

The Role of Media in Creating an Environment of Trust in Society

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Abstract

The media plays a central role in shaping social structures, reinforcing cultural meanings, and influencing individuals' perceptions through the production and dissemination of information. Media content guides public priorities, frames social issues, and shapes opinion, making adherence to impartiality, accuracy, and reliability essential for fostering social trust. Transparent and consistent reporting strengthens confidence in both media institutions and the broader social order, as declining trust can undermine social solidarity and institutional legitimacy. This study therefore examines the role of the media in promoting societal trust, based on teachers' perspectives. This study employed a phenomenological approach, a qualitative research method. The participants consisted of 17 social studies teachers working in secondary schools. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview form, which was developed by the researcher based on expert feedback. Based on the data obtained from the study, teachers perceive the media as having a dual impact on societal trust. While traditional media is seen as promoting transparency, awareness, solidarity, and public oversight, social media is often viewed as undermining trust through misinformation, polarization, and biased or unregulated content. These findings underscore the complex role of media in both supporting and eroding public confidence and social cohesion.

Keywords: Media, Media Environment, Society, Social Structures

Introduction

The interaction between society and media is profound, and the effects of media on social life are increasingly evident in contemporary contexts. Media serves not only as a mirror of societal structures, functions, and values but also as an active force in shaping cultural perceptions and cognitive patterns. Advances in technology have significantly altered how individuals obtain information, fostering a broader range of intellectual perspectives. From the invention of the printing press to the widespread use of smartphones, technological innovations have been swiftly integrated into social life and have played a crucial role in the transformation

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of communication practices. Whereas communication in earlier periods depended largely on visual representations and printed texts, modern societies now enable immediate access to vast amounts of information through digital networks. (Pandey & Singh, 2017; Zafer & Vardarlier, 2019). At the same time, the internet is blurring the boundaries between global and local contexts, creating new opportunities for communication and interaction. It is fundamentally transforming how individuals, institutions, and communities organize their daily activities and manage their affairs. This shift allows a growing number of tasks to be conducted through online platforms, substantially reducing the spatial and temporal limitations of social, economic, and cultural practices. Consequently, the internet not only reshapes communication tools but also profoundly influences daily routines, patterns of social interaction, and access to information. (Demircioğlu, 2017; Denizci, 2009; Ekici, 2023a; Kocoğlu vd., 2023; Koçoğlu vd., 2025; Vatansever Deviren & Yıldız, 2014).

The media performs its roles of informing, educating, and entertaining society not only through the internet but also via various other communication channels. Print media, such as newspapers, magazines, and books, cater to specific audiences, while electronic media reaches much broader populations. Television and radio, for example, provide current information and help individuals analyze and understand events. Television, by combining visual and auditory elements, offers viewers more comprehensive information. Programs and news from different regions of a country are disseminated to large audiences through television. Although initially developed for educational purposes, television has gradually expanded its functions to include both informing and entertaining society. Today, it has become an essential part of daily life, attracting viewers with a diverse range of content, including news, series, films, reality shows, sports, and music programs. (Pandey & Singh, 2017; Ünal, 2021; Wangermee, 1977; Zavalsız & Soydaş Dağcı, 2019). In addition, television advertisements capture the attention of individuals across various age groups and play a significant role in shaping consumption habits and enhancing the effectiveness of marketing strategies. Advertisements not only promote products or services but also influence consumer preferences and stimulate demand. The magnitude of this influence is reflected in the high costs associated with broadcasting advertisements on a per-second basis, making the advertising budget a key indicator of the potential impact on the target audience. Furthermore, distributing advertisements across multiple media platforms extends their reach and strengthens their capacity to shape consumer behavior (Güçhan, 1989; Güz, 2000; Yavuz, 2021).

Additionally, as an integral component of the media, radio operates as an auditory medium with the capacity to reach audiences across extensive geographic regions.. Unlike visual media, radio engages listeners' imaginations, fostering the development of mental visualization and interpretive skills. This characteristic makes radio an accessible medium that reaches not only urban populations but also communities in rural areas with limited infrastructure. Rural residents can stay informed about current events and practical knowledge related to agriculture, forestry, and small-scale industry through radio broadcasts, receiving regular updates on topics such as weather conditions, market trends, and public announcements. Such information plays a crucial role in enabling rural populations to plan production processes more effectively and adapt their daily activities to prevailing conditions. In this way, radio

serves as an efficient communication tool that raises social awareness, informs, and guides large audiences in a cost-effective and timely manner. It can be argued that radio plays a key role in shaping public opinion, transmitting cultural values, and supporting the participation of rural communities in social life (Pandey & Singh, 2017; Seçim, 2017; Şeyhanlıoğlu, 2019).

The media is widely regarded as a powerful agent in shaping social structures, reinforcing cultural meanings, and influencing individuals' perceptions of the world, due to its central role in the production, dissemination, and circulation of information. The content conveyed through mass media tools helps determine individuals' priorities regarding current affairs, guides the interpretation of social issues, and contributes to the formation of public opinion. In this context, the media's adherence to principles of impartiality, accuracy, and reliability is a crucial factor in fostering social trust. Consistent and transparent presentation of information significantly strengthens individuals' confidence not only in media institutions but also, more broadly, in the social order. This is particularly important because a decline in social trust can weaken solidarity among individuals, and diminished confidence in institutions may pose serious challenges to the maintenance of social stability. Therefore, this study aims to determine the role of the media in fostering an environment of trust within society based on teachers' opinions. Within this framework, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

- ✓ Why is it important to establish a climate of trust within society?
- ✓ What factors hinder the establishment of a climate of trust within society?
- ✓ What is the role of the media in society?
- ✓ What is the impact of the media on the establishment of a climate of trust within society?

METHOD

Research Model

Consistent with the aims of the study, this research was carried out using a qualitative research approach that seeks to examine and interpret social phenomena and events within their natural and contextual settings. Qualitative inquiry prioritizes the individual by emphasizing personal emotions, perspectives, and lived experiences in order to conceptualize social life as an integrated whole, while also offering interpretive insights into social change and emerging processes. In this study, a phenomenological design, one of the established qualitative research traditions, was employed. Phenomenology centers on understanding how individuals interpret their lived experiences and how these experiences are transformed into conscious meaning at both personal and collective levels. From this perspective, phenomenological research provides an in-depth understanding of the consequences of lived experiences and elucidates how experience-based perceptions shape individuals' behaviors (Ersoy, 2017; Patton, 2014; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

Participants

The study sample comprises 17 Social Studies teachers employed in secondary schools. In selecting the participants, criterion sampling, a type of purposeful sampling, was utilized. In accordance with the aims of the research, teachers responsible for teaching Social Studies a discipline that integrates knowledge from multiple fields and is primarily oriented toward fostering active and responsible citizenship were included in the study. Detailed information regarding the demographic characteristics of the participating teachers is provided in Table 1.

Table 1.

Demographic Characteristics of Participating Teachers

Demographic Characteristics		Participating	
		n	%
Gender	Female	10	59
	Male	7	41
Age	30 or less	3	18
	Between 31-40	10	59
	41 and above	4	23
Professional Seniority	1-5 year(s)	1	6
	6-10 years	4	23
	11-15 years	10	59
	16 and above	2	12
Educational Level	Bachelor's Degree	15	88
	Master Degree	2	12

As shown in Table 1, the gender distribution of the participating teachers reveals that 59% are female and 41% are male. Regarding age, 18% of the participants are aged 30 or younger, 59% are between 31 and 40 years old, and 23% are aged 41 and above. In terms of professional experience, 6% of the teachers have 1–5 years of service, 23% have 6–10 years, 59% have 11–15 years, and 12% have 16 years or more of professional experience. With respect

to educational attainment, 88% of the participants hold a bachelor's degree, while 12% have completed postgraduate studies.

Data Collection Tools

To explore Social Studies teachers' perspectives on the role of media in fostering a climate of trust within society, a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher and comprising two sections was utilized. The first section provided explanatory guidelines for the administration of the form and included items designed to collect participants' demographic information. The second section consisted of five open-ended questions formulated by the researcher, informed by the relevant literature, to elicit teachers' views on the contribution of media to the development of social trust. The research process commenced with the establishment of a theoretical framework, followed by the development of interview questions grounded in an extensive review of the literature. The appropriateness of the questions in relation to the aims of the study was evaluated through consultation with four academics specializing in Social Studies education. Revisions were made in accordance with expert feedback, and the validity and reliability of the semi-structured interview form were thereby ensured.

Data Analysis

In this research, a semi-structured interview form was employed to examine Social Studies teachers' perceptions of the role of media in establishing a climate of trust within society. The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using content analysis, a qualitative data analysis technique. To enhance the depth and transparency of the analysis, selected excerpts from participants' statements were incorporated through direct quotations. During the analytical process, participants' responses were initially reviewed in detail, and subcodes were generated accordingly. To ensure confidentiality, participants were anonymized and identified using codes such as (Teacher1) T1, T2, ... T17. As individual responses could be associated with more than one subcode, each subcode was assigned a distinct identifier. All subcodes were derived directly from the teachers' statements. Following the formation of subcodes, themes were constructed using an inductive approach. After the initial coding and theme development were completed, a two-week interval was observed, after which the data were recoded. The results of the second coding were compared with those of the first to identify potential discrepancies, thereby enhancing the reliability of the analysis.

Ethical considerations

Throughout this study, strict adherence to ethical principles was maintained to ensure the integrity and credibility of the research. In line with this commitment, all procedures were

conducted in full compliance with the “Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive.” It is important to emphasize that no actions were undertaken that would violate any provisions outlined under the section “Actions Against Scientific Research and Publication Ethics.”

Ethical Review Board: Dicle University Social Sciences and Humanities Scientific
Research and Publication Ethics Committee

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FINDINGS

1. Views on the Importance of Creating an Environment of Trust Within Society

To examine teachers’ perspectives on the significance of fostering a trust-based environment in society, they were asked the question “Why is it important to establish a climate of trust within society?”. The corresponding responses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Why is it important to establish a climate of trust within society?

Sub Themes	Participating	f
Strengthening social networks and ties	T1,T2,T3,T4,T6,T8,T9	7
Fostering cooperation and social solidarity	T10,T12,T14,T16	4
Ensuring economic and institutional stability	T5,T13,T15	3
Promoting social peace and justice	T7,T17	2
Enhancing individual and societal well-being	T11	1

An analysis of Table 2 demonstrates that teachers offered diverse perspectives in response to the question “Why is it important to establish a climate of trust within society?” posed to participants. The findings indicate that participants described this issue primarily in terms of strengthening social networks and ties (f:7), fostering cooperation and social solidarity (f:4), ensuring economic and institutional stability (f:3), promoting social peace and justice (f:2), enhancing individual and societal well-being (f:1).

Selected responses to the question “Why is it important to establish a climate of trust within society?” are presented below:

“A trusting environment promotes open and sincere communication. Social trust nurtures friendly, neighborly, and professional connections, which in turn strengthens community ties.” (T2)

“When people live in a secure society, they feel protected and supported, which improves their overall well-being. Strong trust between members of a community encourages social engagement and increases individual efficiency.”(T11)

“Trust also plays a key role in the success of collaborative efforts and community projects. During emergencies or crises, societies with a strong culture of trust are quicker to show mutual support and solidarity.”(T14)

Overall, the findings suggest that teachers perceive the establishment of a climate of trust as a multidimensional construct that underpins social cohesion. The prominence of strengthening social networks and ties indicates that trust is viewed primarily as a social resource that facilitates interconnectedness and mutual support. Additionally, the emphasis on cooperation, solidarity, and institutional stability highlights the role of trust in sustaining collective action and functional social systems. Although less frequently mentioned, references to social justice, peace, and well-being suggest that trust is also associated with broader normative and quality-of-life outcomes within society.

2. Views on factors that may hinder the establishment of an environment of trust in society

To examine teachers’ perspectives on the factors that may impede the establishment of a trust-based environment in society, they were asked the question “What factors hinder the establishment of a climate of trust within society?” The corresponding responses are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Views on factors that may hinder the establishment of an environment of trust in society

Sub Themes	Participating	f
Corruption and injustice	T2,T3,T5,T9	4
Crime and security vulnerabilities	T1,T4,T11,T15	4
Social inequality and discrimination	T5,T10,T16	3
Low levels of social participation	T6,T14	2
Economic crises and uncertainty	T12,T13	2
Media influence and perception management	T8	1

An analysis of Table 3 demonstrates that teachers offered diverse perspectives in response to the question “What factors hinder the establishment of a climate of trust within society?” posed to participants. The findings indicate that participants described this issue primarily in terms of corruption and injustice (f:4), crime and security vulnerabilities (f:4), social inequality and discrimination (f:3), low levels of social participation (f:2), economic crises and uncertainty (f:2), media influence and perception management (f:1), communication gaps and information pollution (f:1).

Selected responses to the question “What factors hinder the establishment of a climate of trust within society?” are presented below:

“Corruption within government institutions undermines citizens' trust in both the authorities and in one another. In societies where justice is unevenly applied, people tend to become more suspicious and distrustful.”(T3)

“In areas with high rates of crimes like theft and fraud, it becomes difficult for individuals to trust each other. Unsafe environments also reduce participation in social life and weaken personal relationships.”(T15)

“False or misleading information can generate fear and distrust among people. Exaggerated rumors shared on social media contribute to a climate of suspicion and uncertainty within society.”(T8)

The findings indicate that teachers conceptualize barriers to a climate of trust largely through structural and systemic challenges. The prominence of corruption, injustice, and security-related concerns suggests that trust is perceived as highly sensitive to failures in governance and public safety. Moreover, the identification of social inequality, limited civic participation, and economic instability underscores the role of social and economic conditions in shaping trust. Although less frequently mentioned, issues related to media influence, perception management, and communication gaps point to the growing impact of information environments on trust formation, highlighting the complexity and multidimensional nature of trust within society.

3. Views on the Social Role of the Media

To examine teachers’ perspectives regarding the social role of the media, they were posed the question “What is the role of the media in society?”. The corresponding responses are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.

Views on the Social Role of the Media

Sub Themes	Participating	f
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Maintaining awareness of current events	T2,T4,T7,T8,T11,T13	6
Establishing shared understanding	T3,,T10,T17	3
Communicating cultural values	T1,T12,T16	3
Facilitating the exchange of diverse perspectives	T6,T14	2
Delivering educational content	T9,T15	2
Promoting social justice	T5	1

An analysis of Table 4 demonstrates that teachers offered diverse perspectives in response to the question “What is the role of the media in society?” posed to participants. The findings indicate that participants described this issue primarily in terms of maintaining awareness of current events (f:6), establishing shared understanding (f:3), communicating cultural values (f:3), facilitating the exchange of diverse perspectives (f:2), delivering educational content (f:2), promoting social justice (f:1)

Selected responses to the question “What is the role of the media in society?” are presented below:

“The media plays a key role in providing people with information about political, economic, and social events. Regular news and updates act as important tools that help citizens make well-informed choices.”(T7)

“Television shows, movies, and other programs create shared experiences by reflecting societal values, helping people find common ground.”(T10)

“Investigative reporting supports social justice by revealing corruption and unfair practices. Additionally, the media strengthens accountability by monitoring the actions of leaders and institutions.”(T5)

The findings suggest that teachers primarily perceive the media as a central mechanism for information dissemination and meaning-making within society. The emphasis on staying informed about current events highlights the media’s foundational role in supporting public awareness, while references to shared understanding and cultural transmission underscore its function in shaping collective norms and social cohesion. Additionally, the recognition of the media’s role in facilitating diverse viewpoints and providing educational content reflects its potential to contribute to democratic dialogue and lifelong learning. Although mentioned less frequently, the association with social justice indicates an acknowledgment of the media’s normative responsibility in advocating for equity and fairness within society.

4. Views on the media's influence on creating an environment of trust within society

To examine teachers' perspectives on the media's role in fostering a trust-based environment in society, they were asked the question "What is the impact of the media on the establishment of a climate of trust within society?". The corresponding responses are presented in Table 5.

Table 5.

Views on the media's influence on creating an environment of trust within society

	Sub Themes	Participating	f
Positive impact	Ensuring information dissemination and transparency	T1,T3	2
	Promoting social awareness and consciousness	T4,T6	2
	Strengthening solidarity and social cohesion	T8	1
	Facilitating public oversight and accountability	T2	1
Negative impact	Dissemination of misinformation and manipulative content	T5,T10,T13	3
	Fostering polarization and societal prejudice	T9,T14,T16	3
	Overemphasis on negative events in media coverage	T7,T11,T15	3
	Rapid and unregulated information sharing on social media platforms	T12,T17	2

An analysis of Table 5 demonstrates that teachers offered diverse perspectives in response to the question "What is the impact of the media on the establishment of a climate of trust within society?" posed to participants. The analysis revealed that some participants perceived the media as having a favorable influence on the formation of trust in society, and their views were grouped into the following sub-themes: ensuring information dissemination and transparency (f:2), promoting social awareness and consciousness (f:2), strengthening solidarity and social cohesion (f:1), facilitating public oversight and accountability (f:1). According to Table 5, some participants' responses suggested that social media exerts a negative influence on the formation of trust within society, and these responses were grouped under relevant sub-themes: dissemination of misinformation and manipulative content (f:3),

fostering polarization and societal prejudice (f:3), overemphasis on negative events in media coverage (f:3), rapid and unregulated information sharing on social media platforms (2).

Selected responses to the question “What is the impact of the media on the establishment of a climate of trust within society?” are presented below:

“Investigative journalism promotes justice and trust in society by uncovering corruption and exposing unfair practices. By holding institutions accountable, the media also helps strengthen citizens’ confidence in the social system.”(T2)

“Media campaigns raise awareness and encourage people to act more considerately and safely toward one another. Educational programs and documentaries further support a trusting environment by promoting shared social values.”(T6)

“Inaccurate or exaggerated news can create fear and suspicion, undermining the environment of trust. Misleading content may decrease people’s confidence in both each other and in societal institutions.”(T13)

The findings suggest that teachers perceive the media as having a dual role in shaping societal trust. Traditional media is seen as contributing positively by promoting transparency, social awareness, and cohesion, whereas social media is perceived to undermine trust through the spread of misinformation, societal polarization, and the rapid circulation of unregulated or negative content. This underscores the complex and ambivalent influence of media on trust within society.

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMONDATIONS

• Discussion and Conclusions Regarding the Importance of Creating an Environment of Trust in Society

The findings reveal that teachers hold diverse perspectives regarding the importance of establishing a climate of trust within society. Participants most frequently highlighted the role of trust in strengthening social networks and ties, suggesting that relational connections are considered fundamental for societal cohesion. In addition, trust was associated with fostering cooperation and social solidarity, supporting economic and institutional stability, and promoting social peace and justice. Although less frequently mentioned, enhancing individual and societal well-being was also recognized as an outcome of trust. Collectively, these results underscore that trust is perceived as a multidimensional construct, essential not only for social interaction but also for the stability, fairness, and overall functioning of society. Türk kahraman and Tutar (2009) define society as a comprehensive social system and a network of relationships in which different groups and cultural elements come together. At the core of social life lies individuals’ trust in one another and their sense of community. In this context, social cohesion and harmony are critical to the sustainability of society. Social trust primarily begins with mutual trust between individuals and is further reinforced by trust in institutions at the national level. This trust extends beyond interpersonal relationships, fostering an environment of mutual confidence not only within national borders but also in interactions with other societies and

states. Therefore, trust and solidarity form the foundation of social unity and cooperation, playing a vital role in maintaining peace and coexistence. Social trust requires not only strong interpersonal relationships but also the consistent and harmonious functioning of a society's production structures, institutions, and values, thereby minimizing contradictions and inconsistencies on fundamental issues (Başak, 2010; Bjørnskov & Voigt, 2014; Ekici, 2023a; Güneş, 2021).

• Discussion and Conclusions Regarding Factors Impeding the Establishment of Trust in Society

The findings indicate that teachers perceive multiple factors as hindering the establishment of a climate of trust within society. Corruption and injustice, along with crime and security vulnerabilities, were most frequently cited, highlighting the impact of governance and public safety on societal trust. Social inequality and discrimination, as well as low levels of civic participation, further reflect structural and social barriers that limit trust-building. The fundamental cause of social inequality is the exposure of individuals to injustices based on factors such as race, religion, gender, or income; in societies where justice cannot be ensured, this weakens trust among individuals. Similarly, corruption undermines social trust at both the state and civil society levels, threatening economic and political stability and disrupting social harmony. Therefore, strengthening social trust, reducing inequalities, and effectively combating corruption are vital for the stability and well-being of society (Berkmann, 1988; Işık, 2021; Şahin, 2005; Yıldırım Aykurt, 2020).

Furthermore, the research results indicate that economic crises and uncertainty also act as hindering factors, and they emphasize the role of stability in fostering trust among members of society. Less frequently mentioned issues, such as media influence, perception management, and communication gaps, suggest that information environments can either support or undermine trust. Because the media has the power to influence individuals' thoughts and behaviors, it can also have negative effects on social life. While the media should contribute to the formation of public opinion, it can sometimes distort perceptions and undermine democratic processes through biased or manipulative content. The organized structure of the media and its methods of content production can give rise to problems such as misinformation and polarization in political and social life. In this context, the media can become more than a mere channel for information and communication; when used improperly or inadequately, it can become a tool that threatens social trust and the functioning of democracy (Ekici, 2023a; Gönenç, 2005; Palabıyıkoglu, 1997; Sim, 1996; Zorlu, 2016). Overall, these results underscore the complex and multidimensional challenges involved in cultivating a trustworthy social climate.

• Discussion and Conclusions on the Social Role of the Media

The findings suggest that teachers view the media as playing a multifaceted role in society. Participants most frequently emphasized the media's function in keeping individuals informed about current events, highlighting its central role in maintaining public awareness. In addition, the media was associated with establishing shared understanding, communicating

cultural values, and facilitating the exchange of diverse perspectives, reflecting its contribution to social cohesion and dialogue. The provision of educational content and the promotion of social justice, although less frequently mentioned, indicate that the media is also seen as a tool for learning and ethical engagement. Collectively, these responses underscore the media's significance as both an informational and normative institution that shapes societal knowledge, values, and interactions. According to Pembecioğlu et al. (2021), the media serves as a crucial tool for both individuals and societies by not only presenting events and content but also by producing meaning and emotion. Through the media, individuals are able to witness numerous events that they would not have the opportunity to experience directly in their daily lives, as well as share their own experiences with others. In this process, the media goes beyond the mere transmission of information; by combining linguistic elements with visual components, it significantly shapes individuals' emotional and perceptual worlds (Okur Berberoğlu, 2013; Pembecioğlu et al., 2021; Zorlu, 2016).

• Discussion and conclusions on the media's impact on social trust

The findings indicate that teachers perceive the media as having a dual impact on the establishment of a climate of trust within society. Some participants emphasized the positive role of media, highlighting its functions in promoting transparency, disseminating information, raising social awareness, strengthening solidarity, and facilitating public oversight. Conversely, social media was frequently identified as a potential barrier to trust, due to the spread of misinformation, polarization, biased coverage of negative events, and the rapid circulation of unregulated content. These results underscore the complex and ambivalent influence of media, suggesting that while it can support societal trust, it also carries risks that may undermine public confidence and social cohesion. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the media's influence on social trust is not confined to positive outcomes; it may also produce effects that weaken trust. In particular, the largely unregulated nature of social media allows false or incomplete information to spread rapidly to broad audiences, thereby diminishing individuals' trust in both media organizations and social institutions or actors. Concerns regarding the accuracy and credibility of information foster skepticism and uncertainty among the public, rendering social trust increasingly fragile. Moreover, the one-sided, biased, or sensationalized portrayal of negative events intensifies polarization among social groups and undermines the possibility of achieving consensus based on shared values. The widespread circulation of polarizing discourse and ethically problematic content further shapes negative perceptions of both institutions and individuals, posing a threat to social cohesion. In this context, the inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms complicates efforts to restore trust within the public sphere. Although the media has the potential to function as a significant agent in fostering social trust (Akram & Kumar, 2017; Amedie, 2015; Biçen Aras & Çolaklar, 2015; Ekici, 2023a; Hang, 2024), it also entails considerable risks that may erode public confidence and social bonds if not governed in a careful and responsible manner, particularly in light of the structural and content-related challenges associated with social media (Akram & Kumar, 2017; Ahmed & Sharma, 2023; Baş & Diktaş, 2020; Ekici, 2023b; Hang, 2024). Regarding social media, Harchekar (2017) notes that although rapid information sharing has certain positive aspects, social media can also contribute to depression by encouraging the formation of false identities

and superficial relationships. This dynamic fosters a heightened sense of distrust among individuals in society. Similarly, Akram and Kumar (2017) emphasize the negative effects of social media, noting that young people becoming targets of cyberbullying, the intimidation of others through fake accounts, and the hacking of personal information all undermine trust between individuals. In addition, social media addiction hampers the productive use of time, leading to the neglect of social and personal responsibilities, while online risks such as fraud and deception further reinforce suspicion and distrust across society.

Another negative impact of the media is its transformation of violence into a form of visual entertainment, particularly through television and online games. The frequent presentation of such content not only leads people to perceive violence as a part of daily life but also weakens trust among individuals in society. The portrayal of violent behavior as models in TV series, films, cartoons, and digital games encourages children and young people to identify with these characters and adopt violence as a normal way to solve problems. The media's continuous broadcasting of violent content, driven by viewership and profit, increases the likelihood 'especially among young people' of using violence as a means to achieve goals. This, in turn, contributes to a decline in social trust and fosters an atmosphere of distrust in relationships (Diktaş & Üztemur; 2016; Palabıyıkoglu, 1997; Sim, 1996; Zorlu, 2016).

Based on the findings, several strategies can be recommended to enhance societal trust. First, initiatives should focus on strengthening social cohesion, reducing corruption and inequality, and promoting greater civic participation. Second, media literacy programs should be expanded to help individuals critically evaluate information and identify misinformation. Third, media platforms should be leveraged to promote transparency, social awareness, and accountability. Finally, monitoring and regulating social media content can help mitigate polarization, the spread of false information, and biased reporting. Together, these measures can contribute to building a more trustworthy and cohesive society.

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