilitates intercultural adaptation in Sakarya University. It’s really miracle because it’s mixture of social aspects. From social media I can learn more about these cultures thus quickly adapt.” Using social media develops intercultural adaptation on African students because they can improve their adaptation skills. Moreover, SOMA2 claims that, “The usage of social media is exactly helpful for me to develop intercultural adaptation by asking and talking to different people especially the young ones from other countries and different cultures.

Also, this helps me when I can live a new life experience. For example, when I live in cosmopolite world, I like sharing something new.” They share different information about cultures by interacting among them, this is added by SIERL1, “With a vast number of students present at the university, there’s no way we all can interact face to face. So, that means social media usage has to play that part in bringing us together. That is how I use social media.” As a result, interacting on social platforms is also considered as a better way which develops intercultural and interactive communication between students from different culture. This has the objective to attract attention on cultural diversities.

Nevertheless, according to RCA2, intercultural adaptation is also manifested by other social activities such as football matches, “Let say that through social media, we can organize football matches, this permits us to know each other through playing games such as football matches. These social activities facilitates good interaction between international and local students. So, most of school activities are organized through social media.” Playing football matches is also more constructive for intercultural adaptation process. One of the participants claims that cultural aspects are strengthened by the games in multicultural environments. Overall, cultural diversities help African students to have efficient communication, “In Sakarya University, social media usage helps me to get

efficient communication between me and my lecturers including other students (TANZ3)”. Generally, social media help them to discover new cultural diversities in their educational environment. In short, social media usage plays a significant role in helping African students in Sakarya University.

3.3.1. Socio-Cultural Adaptation of African Students in Sakarya University

Socio-cultural adaptation process is an ability steps which enable a sojourner to adapt in a society or cultural environment. Adaptation process in the host country requires some knowledge and skills which are adequately relate to close previous cross-cultural experiences such as cultural distance and expectations as well as cultural identity (Ward & Searle, 1990). African students are in contacts with Turkish culture for the very first occasion in using social media as it is revealed, “[Social media usage] helps me to deal with my friends in social situations as exchanging about school courses. Besides that, it helps me to know what is going on in my [Sakarya] University and also the world at large (IVOR2).” This emerges difficulties that impede African students’ socio-cultural adaptation.

According to Triandis F.E., (2017), cross-cultural adaptation is a complicated process because of the shortage of knowledge of the host environments’ culture and language. It is a process of adjusting one’s self into the culture and norm of the host environment. From this regard, the learning model illustrates intercultural adaptation process as a way of understanding and learning sociocultural traditions and norms of the host culture. ETHI1 explained that, “Social media usage helped me in so many ways, to make new friends [in Sakarya University], discuss ideas; learn languages, news.” Also, social learning perspectives namely learning behavioral, perceptual rules and academic norms of the new environment are important to entail the adaptation model where participation competence in academic interaction is utilized to engage university instructions. Student’s capacities and pedagogical purposes are determined by interaction competence in classroom activities. Using social media in academic interaction improves instruction competence in Sakarya University.

Moreover, Beil and Mayor (2018) illustrates that cross-cultural adaptation is a process which is very tough and frustrating moment when an individual stranger struggles to adapt and manage his/her life in a new environment. They also added that many factors might

contribute to the cultural adaptation process of a stranger positively and negatively. However, this depends upon the individual conditions which could change the adaptation process. In fact, . BDI8 “The usage of social media helps me stay informed of any events happening in the Sakarya University, also it allows me to meet people living and studying here. In short, it makes friendships and learns from foreign cultures (CHAD1).” In fact, Aghae, N, M. (2010), confirms that international students experience psychological problems as depression and loneliness whose result is lower academic performances because of pressure, shame, regret and disappointment. In short, if they do not handle adjustment well in a host environment, they often encounter with these problems. These issues create a sense of isolation as a result of studying in the host country. But, in some cases, the stranger who has close cultural and language similarities with the host environment might not struggle as the other individuals who came from culturally different areas.

3.3.2. Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is referred as a group of people who belong to a given cultural setting. from this understanding, it is defined as cultural entity whose endorsement enables someone to live in a social environment which is different from someone else. Berry et al. (1997) analyze cultural identity as ethnic intergroup which has relations to a limited number of people. This empirical study tends to show sociocultural problems related to adaptation in a host country. International students are defined by cultural identity when they are probably considered as making less willing to adjustment in the host culture. This is conceptualized as fact of having a sense of identity in a host area in the purpose of psychological adjustment.

In this situation, the new culture is applied to illustrate the cultural diversities, “[social media usage] enables me to know which cultural aspects are similar to the ones my people have back home and those which are different from ours (CAM1).” Cultural aspects are involved in cultural identity when students have good relationships one another in their educational situations. Also, regarding factor of cultural identity, one of the interviewees has confirmed getting advantage from using social media, “I got to know more about cultural diversity. Search for and share information, find most of the basic information that I need for my research and how to survive in Turkey. This helps me

to communicate in different languages, learn Turkish culture and unknown facts about Turkey (GUIB1).” Some of African students perceived experiences about socio-cultural adaptation which contributes more to adjust positively in Sakarya University through adaptation skills applied due to this summary below.

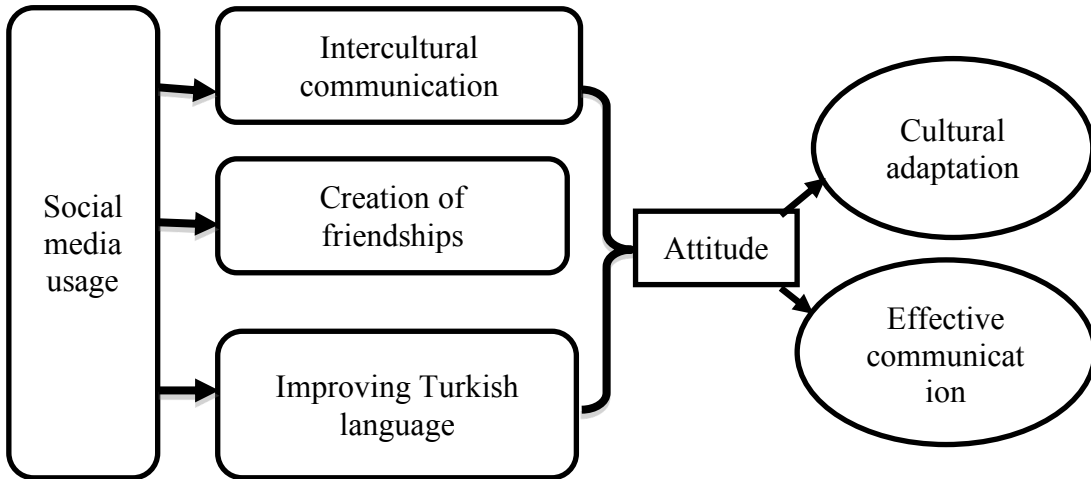


Figure 3: Illustration of Intercultural Adaptation

Source: Made by the author of this thesis

Participants mentioned the importance of social media usage in education when they emphasize that it helps them creating relationships among themselves. This reflects socio-cultural adaptation which enables to improve, communication and Turkish language skills that tend changing their attitude. Factors related with socio-cultural adaption such as effective communication, personal psychology and cultural. The Sakarya campus life is rich niche which enhances multicultural community meetings and gatherings. The cultural differences are considered as ideological awareness that would be identified as a process of socio-cultural adaptation which is suitable to cultural values for gradual integration into the host environment.

3.3.3. Cultural Distance

The concept “cultural distance” normally refers to a distant extent of a home place towards host culture. This is not related with a physical distance, but rather to a cultural difference that arises from a sense of distance and unfamiliarity (Hofstede, 2001). In addition, there is another reason that can explicate cultural distance as it was discussed by Hofstede about the power distance index. The cultural distance focuses on cultural

dimension in the perspectives of country location. It is known that some African countries are not located far from Turkey. For example, from Casablanca to Antalya is about 2 or 4 hour-flight journey. Compared to the USA, Canada, or Brazil, Turkey is not far from Africa. Due to the power distance between Africa and Turkey, African students are required to be respectful to the locals in their educational situation. The power distance is explained by Ward & Searle (1990) when they portray the greater degree of cultural distance when individuals likely encounter difficulties in socio-cultural adaptation.

Furthermore, cultural distance and social learning skills are closely examined as degree of cultural distance that include home and host country to determine experience of socio-cultural adaptation. Bochner (1986) adds that this depends upon students' initiative trained in school environment that s/he finds less or more difficult to get accustomed to existing culture. Using social media could be one of the solution as it is stated, "Social media facilitates communication with people. I'd say that it helps gathering international students here in Sakarya [Turkey] and for students who have common goals and are facing difficulties of surviving in a foreign country [Turkey] (SOMA2)."

However, cultural distance is based on a complete social process when mastering a proper style communication model to set up social values. While arriving in a new cultural environment, international students realize that their original cultural values are not practically active in the host environment. They are required to acquire new cultural values which enables them to adapt immediately. Subsequently, the influence size is also taken into consideration in the interviewees. The study gives a picture of how Sakarya University is portrayed to socio-cultural adaptation through social media by some African students. This exploration of social environment establishes interpersonal relationship based upon socio-cultural adaptation skills. The results of interview denoted the influence, "It [Social media usage] helps me to meet new people and learn about social events and further it aids my understanding of Turkish language. Also, it helps me to develop my relation with friends because I stay connected with them (MAL1)." Interpersonal relationships are maintained through using social media as it is said African students, making friends means taking care of others, but this situation is also taken as helping others in difficult situations.

Many of interviewed students confirm to have good interaction with local students. From this reason, effective cross-cultural communication requires, for African students in Sakarya University, to master Turkish language. Deficiency in understanding language emerges an impact to academic activities. Moreover, Jia (1997) conceptualizes social backgrounds and lifestyle in terms of beliefs, religion, education, economic conditions, hobbies as well as personality traits. Cultural activities play a significant role in socio-cultural experience to participate more in academic life. In short, many African students are satisfied with their socio-cultural adaptation in Sakarya University while using social media. This chapter has described the findings and discussion about intercultural impacts of social media usage for African students. It was illustrated that social media usage helps international students to learn Turkish language in Sakarya university. Then, it was portrayed that African students can adapt in academic, psychological and socio-cultural processes by using social media.

CONCLUSION

The last part of this study focuses on the key findings on academic, psychological and socio-cultural adaptations that will be summarized in accordance with theories used in the research. Then, some recommendations will be provided to orientate the future research about impacts of social media in educational situations.

Summary of the Key Findings

The main objective of this research was to analyze intercultural impacts of social media usage on African students in Sakarya University. In other words, the study aimed at investigating intercultural impacts of using social media in educational situations. It was shown that Sakarya University receives many international students every year. It is reported 582 African students who are currently enrolled in the academic year 2020-2021. However, some of them encounter social challenges based on adaptation in their educational situations. This study illustrated that social media play capital role to help them adapting in the social host environment. Therefore, to analyze social media usage in Sakarya University seems to be very important in education life. In fact, sixty six (66) informants, from different twenty eight (28) African countries, have participated in this study. All of them are students of Sakarya University and use social media for educationally relevant purposes. Also, they were selected within the framework of the research. The data utilized in this study have been collected from primary and secondary sources. After data collection, four (4) theories, namely Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory, Cultural Capital Theory, Acculturation Model Theory and AUM Theory have been used to assess the impacts of social media usage in educational contexts. Three types of adaptation on African students in Sakarya University specifically academic, psychological and socio-cultural adaptations are examined to get results of this study.

Academic adaptation of African students in Sakarya University is based on the cultural capital theory which describes individuals' abilities and competences whose intention is to promote cultural mobility in academic adaptation process. This theory plays a constructive role in cultural learning environment to comprehend cultural experiences within student framework. In this context, social media usage has been identified as pedagogic and communicative means which help African students to adapt in Sakarya University. In this study, the results indicate that language barriers impede them from

adapting adequately in their academic life. Consequently, language barriers are major sources of psychological problems such as stress and frustration to African students. Briefly, poor language ability has negative impacts on adaptation process when they are unable to express themselves as free as they can. It was shown that social media usage increases African students' engagement in the language learning process and this helps them to improve academic performances and mobilize into a more active and participatory role. All in all, social media usage constitutes an essential factor of learning Turkish language in Sakarya University.

Psychological adaptation of African students in Sakarya University is based on the AUM theory that constructs uncertainty in the behaviors and values embodied individuals from the host culture resulted anxiety with the host nationals. In this context, personality traits are linked with culture and geography. Moreover, personality traits include cultural sense, openness, emotional stability, social initiative, flexibility and social support which reduce stress and negative emotions in educational situations. However, psychological adaptation is related with personal characteristics and strategies which are copied in the social circle. It has been demonstrated that social media are an innovative and influential tools that help African Students to navigate their everyday lives during their sojourn in Sakarya University for mitigating acculturative stress and improve psychological well-being. Additionally, it has been analyzed that, in educational milieus, difficulty to make friendship may lead African students to the feeling of homesickness. The result show that social media usage helps them to alleviate stress and feelings of homesickness during their education in Sakarya University. Social media usage is a major source to establish and maintain emotional supports needed to help adjusting to the new environment. It is therefore a buffer against psychological effects on them.

Socio-cultural adaptation of African students in Sakarya University is laid on Acculturation Model Theory which describes a condition where a group of people from different cultures and customs come together and leads to the cultural changes it also illustrates that African students are psychologically/culturally influenced to change their behaviors based upon learning adaptation process as a way of understanding socio-cultural traditions and norms of the host country. This part refers to cultural identity which conceptualizes a sense of culture and identity for psychological adjustment. The cultural

distance involves effective cross-cultural communication that requires mastering Turkish language skills in adaptation process in Sakarya University. It has been identified that social media usage is a relevant strategy which facilitates African students to intercultural communication to acquire effective cultural skills allowing them to have sense of connectivity with others in Sakarya University. Overall, the results reveal that socio-cultural adaptation needs effective integration and strategies with which cross-cultural communication is related to help them keeping in contact with their friends and lecturers through social media.

A. Suggestions for African Students in Sakarya University

In order to facilitate African students' cultural adaptation in Sakarya University, it is proposed some suggestions on the basis of this research.

1. To provide effort in improving Turkish language because they have to be aware of importance of Turkish language. Language ability plays a significant role in the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Thus, they must use social media to learn and improve Turkish skills;
2. To accept cultural adaptation training such as social activities organized by dormitories/universities/municipalities to improve socio-cultural adaptation skills. They must learn Turkish culture, social customs and communication methods used by Turkish students in Sakarya University;
3. To improve openness and receptivity when cultural differences are contacted. For avoiding cultural shock, they have to build self-confidence and optimistic mindset. They should accommodate and understand Turkish culture in positive manner;
4. To try understanding the pedagogic difference to adjust their own learning methods accordingly. They may use social media to improve their learning skills so that they can move forward participating actively in cultural events and communicating openly with other students.

B. Suggestions for Sakarya University

From the institutional aspect, Sakarya University has to encourage African students to participate in socio-local activities because the university should provide them opportunities for improving interaction with the host environment. It was shown that socio-cultural adaptation is not only determined by African students themselves but also

by a social support contributed by Sakarya University. Moreover, student associations could organize more cultural activities and events. For instance the Afrika gecesi (African night event organized by Afrokarya) not only at the end of the academic year but also at the beginning of every semester. The lecturers and related staff need to give some seminars about cross-cultural adaptation to African students because some cultural courses could be organized through issues that may encounter in their education.

C. Suggestions for Future Research

This thesis has essentially shown importance of using social media in academic background. It was considerably discussed that African students of Sakarya University use social media to develop their academic and socio-cultural adaptation skills to adjust good relationship with other students. Nevertheless, there are other factors that could influence African students' adaptation process in education such as length of residence and self-confidence. From that reason, impacts of popularization of smartphones through model of adaption process in educational contexts could be examined with more details in the future research. This may bring new empirical insights in the question of international students' adaptation. To enhance more credibility of analysis, SPSS software in quantitative method research, for analyzing data, could be utilized to explore more clearly the issue of adaptation process.

In conclusion, this thesis has examined intercultural impacts of social media usage for African students on Sakarya University. It tried to assess and figure out the overall of social media impacts to illustrate its role in academic, psychological and socio-cultural adaptation processes as it has mainly been discussed in the chapter three. In fact, the results of this study confirmed that social media usage enables African students to strengthen friendships, organize academic activities and adapt intercultural environment in their educational situations. It was finally concluded that social media usage plays a significant role in adaptation process for African students in Sakarya University.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview questions for African students in Sakarya University

1. How does social media usage help you to develop your intercultural adaptation in Sakarya University?

2. What do you gain from social media usage in aspect of intercultural adaptation in Sakarya University?

3. How does social media usage contribute to adapt with other students in Sakarya university?

4. How does social media usage help you to create friendship with other students in Sakarya University?

5. What are advantages of using social media by strengthening relationship in educational situations?

6. How often does social media usage help you to overcome social challenges with your school friends?

7. How does social media usage help you to organize school activities?

8. What are relevant school topics that you learn from social media platform?

9. In social media platform, which research findings are you interested in?

10. How does social media usage help to learn Turkish language?

CURRICULUM VITAE

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