Use of Social Networks in Open and Distance Education: What Sociology Students Share?

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Abstract

Facebook, Twitter, forums, blogs, and Wikis are the leading social web applications. Social Web is one of the most active electronic learning systems. Therefore, learners are able to interact with other learners and influenced by these interaction. InMap, Wolfram Alpha and Facebook Insight are the examples of analytics supported Social Web applications. In this study, 12 different Facebook groups and fan page oriented Anadolu Univesity, Open Education Faculty, Sociology Program, were investigated. Posts, comments and answers on the fan pages and the groups are subjected for content analysis. Inductive content analysis was used for qualitative data collected. Qualitative data were given in tables, tables were separated into appropriate groups, codifying applied for related themes in the groups and major themes were acquired. In analysis of data, NVIVO package software was utilized. According to the results of the research, it was determined that students share mostly about exam services, lessons orientation and accreditation of the distance education program.

Keywords: social web; open and distance education; social networks; content analysis; sociology

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1. Introduction

Apart from web analysis, LMS and CMS analysis, in learning analytics there are various medium and tools. Included 3D, video games, every kind of game, simulation and video sharing platform such as YouTube, Dailymotion, Google Video, Yahoo video, Vimeo analysis set good examples. It is thought that as learning analytics are subjected for educational study at every medium a learner interacts, the technology which provides learning analysis is to begin.

Social media is seen as an important component of learning analytics and a field which may be studied most (Ferguson, and Shum, 2012). Since social media is the leading medium on which learning interactions are the most intense and one of the field that individuals are most active. Researches about the subject may be classified as a social web analysis. Facebook, Twitter, Forums, Blogs, Wikis are primary in social web applications. Social Web technologies are the most active electronic mediums (Smith, 2009). However, a learner interacts with other learners at most in these environments and influenced by other via this interactions in social web. Taking advantage of the social web and learners' interactions cause to arise tools which emerges web analysis.

Millions of member of a society, faculty members, students who take same course, a squad of a project or even an individual could be subjected for social web analysis. For example, Fernandes, Giurcanu, Bowers and Neely, (2010) have analyzed university student's posts on Facebook about US Presidential Election at 2008. The innovation of learning analytics underlies that point. Data for study can be extended millions of time. Not only the individual's behaviors at the social web but structure of the social web is also very important. Because the features of the social web which include the individuals, reflect the feature of the individual social interactions (Knoke,& Yang, 2008).

Today, social web analysis is important to explain and comment the structure of the web which is getting more complicated and more extensive. It is known that the learners with special open education or distance education is active at the social platform and application. Because of this, mega universities' posts such as Anadolu University on Web platforms and applications are very important.

1.1. Purpose

The study determines the post of the students at Open Educations Faculty, Department of Sociology Associate Degree Program, Anadolu University on Facebook. Considering the purpose, posts on groups and fan pages, comments and replies are subjected to content analysis.

2. Methods

This is a research includes qualitative data. Analyzed the results of the study utilize the method of content analysis and descriptive analysis. In the content analysis, at first qualitative data are tabulated, tables are grouped appropriately, themes related to groups, are codified. While analyzing the data, NVIVO 10 package software are used. At the content analysis, data are codified, the themes are found, data are organized and described according to codes and themes, the finding are commented at last stage (Yıldırım,& Simsek, 2006; Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen,& Kyngäs, 2014). In accordance with descriptive content analysis, data obtained from the participants are codified and codified data are inferenced. At last, data are grouped according to the themes and codes and with direct citation the findings are submitted.

In the study, 12 different Facebook group pages and fan pages, oriented Anadolu University, Open Education Faculty, Sociology Associate Degree Program, are examined. 22 posts which are liked and shared most in these pages are analyzed. A social media analytics tool named Quintly, is used, which is a tool for social web analysis effectively.

3. Findings

Most shared and liked 22 posts by the students from Anadolu University, Open Education Faculty, Sociology Associate Degree Program are imported by Quintly. Obtained data are organized and transferred into NVIVO package software. Coded data's content analysis and
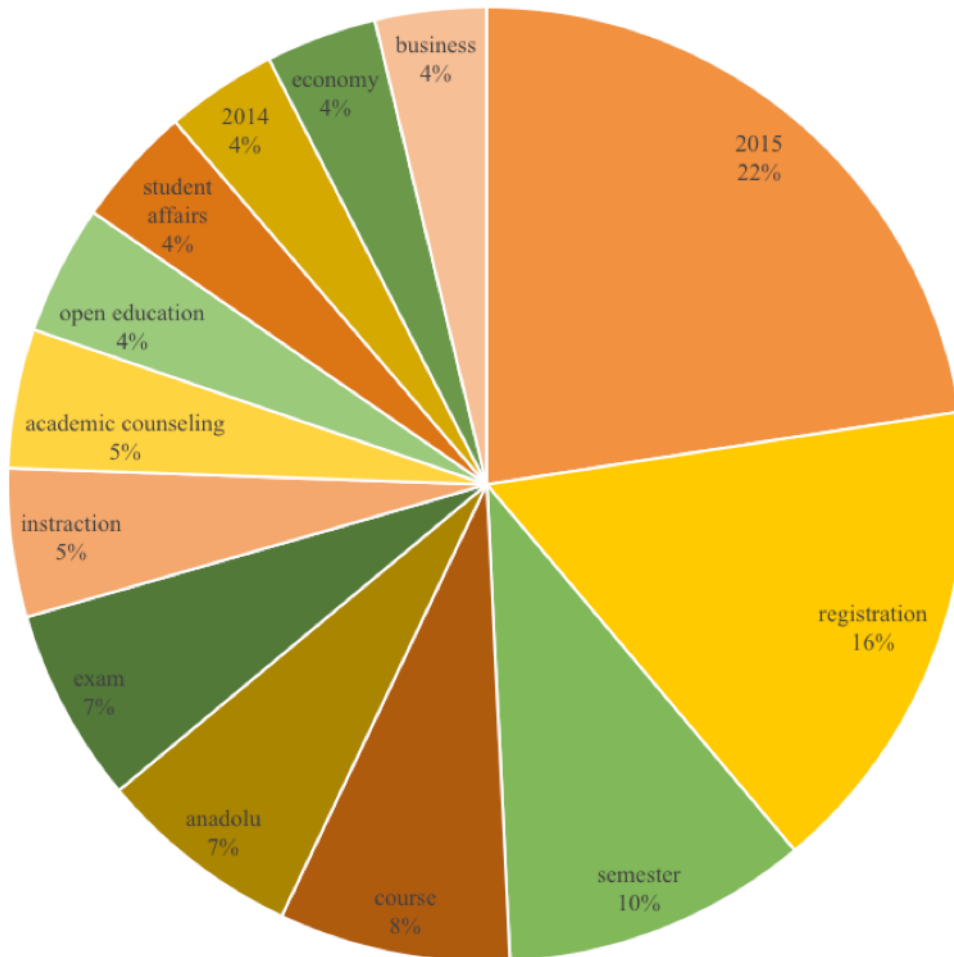
descriptive analysis are practiced with the software. Important findings are reached as a result of the analysis of most shared and liked 22 post on 12 different Facebook groups and fan pages. The first of the finding is oriented frequency of words. With this purpose, Query in NVIVO 10 package software analyses Word frequency. Obtained results which show most frequent words from the analysis are given in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Most Frequent Word in the Posts

When examined analyzed the most frequent words, it is seen that 2015 22%, Registration 16%, Semester 10%, Course 8%. According to the finding it may be said that the most liked and shared posts pertain to 2015. The reason of the situation might be 4 of the groups opened

at 2015. Moreover, 2014 is found in only 4% of posts. Accordingly, it might be said that the posts increased from 4% to 22% at between 2014 and 2015. Also it may be said by utilizing the findings that examined the most liked and shared posts are about "registration" on 12 Facebook groups and fan pages. This situation shows that the students from Anadolu University, Open Education Faculty, Sociology Associate Degree Program attach importance to the post about registration and re-registration.

22 post within the scope of the research, are subjected to content analysis. In compliance with inductive content analysis, at first nodes, then themes are reached in NVIVO software. 4 themes which are reached as a result of the inductive content analysis, given below Figure 2.
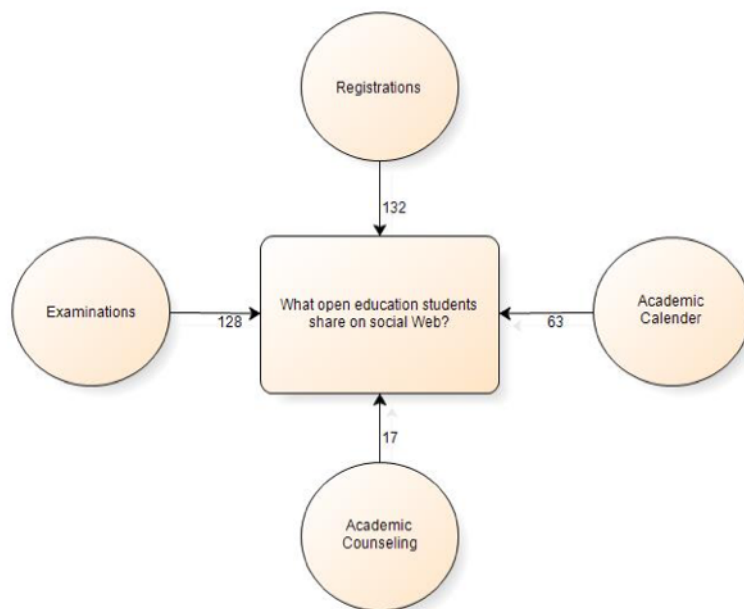

Fig. 2. Themes about Student Sharing

Related to the themes about most liked and most shared post in the Facebook group and fan pages are appeared in Figure 2. The themes are Registration, Examination, Academic Calendar and Academic Counseling. The most liked and shared 22 post of the students, who attend Anadolu University, Open Education Faculty, Sociology Associate Degree Program, are grouped into four themes. Numbers above the arrows on the charts show that how many times the post, which belongs the theme, shared. Accordingly, most shared themes are Registration and Examination 132 times and 128 times, respectively. The direct citation which belong 4 themes, are given below.

"…whoever has an excuse, can re-register at 03-04 March 2015. Last 2 days for our friends with an excuse who want to re-register… "

Registration

"…Academic Counseling classes are starting! For the students from Anadolu University's Center Open and Distance Learning System Open Education Faculty Economics and Management Department's, face-to-face academic counseling Spring Semester Course begin entire country on 7 March 2015 while in Eskisehir begin on March 9, 2015 . May 22, 2015 Friday It will end... "

Academic Counseling

 "…2014-2015 Fall semester final examination results are declared…"
Examination

 "... Due to at 7 June 2015 Sunday, 25. Deputy General Elections which will be held across Turkey, Spring semester's academic calendar has been changed…"

Academic Calendar

The themes which are supported by direct citation show that The students of Anadolu University, Open Education Faculty, Sociology Associate Degree Program share more about structurally student affairs, calendar and examinations than the lessons and the content of it.

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

In the study, 12 different Facebook group pages and fan pages, oriented Anadolu University, Open Education Faculty, Sociology Associate Degree Program, are examined. 22 posts, are liked and shared most in these pages are subjected to descriptive and content analysis. While collection of data and analyzing, Quintly, social media analytics tool, and NVIVO is utilized.

It is possible to reach several important consequences by considering the findings. First of all, the most repeated words "2015" and "Registration". One of third Sociology Associate Degree Program's groups and pages are created at 2015 and posts includes "2015" are more than four times comparing the posts includes 2014 which shows that the students of Open Education Faculty increasingly share more post. Besides, "Registration" is the second most repeated word which also shows that students share posts about examination at most in social media platform such as Facebook.

22 posts which are liked and shared most are examined accordingly inductive content analysis. At the consequence of the analysis the themes; Registration, Examination, Academic Calendar and Academic Counseling are reached. While number of sharing posts belong themes are analyzed, Registration and Examination are seen to head. This finding indicates that Sociology Associate Degree Program's students share about Registration and Examination. According to the finding it is possible to say that Sociology Program's students structurally share more about student affair, calendar and examination than lesson and content.

Researches soon to be carried out, may focus on more detailed about every kind of post on the social media and applications with the participation of students from other program. Regarded to this, it may be compared that created groups and pages on social media such as Facebook, created by whom and what is the purpose of them. The consequence of the analysis by stating the features it is comparable according to the features. Generally social web applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Forums, Blogs, Wikis are examined by using tools like InMap, Wolfram Alpha and Facebook inSight, Quintly, SimplyMeasured.

Considering students' sharing about structurally student affair, calendar and examination, it is thought that these mediums are controlled and observed by other authorized council. So that, it may prevented from disinformation and misdirection. Also it is seen that there are more individual's and commercial's group or pages than institute's page at performed querying. Therefore, public enterprises and universities are required to carry out active studies to inform properly the students who use social media efficiently.

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