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Adaptation of perceived social media literacy scale to Turkish culture: The case of educators

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Highlights:

- The Perceived Social Media Literacy Scale (PSMLS) was adapted and validated for use among Turkish educators and school administrators.
- Utilizing both first- and second-order confirmatory factor analyses, the PSMLS's structural validity and theoretical alignment were confirmed.
- The Turkish version demonstrated strong internal consistency, construct reliability, and criterion validity.
- No significant gender differences were found, but younger educators (≤ 40 years) reported higher levels of social media literacy.
- The scale, having undergone validation, provides a reliable basis for formulating educational policies to enhance digital and media literacy competencies among educators.

Abstract

Social media has become an integral component of contemporary digital interactions, influencing education, communication, and information access. As social media usage continues to rise, social media literacy (SML) has gained increasing attention as a crucial competency for individuals to critically assess online information, manage digital interactions, and navigate algorithmic content. While several scales have been developed to measure SML, there remains a gap in assessing the construct among educators, particularly within non-Western cultural contexts such as Türkiye. Addressing this gap, this study aims to adapt and validate the Perceived Social Media Literacy Scale (PSMLS) for use among Turkish educators and school administrators. The research sample consisted of 571 teachers and 293 school administrators, and the adaptation process involved translation, cultural adaptation, and psychometric validation. Both first- and second-level confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted to examine the structural validity of the scale. The first-level CFA confirmed the original factor structure and achieved cultural fit, while the second-level CFA supported the hierarchical structure of the scale, demonstrating strong alignment with the theoretical model. Additionally, criterion validity correlations, construct reliability, Cronbach's Alpha, and McDonald's Omega coefficients confirmed the scale's reliability. While gender differences in SML scores were not statistically significant, teachers aged 40 and below exhibited significantly higher SML scores than their older counterparts. The findings establish the PSMLS as a valid and reliable instrument for assessing social media literacy among educators and school administrators in Türkiye. This study contributes to the literature by providing a culturally adapted and psychometrically robust tool, enabling further research on digital literacy, media education, and social media engagement within educational contexts.

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1. Introduction

With the expansion of digital technologies, social media has become a dominant force shaping personal, social, and professional interactions (Brown & Duguid, 2017). As individuals engage with this ever-evolving digital landscape, social media literacy (SML)—which encompasses the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required for critical engagement with social media platforms—has emerged as a key area of academic inquiry. Developing SML is essential for promoting responsible and effective use of digital media while mitigating risks such as misinformation, cyberbullying, and privacy violations (Samala et al., 2024). Research instruments must be carefully adapted to specific cultural contexts to ensure accurate measurement of SML across different populations. The Perceived Social Media Literacy Scale (PSMLS), originally designed to assess individuals' ability to analyze and interact with social media content critically, requires a thorough cultural adaptation to reflect the distinctive social dynamics of Turkish society accurately. SML, which entails the ability to access, interpret, evaluate, and produce digital media content, is increasingly regarded as a crucial competence in the digital age (Özel, 2023). In Türkiye, educational policies have increasingly emphasized the integration of digital and media literacy into curricula, acknowledging its role in equipping students with essential critical thinking skills for engaging with digital media (Hobbs & Tuzel, 2017). Given the significant influence of social media on public discourse and daily communication, developing SML among students and educators alike is more important than ever (Solmaz & Reinhardt, 2024).

The adaptation of the PSMLS extends beyond mere linguistic translation; it requires cultural modification to ensure that the scale adequately captures the specific ways social media is used and perceived within the Turkish context. Research has repeatedly emphasized the importance of psychometric validation when adapting media literacy instruments to different cultural settings (e.g., Ak & Arslantaş, 2024). For instance, adapting the Algorithmic Media Content Awareness Scale for Turkish learners involved comprehensive validity and reliability testing to confirm its effectiveness in assessing algorithmic literacy (Ak & Arslantaş, 2024). A similar methodological approach is necessary to adapt the PSMLS, ensuring it undergoes rigorous translation, cultural alignment, and psychometric evaluation to establish its applicability and validity in Türkiye.

As digital platforms become increasingly embedded in educational environments, educators play a fundamental role in fostering social media literacy among students. However, a significant research gap remains regarding how educators perceive and engage with social media, particularly within the Turkish educational system. In addressing this gap, the present study seeks to adapt and validate the Perceived Social Media Literacy Scale (PSMLS) specifically for educators, thus providing a reliable tool for assessing their digital competencies.

The present study focuses on adapting the PSMLS for the Turkish educational context, ensuring its linguistic, conceptual, and psychometric suitability for Turkish-speaking educators. The adaptation process entails rigorous translation, cultural alignment, and validation techniques, including confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), to establish the scale's reliability and construct validity. By localizing the PSMLS, this research contributes to the expanding body of scholarship on SML while offering educators, researchers, and policymakers in Türkiye a reliable instrument for assessing and enhancing digital literacy skills. The subsequent sections explore the theoretical foundations of SML, outline the methodological framework of the adaptation process, and discuss the implications of the adapted scale for research and practice in Türkiye. This study addresses a significant gap in the literature and highlights the importance of culturally responsive assessment tools in advancing digital literacy on a global scale.

1.1. Literature Review

Social media literacy (SML), a fundamental aspect of digital literacy, involves interpreting, critically assessing, and actively engaging with content on social media platforms (Meyers et al., 2013). Prior research has demonstrated a positive relationship between SML and several beneficial outcomes, including improved critical thinking, responsible digital engagement, and enhanced communication abilities (Tommasi et al., 2023). However, since digital engagement is shaped by cultural, societal, and technological factors, localized investigations and tailored measurement tools are essential for ensuring the validity and applicability of research findings. Scholars have widely recognized the significance of SML as a vital skill in today's digital landscape. For example, Buckingham (2013) emphasized its role in addressing contemporary issues such as misinformation, digital manipulation, and disparities in online participation. Similarly, Livingstone (2008) explored the function of digital literacy in enabling individuals to assess online information and interact responsibly and critically with digital platforms. Jenkins (2007), in turn, examined how participatory culture within social media necessitates educational interventions that encourage critical engagement and collaborative competencies among users.

In Türkiye, equipping individuals with the skills required to navigate complex digital spaces has gained increasing prominence. Ugurhan et al. (2020) highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive media literacy education to counteract misinformation and bridge the digital divide. Additionally, incorporating media literacy into the Turkish educational curriculum has strengthened students' analytical and evaluative skills (Tüzel, 2012).

The Perceived Social Media Literacy Scale (PSMLS) is a comprehensive instrument for measuring SML, encompassing various dimensions such as information verification, privacy management, and digital participation. The successful adaptation of similar instruments underscores the necessity of psychometric validation and cultural sensitivity when localizing scales. For instance, previous studies have successfully adapted the Digital Competence Scale (Toker et al., 2021) and the Media and Information Literacy Assessment (Ugurhan et al., 2020) to diverse cultural settings. Additionally, cross-cultural research highlights how media literacy assessments must be tailored to reflect local sociocultural nuances. Du Preez et al. (2024), for example, examined the influence of cultural and socioeconomic factors on digital engagement in South Africa, while Park (2012) analyzed SML in East Asia, emphasizing the impact of collectivist values on online behavior and participation.

Beyond being an individual competency, SML is increasingly recognized as a critical pedagogical skill (Williams, 2024). Educators play a central role in fostering students' digital literacy by guiding them in assessing online content, promoting responsible social media practices, and integrating digital tools into their teaching methodologies (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007; Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). However, as students increasingly rely on digital platforms as primary sources of information, they become more vulnerable to misinformation, privacy threats, and unethical content consumption (Tandoc et al., 2018). Without sufficient SML skills, educators may struggle to equip students with the necessary competencies to navigate digital environments critically (Selwyn, 2012).

Despite the widespread integration of digital technologies into education, research indicates that many educators receive minimal formal training in social media literacy (Koltay, 2011; Erstad, 2015). As a result, there remains a significant knowledge gap regarding how educators perceive their SML abilities and their preparedness to teach these competencies.

Previous studies examining educators' use of social media have primarily focused on their attitudes toward its implementation in classrooms (Carpenter & Krutka, 2014; Manca & Ranieri, 2017). However, research specifically investigating teachers' competencies in evaluating the credibility of online content, understanding social media algorithms, and managing digital privacy remains limited. Moreover, many of the existing SML measurement tools are designed for general users, failing to account for the unique instructional responsibilities of educators (Lankshear & Knobel, 2008). Recent research has underscored concerns regarding educators' ability to analyze digital information critically. Studies suggest teachers frequently struggle to detect misinformation and may inadvertently reinforce digital biases in classroom discussions (Tandoc et al., 2018). Moreover, Kahne and Bowyer (2017) assert that digital literacy education must extend beyond technical competencies to include critical engagement with digital content. These findings emphasize the necessity of an SML assessment tool specifically designed for educators, as their digital competencies directly shape students' media literacy development. With the rapid pace at which digital environments evolve, assessing educators' SML competencies is crucial for understanding their ability to navigate and integrate digital technologies into teaching effectively. Implementing the PSMLS in an educational context will yield valuable insights into educators' digital competencies, highlight areas requiring professional development, and contribute to ongoing policy discussions surrounding digital education (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). In Türkiye, adapting the PSMLS is particularly relevant, as national education policies increasingly prioritize digital literacy initiatives. The present study aims to establish a reliable and culturally adapted instrument for assessing teachers' SML competencies by validating this scale among educator-specific populations. Findings from this research will inform teacher training programs and curriculum development, ultimately supporting educators in fostering responsible digital citizenship among students (Selwyn, 2012).

1.2. Significance of the Study

The present study is significant for several reasons. Firstly, considering the paucity of validated instruments specifically designed for the Turkish context, adapting this scale into Turkish and subsequent analysis of its psychometric properties will provide researchers with a culturally relevant tool. This will, in turn, enable a more accurate and context-specific examination of teachers' instructional practices in Türkiye. Secondly, the findings will contribute to developing targeted educational strategies and policies to enhance

digital literacy among diverse populations in Türkiye. Finally, adapting the PSMLS provides a model for similar efforts in other non-Western settings, promoting global equity in digital literacy research and practice. By adapting the PSMLS, this research underscores the importance of culturally relevant tools for understanding how individuals interact with digital environments. As social media continues to shape societal discourses and practices, a localized approach to assessing and fostering SML becomes increasingly critical.

1.3. Research Questions

The present study has two objectives. Firstly, it aims to examine the cultural appropriateness of a construct measured through an existing scale within the Turkish cultural context. Secondly, it aims to adapt the scale accordingly. To address this objective, the following research questions were investigated:

RQ1: How can the Perceived Social Media Literacy Scale (PSMLS) be linguistically and culturally adapted to align with the Turkish cultural context?

RQ2: What are the psychometric properties (e.g., reliability, construct validity) of the adapted PSMLS within the Turkish context?

Whilst the principal objective of this study is to adapt and validate the PSMLS in the Turkish context, an ancillary exploratory analysis was also conducted to examine its relationship with digital literacy and potential demographic influences. However, it should be noted that these analyses remain secondary and do not interfere with the primary objective of this research.

2. Method

The extant literature defines the process of adapting scales as translating measurement instruments into different languages and cultures and re-evaluating their psychometric properties (Deniz, 2007; Heggestad et al., 2019). The present study employs a cross-sectional design utilizing quantitative methods (Hall, 2008; Spector, 2019). During the adaptation process, linguistic equivalence of the scale was first ensured, followed by validity and reliability analyses.

2.1. Participants

The study's sample group comprises 864 voluntary participants selected through convenience sampling (Battaglia, 2008) from various urban centers across Türkiye. Five hundred and seventy-one of the participants are teachers, and 293 are school administrators. Detailed demographic information about the sample group is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of participants (n = 864)

Variable	Category	Mean or N	SD or %
Age	21-30 years old	178	20.6%
	31-40 years old	339	39.2%
	41-50 years old	257	29.8%
	51 years and over	90	10.4%
Gender	Female	457	52.9%
	Male	407	47.1%
Type of school where the position is held	High School	398	46.1%
	Middle School	174	20.1%
	Primary School	236	27.3%
	Preschool	56	6.5%
Time on social media use (hours/day)		3.26	1.47
Marital Status	Married	634	73.4%
	Single	230	26.6%

Note. *SD* = standard deviation

As seen in Table 1, the participants' mean daily social media usage time was M = 3.26 and SD = 1.47 (range = 1-5 hours/day). The demographic profile of the participants reveals several notable patterns. Concerning age distribution, the largest group comprises individuals aged 31-40 (39.2%), followed by those aged 41-50 (29.8%). The 21-30 age group accounts for 20.6% of the sample, while the 51+ age group constitutes the most minor proportion (10.4%). The gender distribution is relatively balanced, with 52.9% of participants identifying as female and 47.1% as male, ensuring diverse representation. Concerning the institution type, most participants are employed in high schools (46.1%), followed by primary schools (27.3%), middle schools (20.1%), and preschools (6.5%). This finding suggests that a significant proportion of the sample comprises high school

educators, while preschool educators constitute a comparatively smaller segment. The data on marital status reveals that most of the participants (73.4%) are married. The remaining 26.6% are single, consistent with the age distribution, as a substantial proportion of the sample falls within middle-aged groups. The findings provide a comprehensive demographic overview of the sample, which consists predominantly of middle-aged, highly educated educators with balanced gender representation and moderate daily social media use. This profile offers valuable context for interpreting their SML levels and related behaviors.

2.2. Scale Adaptation Process

The PSMLS, developed by Tandoc Jr. et al. (2021) and adapted to Turkish culture, consists of 14 items distributed across four subdimensions: Technical Competence (5 items), Social Relationships (3 items), Information Awareness (3 items), and Privacy and Algorithmic Awareness (3 items) (see Appendix). The adaptation process was conducted in accordance with the principles proposed by Hambleton et al. (2004). Initially, permission to adapt the scale to Turkish culture was obtained via email from the original scale's authors. Following this, ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University (Ethics Number 608039, dated 14/01/2025). Following the procurement of these permissions, the translation and linguistic validation processes were conducted. Adapting the PSMLS to Turkish followed a rigorous methodological approach to ensure linguistic accuracy, cultural appropriateness, and psychometric validity. Initially, the English version of the scale was translated into Turkish by three independent bilingual linguists, each of whom was proficient in both languages and specialized in educational research. A fourth language expert conducted a comparative analysis to ensure consistency across translations, identifying any discrepancies between the translations. A consensus approach was then employed to finalize each item's most semantically and contextually appropriate translation. To further validate the linguistic integrity of the scale, a back-translation method was applied, wherein a separate group of bilingual experts translated the Turkish version back into English. The back-translated version was then compared to the original scale to assess whether the semantic integrity and conceptual equivalence had been preserved. It was established that minor discrepancies in meaning were present in a small number of items, particularly those involving colloquial expressions and culturally specific terminology. These discrepancies were resolved through expert discussions, ensuring that the final Turkish version accurately conveyed the intended meaning while remaining culturally appropriate. Following the translation phase, an expert panel comprising five specialists in educational sciences and digital literacy evaluated the Turkish version of the scale regarding content validity, assessing each item for relevance, clarity, and cultural appropriateness. Experts provided feedback on the alignment of items with the construct of social media literacy in the Turkish context, and minor modifications were made to improve clarity and ensure that the scale maintained its conceptual integrity within the target population.

A pilot study was conducted with a sample of 50 educators to examine the comprehensibility and usability of the Turkish version, with participants encouraged to provide qualitative feedback regarding any items that were unclear or difficult to interpret. Based on this feedback, two items underwent minor rewording to enhance clarity without altering their original meaning. During the adaptation process, several linguistic and cultural challenges were encountered. For instance, some terminology related to algorithmic awareness and digital privacy had no direct equivalents in Turkish and required contextual reinterpretation. Additionally, certain phrases with specific cultural connotations in English were adapted to ensure they were meaningful and relevant to Turkish educators. These challenges were addressed through an iterative review process, incorporating feedback from both linguists and subject matter experts.

The study's systematic and multi-step adaptation process ensures the PSMLS maintains its validity, reliability, and cultural appropriateness for assessing social media literacy among educators in Türkiye. The original five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 [strongly disagree] to 5 [strongly agree]) was retained.

2.3. Materials Procedure

To examine the adapted PSMLS's concurrent validity, the Digital Literacy Scale subdimensions, developed by Bayrakcı and Narmanlıoğlu (2021), were used as a data collection instrument. The scale comprises six subdimensions: “Ethics and Responsibility, General Knowledge and Functional Skills, Daily Use, Professional Production, Privacy and Security, and Social Dimension”. The scale consists of 29 items, rated on a five-point Likert scale (1- Strongly Disagree; 2- Disagree; 3- Neutral; 4- Agree; 5- Strongly Agree). In the present study, the internal consistency reliability of the scale was re-evaluated. The results obtained from the analysis revealed that Cronbach's α and McDonald's ω coefficients ranged between .79 and .93, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

2.4. Procedure Data Analysis

Following the ethics committee's approval, research data was collected over a period of two weeks between the 14th and 27th January 2025. An online research form, prepared using Google Forms, was utilized during this process. The form comprised two sections: the first included questions about participants' personal information and the informed consent form, while the second contained the scales used in the study. No financial compensation was provided to the voluntary participants. The access link to the research form was distributed to participants via social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and email.

2.5. Data Analysis

To verify the hypothesis that the original factor structure of the PSMLS was retained in its Turkish version, both first-order (n_1 = 500) and second-order CFA (n_2 = 364) were conducted. The discriminant validity of the scale was assessed using multiple criteria to ensure robustness. In addition to the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio method, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was employed, comparing the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values with inter-construct correlations. The results confirmed that each construct's AVE square root was greater than its highest correlation with any other construct, supporting the discriminant validity of the scale. Although Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were not explicitly calculated, the Fornell-Larcker results indicate that the scale meets the recommended discriminant validity thresholds, as suggested in the literature (Yurt, 2023). Additionally, the following tests were performed: tests of internal consistency, tests of concurrent validity with external criteria, and gender differences. All analyses, including CFA, HTMT ratios, internal consistency, and other statistical evaluations, were conducted using Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP) version 0.19.2. The internal consistency of PSMLS with its sub-dimensions was analyzed using Cronbach's α and McDonald's ω. α and ω values higher than .70 indicate acceptable internal consistency (George & Mallery, 2019). It was considered more beneficial to use both reliability estimates together in this study (Soysal, 2023). The following fit indices, calculated from the CFA, were used to determine whether the original factor structure of the scale was validated in its Turkish version: Comparative Fit Index (CFI) > .90, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) > .90, Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) < .08, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) < .08 (Byrne, 2011). The factor loadings obtained from the CFA were utilized in the HTMT method, where a ratio below .85 supports discriminant validity (Kline, 2023). The PSMLS and its subdimensions were also examined for concurrent validity with relevant external criteria (i.e., the subdimensions of the Digital Literacy Scale). Pearson correlations (r) were used to evaluate concurrent validity. Pearson correlation coefficients of r < .30 indicate weak correlations, while values of r > .30 suggest moderate to strong correlations (Cohen, 1988). Finally, the total PSMLS score and its subdimension scores were analyzed to determine whether they significantly differed across gender groups (i.e., male and female participants). To this end, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare gender differences.

3. Results

In scale adaptation studies, it is imperative to ascertain the validity and consistency of the scale's subdimensions (first-order CFA) and its overall structure (second-order CFA) within the target culture. Suppose the first-order factor analysis results demonstrate that the items are appropriately loaded onto their respective factors. In that case, the subsequent step involves conducting a second-order factor analysis to test whether these subdimensions align with an overarching structure. This process is instrumental in ensuring the validity and compatibility of the scale at both the micro-level (items and subdimensions) and the macro-level (overall structure) (Arafat et al., 2016; Heggestad et al., 2019). In this context, a first-order CFA was initially conducted on the dataset (see Figure 1).

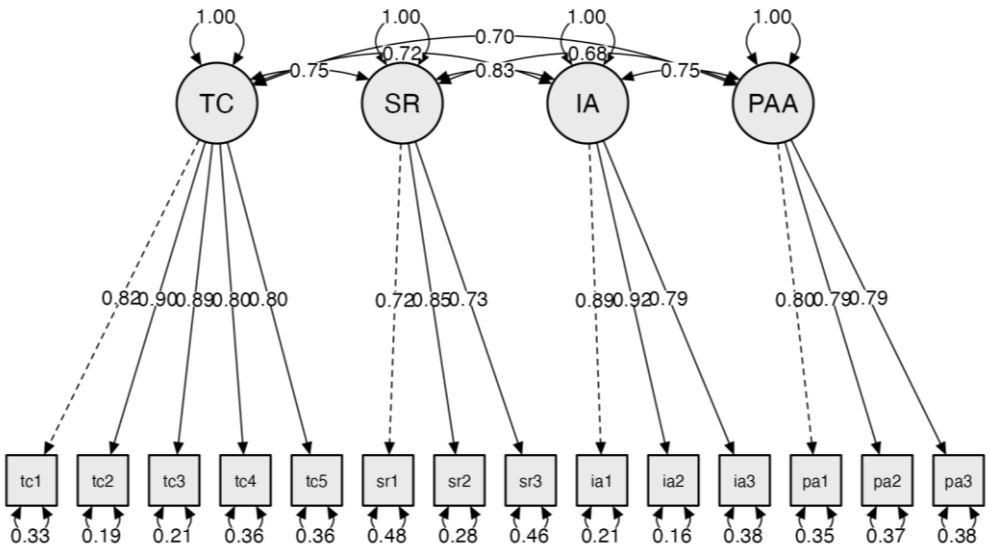

Figure 1. PSMLS 1st Level CFA Analysis Screen Output [TC=Technical Competency; SR=Social Relationships; IA=Information Awareness; PAA=Privacy and Algorithmic Awareness]

The model fit indices (χ^2/df = 8.31, TLI = .93, CFI = .94, SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .09) indicate an acceptable level of model fit, based on commonly used cutoff values (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Although the RMSEA slightly exceeds the conventional threshold of 0.08, previous research (e.g., MacCallum et al., 1996) suggests that values up to 0.10 can still be considered reasonable, particularly in the case of complex models with large datasets. The chi-square goodness-of-fit test yielded a relatively elevated ratio (χ^2/df = 8.31), which exceeds the commonly accepted limit of 5. Values below 3 generally indicate a robust model fit (Yurt, 2023). However, extensive literature highlights that chi-square values tend to be highly sensitive to sample size, often inflating the χ^2/df ratio, particularly in large-scale studies (Yurt, 2023). Given that this study includes 864 participants (571 teachers and 293 school administrators), the increased χ^2/df value is likely attributable to this sensitivity rather than an indication of model misspecification.

To address this concern, greater reliance was placed on alternative model fit indices that were less impacted by sample size. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI = .94) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI = .93) both surpass the recommended threshold of .90, indicating a good model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Furthermore, the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR = .04) falls within the optimal range (≤ .08), while the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = .09) remains within marginally acceptable levels. These indices suggest that the model adequately represents the underlying data structure despite the chi-square statistic being influenced by the large sample size. These values indicate that the model is generally consistent with the data. Furthermore, an examination of the factor loadings demonstrated that all items exhibited significant loading onto their respective factors, ranging from .72 to .92 ($p < .001$). The internal consistency values for each subdimension of the scale, calculated as Cronbach's Alpha and McDonald's Omega, are presented in Table 2. The values obtained were above .80, indicating that the subdimensions are reliable (Hayes & Coutts, 2020). These findings substantiate the predicted factor structure of the scale at the first-order level and affirm the scale's capacity for adequate measurement validity. Following the first-order CFA, it was determined that the scale items align well with the previously hypothesized factor structure, leading to the decision to conduct a second-order CFA. The objective of this analysis is to ascertain whether the subdimensions of the scale align with the overall structure of the scale. The results of the second-order CFA are presented in Figure 2.

A second-order CFA was conducted to evaluate the alignment of the scale's subdimensions with the overall structure. The model fit indices (χ^2/df = 6.17, CFI = .96, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .04) suggest an overall satisfactory model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Although the chi-square/degree of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) remains above the conventional threshold, prior findings have demonstrated that this index is highly sensitive to sample size (Yurt, 2023). Therefore, in accordance with best practices in structural equation modelling, greater emphasis was placed on alternative fit indices to assess model adequacy. The results indicate that the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = .96) and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI = .95) both exceed the recommended threshold of .90, suggesting a strong model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Furthermore, the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR = .04) is within the optimal range (≤ .08), and the Root Mean Square Error of

Approximation (RMSEA = .07) remains within acceptable limits. These indices collectively indicate that the model provides a theoretically sound and statistically robust representation of the data. These values suggest that the model is generally consistent with the data, with minor modifications (tc2 → tc3) further improving the model fit (Byrne, 2016). Furthermore, an examination of the factor loadings for the subdimensions demonstrated that all subdimensions were significantly and strongly loaded onto the overall structure, with factor loadings ranging from .82 to .90 ($p < .001$). These results indicate that the subdimensions of the scale exhibit an adequate level of fit with the overall structure proposed for the second-order CFA. Detailed results of this analysis are presented in Table 2.

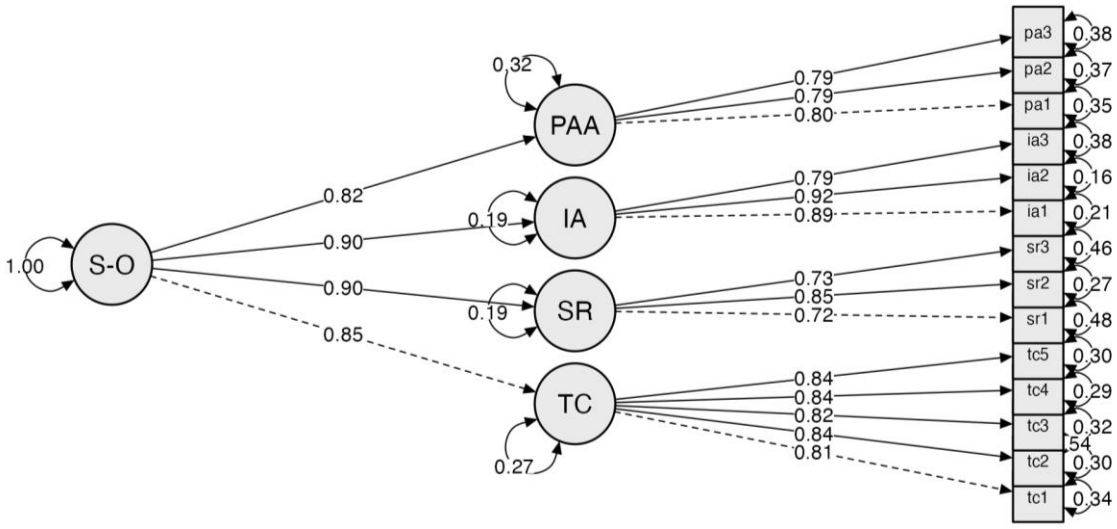

Figure 2. PSMLS 2nd Level CFA Analysis Screen Output

Table 2. The PSMLS' properties

	PSMLS	Technical Competency (TC)	Social Relationships (SR)	Informational Awareness (IA)	Privacy and Algorithmic Awareness (PAA)
Cronbach's α	.94	.92	.81	.90	.84
McDonald's ω	.95	.90	.81	.90	.84
2nd Level CFA					
$\chi 2$ (df)	444.19 (72)	–	–	–	–
p-value	<.001	–	–	–	–
CFI	.96	–	–	–	–
TLI	.95	–	–	–	–
RMSEA	.07	–	–	–	–
SRMR	.04	–	–	–	–
HTMT method					
TC	–	1.00			
SR	–	.78	1.00		
IA	–	.73	.84	1.00	
PAA	–	.72	.67	.77	1.00

Note. CFA=confirmatory factor analysis; CFI=comparative fit index; TLI=Tucker-Lewis's index; RMSEA=root mean square error of approximation; SRMR=standardized root mean square residual; HTMT= heterotrait-monotrait ratio.

The results of the second-order CFA for the PSMLS are presented in Table 2. The four-factor structure of the scale, derived from the sample (n = 364), was validated with acceptable fit indices obtained through CFA. The HTMT analysis was performed to assess discriminant validity. The HTMT factor loading ratio was less than .85, supporting the hypothesis that discriminant validity was achieved (Henseler et al., 2015). Furthermore, the internal consistency of the overall PSMLS and its subdimensions was calculated and presented in Table 2. The

findings indicate that both the overall scale and its subdimensions are reliable. Following the first- and second-order CFA analyses, criterion validity was evaluated (Borneman, 2010).

To this end, the correlations between the PSMLS subdimensions and the Digital Literacy Scale employed in this study were examined. The correlation values are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Concurrent validity of the PSMLS

	Pearson correlation with an external criterion measure					
	Ethics and Responsibility	**General Knowledge and Functional Skills**	**Daily Usage**	**Advanced Production**	**Privacy and Security**	**Social Dimension**
PSMLS	.80**	.55**	.74**	.20**	.74**	.45**
Technical Competency	.66**	.46**	.68**	.13**	.68**	.38**
Social Relationships	.63**	.53**	.61**	.28**	.60**	.47**
Informational Awareness	.76**	.51**	.63**	.19**	.65**	.41**
Privacy and Algorithmic Awareness	.76**	.40**	.61**	.11*	.60**	.30**

Note. *p<.05; **p<.001

As shown in Table 3, a positive and significant correlation is evident between the overall PSMLS, its subdimensions, and the subdimensions of the Digital Literacy Scale. The findings suggest a significant and positive correlation between the overall PSMLS, its subdimensions, and the subdimensions of the Digital Literacy Scale. A notable observation is a low positive correlation between Advanced Production and Privacy and Algorithmic Awareness. The correlation coefficients range from .11 to .80, demonstrating significant relationships that vary from low to moderate to high levels ($p < .001$; $p < .05$).

Furthermore, the relationships between the PSML scale (including its subdimensions) and the gender and age ranges of the participants were also examined. The results of this investigation are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Comparing the PSML between gender

	Mean (SD) in gender		t(p)
	Male (n =407)	**Female (n =457)**	
PSMLS	4.06 (.92)	4.16 (.89)	-1.56 (.12)
Technical Competency	4.26 (1.08)	4.37 (1.03)	-1.48 (.14)
Social Relationships	3.62 (1.10)	3.73 (1.12)	-1.51 (.13)
Informational Awareness	3.97 (1.09)	4.04 (1.04)	-0.85 (.39)
Privacy and Algorithmic Awareness	4.27 (.98)	4.37 (.95)	-1.45 (.15)

Table 4 presents a detailed examination of the disparities in the PSML and its subdimensions, focusing on the influence of gender among the study participants. The findings reveal that the mean scores for the overall scale and its subdimensions do not demonstrate statistically significant differences between genders ($p > .05$). This finding suggests that male and female participants have similar levels of perceived SML. However, the relationship between scale scores and age groups was analyzed using a one-way ANOVA test to assess differences in perceived SML. The findings of this analysis revealed that these differences were statistically significant, albeit with a small effect size ($F_{(3, 860)} = 13.40$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .05$). After this significant finding, a Games-Howell post-hoc analysis (Juarros-Basterretxea et al., 2024) demonstrated that participants aged 21-30 years and 31-40 years exhibited significantly higher levels of perceived SML in comparison to participants aged 41 years and older. Specifically, participants under 40 years of age reported higher literacy levels ($M_{21\text{-}30} = 4.41$, $SD = .63$; $M_{31\text{-}40} = 4.13$, $SD = .92$) than those aged 41-50 years ($M_{41\text{-}50} = 4.03$, $SD = .94$) and 51+ years ($M_{51+} = 3.72$, $SD = 1.00$).

4. Discussion

The present study adapted the Perceived Social Media Literacy Scale (PSMLS) (Tandoc Jr. et al., 2021) to the Turkish cultural context and assessed its validity and reliability among educators. The first-order and second-order CFA results supported the scale's original 14-item, four-factor structure. These findings indicate a strong alignment between the dimensions of Technical Competency, Social Relationships, Informational Awareness, and Privacy and Algorithmic Awareness and the theoretical framework proposed in the original scale. The results of this study are consistent with those of previous studies on media literacy assessment, which

emphasize the importance of cross-cultural validation in ensuring measurement accuracy (Toker et al., 2021; Ugurhan et al., 2020).

The first-order and second-order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results demonstrated that the PSMLS maintains its structural validity in Turkish education. The initial CFA model yielded acceptable model fit indices; however, a refined model incorporating modification indices significantly improved model fit. The final model's fit indices (CFI = .96, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .04) indicate an acceptable-to-good model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Despite the elevated chi-square/degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df = 6.17), this is a prevalent concern in large-sample studies, as chi-square values demonstrate sensitivity to sample size (Yurt, 2023). Consequently, greater emphasis was placed on CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR, which are less influenced by sample size and provide robust evidence of a well-fitting model. These findings are consistent with previous scale adaptation research, which used multiple fit indices to validate social media literacy constructs (MacCallum et al., 1996).

The reliability of the adapted scale was confirmed through the analysis of Cronbach's Alpha and McDonald's Omega coefficients, both of which exceeded the established threshold values. These results support the scale's internal consistency and confirm its robustness as a measurement tool. The high mean scores across subdimensions suggest that participants demonstrated strong SML competencies, particularly in technical proficiency, critical information evaluation, and privacy awareness. Participants with high scores in the Technical Competency subdimension demonstrated proficiency in managing digital platforms and controlling their online presence. Similarly, high scores in the Informational Awareness subdimension indicated that participants engage with digital content critically, actively verifying the accuracy of online information rather than passively consuming it. Furthermore, the significant Privacy and Algorithmic Awareness scores indicate that participants have a solid grasp on digital data processing, algorithmic content curation, and online security risks, which is in line with the results of previous digital literacy studies (Polanco-Levicán & Salvo-Garrido, 2022).

The present study examined the effects of age and gender on social media literacy. While no statistically significant gender differences were observed, age-related differences were evident, with younger educators (aged 40 and below) scoring higher in SML competencies. This finding aligns with previous studies suggesting that younger individuals are more digitally literate due to increased exposure to social media and digital tools (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). However, research by Kahne and Bowyer (2017) suggests that social media literacy is not solely a function of age but also depends on professional training and experience. The absence of significant gender differences in this study aligns with Erstad (2015). However, it contrasts with research suggesting that male educators perceive themselves as more digitally competent than female educators (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). These variations underscore the necessity for further research into gender-based perceptions of digital literacy and their implications for educational practices.

4.1. Study Limitations and Future Research Directions

A key limitation of this study is convenience sampling, which, while practical for large-scale data collection, may introduce selection bias. Since participants were recruited voluntarily from various urban centers, the sample may not fully represent the broader population, particularly individuals from rural areas or those with limited digital access. Additionally, the reliance on voluntary responses may have led to self-selection bias, with participants with higher digital engagement or stronger opinions on social media being more inclined to participate. In future studies, employing probability sampling techniques to enhance the generalizability of findings is recommended. Another limitation is that confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted on the entire sample, combining data from both teachers and school administrators. However, given that these groups have distinct professional roles and experiences, their perceptions of social media literacy may differ meaningfully. Conducting separate CFAs for each group or implementing multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (MG-CFA) would allow for a more nuanced understanding of whether the factor structure remains stable across different professional categories. Future research should explore these differences further to validate the PSMLS's applicability across diverse educational contexts. The participants were educators from the preschool, primary and secondary levels but not those at the tertiary level. Future studies may intentionally explore those at the tertiary level too.

5. Conclusion

The present study successfully adapted and validated the PSMLS for use among Turkish educators, confirming its structural validity and reliability. The scale is a comprehensive tool for assessing social media literacy among teachers and school administrators, offering insights into their technical competencies, critical

engagement with digital content, and awareness of privacy and algorithmic influences. Given the increasing role of social media in education and professional communication, initiatives aimed at enhancing educators' digital literacy could prove highly beneficial. The findings of this study suggest that further integration of social media literacy training in teacher education programs could enhance educators' ability to navigate digital environments effectively and foster responsible digital citizenship among students. Future studies should continue investigating demographic and professional differences in SML, ensuring that educational policies and training programs align with the evolving digital landscape.

Statement of Researchers

Researchers' contribution rate statement:
MK: Conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data curation, writing- original draft preparation. MP: Data curation, writing-original draft preparation, software, investigation, validation, formal analysis. DO: Writing - review & editing, DKA: methodology, investigation, data curation, writing - review & editing,

Conflict statement:
The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement:
The data supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding authors upon reasonable request.

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This research was approved by the Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University Ethics Committee's decision, No. 608039, dated 14/01/2025.

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Appendix

Perceived Social Media Literacy Scale Turkish Version

(Algılanan Sosyal Medya Okuryazarlığı Ölçeği Türkçe Versiyonu)

1- Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum; 2- Katılmıyorum; 3- Kararsızım; 4- Katılıyorum; 5- Kesinlikle Katılıyorum

Aşağıda sosyal medya okuryazarlığı (teknik yeterlilik, sosyal ilişkiler…) ile ilgili maddeler bulunmaktadır. Sizden aşağıda yer alan maddelere katılma düzeyinize göre yanıt vermeniz istenmektedir.		**(1)**	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**
Teknik Yeterlilik	1) Sosyal medyada bir hesap açmayı biliyorum.					
	2) Sosyal medyada hesabımı silmeyi biliyorum.					
	3) Sosyal medyadaki hesabımı devre dışı bırakmayı biliyorum.					
	4) Sosyal medya hesabımda fotoğraf gibi içerikler paylaşmayı biliyorum.					
	5) Sosyal medya hesabımdaki istenmeyen içerikleri kaldırmayı biliyorum.					
Sosyal İlişkiler	6) Sosyal medya platformlarını yöneten telif hakkı yasalarını biliyorum.					
	7) Sosyal medya çatışmalarını (olumsuzlukları, tartışmaları vb.) uygun bir şekilde yönetmeyi biliyorum.					
	8) Görev yaptığım kurumun sosyal medya politikasının farkındayım.					
Bilgi Farkındalığı	9) Sosyal medyada paylaşılanların doğru olup olmadığını nasıl kontrol edeceğimi biliyorum.					
	10) Sosyal medyada gördüğüm farklı bilgileri doğrulamak için bilgi kaynaklarını nasıl kullanacağımı biliyorum.					
	11) Sosyal medyadaki bir bilginin doğru mu yanlış mı olduğunu ayırt edebiliyorum.					
Gizlilik ve Algoritmik Farkındalık	12) Facebook, X, Instagram gibi sosyal medya platformlarının bana sunulan içerikleri kontrol ettiğini biliyorum.					
	13) Sosyal medyada paylaştığım bilgilerin platformlar tarafından kalıcı olarak depolandığını biliyorum.					
	14) Sosyal medyada gördüğüm reklamların tercihlerim dikkate alınarak bana özel hazırlandığını biliyorum.					