



**Digital competences and skills as key factors between
connectedness and tolerance to diversity on social
networking sites: Case study of Social Work Graduates on
Facebook**

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Abstract:	<p>Social networking services are becoming parallel socialization universes. In these digital contexts, people tend to connect with others who share their perspectives and opinions about the world. Emerging voices are warning about the growing homophily resulting from these forms of socialization, which can have a negative impact on tolerance to diversity and the quality of social capital. Relational approach disciplines such as Social Work can provide digital skills and competences to improve the manner in which these services are used.</p> <p>In this paper, we analyse how connectedness patterns from Social Work graduates affect tolerance to diversity and social capital. A sample of 126 Social Work graduates was analysed to assess their connectedness patterns on Facebook. Participants were also asked about their digital competences and skills in order to know how these variables can modulate the achievement of tolerance to diversity and social capital. Results show that higher connectedness, when social work graduates have digital skills on Facebook, leads to higher tolerance to diversity and social capital. In order to counteract homophily, social workers must encourage users to acquire digital skills thus increasing tolerance for diversity.</p>

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Digital competences and skills as key factors between connectedness and tolerance to diversity on social networking sites: Case study of Social Work Graduates on Facebook

Abstract

Social networking services are becoming parallel socialization universes. In these digital contexts, people tend to connect with others who share their perspectives and opinions about the world. Emerging voices are warning about the growing homophily resulting from these forms of socialization, which can have a negative impact on tolerance to diversity and the quality of social capital. Relational approach disciplines such as Social Work can provide digital skills and competences to improve the manner in which these services are used.

In this paper, we analyse how connectedness patterns from Social Work graduates affect tolerance to diversity and social capital. A sample of 126 Social Work graduates was analysed to assess their connectedness patterns on Facebook. Participants were also asked about their digital competences and skills in order to know how these variables can modulate the achievement of tolerance to diversity and social capital.

Results show that higher connectedness, when social work graduates have digital skills on Facebook, leads to higher tolerance to diversity and social capital. In order to counteract homophily, social workers must encourage users to acquire digital skills thus increasing tolerance for diversity.

Keywords

Connectedness; Digital competences, Digital skills on Facebook; Tolerance to diversity; Social capital

Introduction

Training the population and work forces in digital competences is key to build a digitally inclusive society and improve competitiveness. According to current figures, 44% of European citizens do not have basic digital competences whilst 37% of employees lack digital skills (European Commission, 2016). Yet, there has been a significant rise in the need for these competences in all professions. Therefore, education and training systems must be updated in order to train young students for the today's digital society.

Social Work graduates and Social Work as a discipline cannot stay behind the effects of the digital era we live in, because technologies are "shaping the nature of social intervention practice" (NASW y ASWB, 2005: 4). Supported by digital means, it is possible to provide services and build networks in different ways, thus connecting the disconnected (Del Fresno, 2015). Some Social Work institutions, such as the National Association of Social Work, the Association of Social Work Boards, the Council on Social Work Education and the Clinical Social Work Association (2017) are encouraging social workers to acquire digital skills and competences in order to use technological means appropriately and find improved solutions to social problems. In particular, technological means can be highly useful when it comes to exchanging information and improving socialization on social networking sites. These sites are specifically relevant to Social Work as a discipline and as a profession since they target Social Work's main purpose, that is, to work with information and users along with their environments and networks, therefore promoting the creation and improvement of their relations.

Connectedness, social capital and tolerance to diversity

Amongst personal-profile networking sites, Facebook is the most prominent. In 2016, it announced to have reached the remarkable figure of two billion users active every month. This makes Facebook the most used social networking site, gathering more than a fourth of the population worldwide. More than 75% of the population use personal-profile networking sites on a daily basis and the average time spent on these sites has increased up to almost two hours every day (Roth, 2018). In Europe, Facebook makes possible five billion social connections (Filiz, Adamic and State, 2016). In the connected age (Watts, 2003), social networking sites allow for the progressive shortening of social distances, bringing us closer and closer together. In fact, as has recently been shown, social distances have fallen from 4 degrees (Backstrom et al., 2012) to 3.5 degrees of separation (Edunov et al., 2016) due to Facebook®. These possibilities of connectedness are transforming the way we communicate, keep in touch and

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3 the way society thinks. Moreover, the number of users worldwide, the frequency of use and the
4 time spent on Facebook make it a parallel universe for socialization (Wilson, Gosling and
5 Graham, 2012). This high connectedness is reducing social distances (Edunov et al., 2006),
6 bringing cultures closer and accelerating diversity, the one that acknowledges the increasing
7 heterogeneity in today's societies. Different people, from different origins and places, from
8 different backgrounds and organizations are involved in interactive dynamics and take part in
9 the creation and dissemination of content, thus generating large amounts of information. This
10 process is known as mass self-communication (Castells, 2009). Yet, there is currently a
11 paradox in that, during the period of greatest access to information in History, it is increasingly
12 difficult to filter the constant and massive flow of information and news spread on the Internet.
13 The current problems of 'infoxication' and 'infosaturation' are caused by the difficulty of
14 handling the constant and massive flows of information and news spread on the Internet (Dias,
15 2014). Additionally, when users search information on the internet, they often find information
16 that reinforces their own beliefs. This occurs because digital means suggest content and actions
17 based on users' digital fingerprint when they use web browsers and social networking sites
18 (Nikolov, Oliveira, Flammini and Menczer, 2015). Information is thus biased, meaning users
19 access hierarchical and custom content based on their previous actions on the internet, and as
20 a result, users adopt filters according to their own actions, regardless of being aware of it or
21 not. Accessing information and knowledge on social networking sites is determined by
22 connectivity patterns, that is, by the way in which users are imbricated in specific social
23 structures. These structures allow to reach social capital.

24 Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as the set of resources (current or potential) that are
25 embedded in our social networks and which can be accessed or mobilized when needed. This
26 concept can be analysed from different approaches. Social capital is often divided between
27 "bridging" and "bonding" (Putnam, 2000; Williams, 2006). A Facebook-type user will
28 communicate directly with a core group made of strong ties by writing comments and sending
29 private messages or recommendations, thus reaching a "bonding" social capital. At the same
30 time, such user will passively follow a majority of weak ties, by reading their news (Burke,
31 Marlow and Lento, 2010). Weak ties provide more diverse information and they tend to
32 represent the so-called "bridging" social capital (Ellison et al., 2007). Bridging social capital
33 allows reaching more diverse information, to be exposed to new ideas and to be willing to try
34 new things. Connectedness builds communication channels which provide access to
35 information, resources and knowledge, whether there is or not interaction (Burke and Kraut,
36 2013). It is important for people to be connected but not in any manner. The people and
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3 organizations to which people choose to be connected determine the social bandwidth, that is,
4 the quantity and quality of the information accessed by users (Stutzman, Vitak and Ellison,
5 2012).
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8 People use social networking sites massively and highly frequently mainly due to feeling the
9 need to connect with others, to keep in touch (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe, 2007; Quan-
10 Haase, Mo and Wellman, 2017). Social networking sites are predominantly used to keep or
11 strengthen offline relations rather than meeting new people (Ellison et al., 2007; Quan-Haase
12 and Young 2010), which reflects accurately how socialization occurs in the offline reality
13 (Dunbar et al., 2015). In social networking sites, users tend to surround themselves by other
14 users who share their same ideas and opinions, hence leading to “filter bubbles” or “echo
15 chambers” (Pariser, 2011). Being immersed in these bubbles results in a redundancy of content
16 and relations which can lead to an increase in tribal attitudes and reduce the quality, reliability
17 and diversity of online content (Gillani et al., 2018). This connectivity patterns can lead to
18 constrained world views, limiting users’ exposure to different ideas and causing less informed
19 opinions, hence a breeding ground for disinformation.
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22 Users who look for online information following these patterns often find monolithic
23 information and knowledge that reinforces their own beliefs and which conditions their pre-
24 reflexive abilities (Han, 2014). As a result, tolerance to diversity is increasingly scarce and
25 affective polarization is on the rise (Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes, 2012).
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28 Despite this evidence, there is yet some controversy. Dubois and Blank (2018) state that the
29 majority of people are not trapped in echo chambers as much as some would have us believe.
30 These authors suggest that there are five different forms to describe an echo chamber and
31 according to their analyses, results are very consistent regardless of which one is used: echo
32 chambers do not exist. According to Dubois and Blank, people access various sources of
33 information - an average between five and three, three offline and two online-, in which they
34 find different opinions, including some with which they might not agree, thus shaping their
35 own beliefs. Even Pariser (2011), who coined the ‘filter bubble’, agrees with these authors in
36 that the internet is not entirely to blame as this phenomenon has already occurred in the past
37 by means such as the television (Blank, 2018).
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54 55 **Digital competences**

56 A recommendation from the European Parliament and the Council in 2006 considered digital
57 competences as one of the key competences for lifelong learning. Digital competences have
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3 become a significant priority in the European Commission's most recent policies, actions and
4 communications (European Commission, 2010a, 2010b). For the purpose of reaching this goal,
5 a reference tool to measure digital competences has been adopted, the so-called DigCom
6 (Ferrari, 2013). This tool addresses five key areas: information, communication and
7 cooperation, content creation, security and problem solving. The area of information considers
8 skills for navigation and digital content, information and data search and filtering. The area of
9 communication and cooperation measures users' ability to interact through various digital
10 means, understanding and choosing the appropriate digital means for specific contexts. The
11 section named *Netiquette* covers a concept that includes the moral and ethical values that
12 people apply to their behaviours in the online universe in a broad sense. This means knowing
13 how to adapt communication strategies to specific targets and being aware of the cultural and
14 generational diversity that exists in digital environments. The creation of digital content, the
15 third area, tackles users' ability to create content in different formats (i.e., data, text,
16 multimedia) and knowing how to express their ideas through digital means by editing, adding
17 and improving the existing digital content. Regarding security, it is essential that users
18 understand the risks of digital environments, being aware of security and protection measures,
19 taking into consideration reliability and privacy and knowing how to protect themselves
20 through different devices. Finally, it is also considered important to know how to identify and
21 solve technical problems when operating with devices in digital environments.
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38 **Digital skills on Facebook**

39 Social networking sites have been adopted and are used by people spontaneously, hence
40 leading to lack of training and awareness about the effects certain ways of using these sites
41 might entrain. Such a lack of training and awareness is giving rise to different behaviours, some
42 of which are deviant. Poor training when it comes to using digital means can lead to certain
43 disadvantages, particularly for those who lack digital skills. Having appropriate digital skills
44 determines users' access to resources and therefore empowers those who have such
45 competences to make use of the potentialities of digital means, leaving behind those who do
46 not know how to make use of such advantages (Dijk, 2006). Digital skill is understood as "the
47 capacity to respond pragmatically and intuitively to challenges and opportunities in a manner
48 that exploits de Internet's potential" (DiMaggio et al., 2004: 378). It is also defined as the
49 "user's capacity to find content on the Internet in an effective and efficient manner" (Hargittai,
50 2005: 372).
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3 Digital competences can be analysed and conceptualized according to various levels. One of
4 these levels looks at operational abilities (Steyaert, 2002). These abilities refer to knowledge
5 and use of applications and devices that imply interaction. Van Dijk (2005) defines these
6 abilities as those used to operate computers –also smartphones –which relate to hardware and
7 software networks. These digital skills refer to the ability to handle the profuse amount of
8 resources at hand, which is also known as hypermedia (Lee, Cheng, Rai and Depickere, 2005).
9 These skills are key to search, select, process and apply means to an environment which is
10 overloaded with resources (Van Dijk, 1999). Hargittai and Hsieh (2010) measure these
11 competences through a scale that considers knowledge of the language and use of basic
12 functions of the Internet (PDF, JPG, Favourites, Reload, etc...). In the online universe of
13 Facebook, these functions are constituted by Facebook’s language and functions (Timeline,
14 Pages, Groups, Lists, etc...). Jenkins-Guarnieri, Wright, and Johnson (2013) establish a scale
15 to measure how the use of Facebook is integrated in people’s lives. This scale considers
16 variables that measure how people feel when they use Facebook or the role Facebook plays in
17 people’s lives, amongst others. At a secondary level, digital skills concerning information
18 search are considered. These skills refer to actions taken by users to satisfy their information
19 needs (Jenkins, 2006). Knowing how to look for information by using applications and services
20 on the Internet implies a certain level of skills to filter information (Marchionini and White,
21 2007) and awareness about the fact that based on the digital fingerprint left by using browsers
22 and applications leads to be suggested specific personal profiles, products or advertisements.
23 Hargittai and Hsieh (2012) establish a scale comprising two types of activities on Facebook,
24 making a distinction between actions related to strong ties (seeing friends’ pictures, sharing
25 photos, sending private messages, making plans, etc.) and actions related to weak ties (seeing
26 pictures from unknown people, meeting new friends, sharing information on a group, etc....).
27 In order to solve these significant information biases, users must have strategic digital
28 competences. As stated by Correa (2016), strategic digital skills allow users to use digital
29 means towards achieving a specific goal. To discover how Facebook is perceived and use that
30 information as a valuable source, Lampe, Vitak, Gray and Ellison (2012) suggested an array of
31 indicators that allow assessment of whether Facebook is used to seek advice, references or
32 answers to specific questions. Given the fact that social reality mirrors the offline reality
33 (Dunbar et al., 2015; Gillani et al., 2018; Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter and Espinoza,
34 2008), optimal socialization on digital means might be key for users to feel part of the same
35 community, thus promoting various forms of mutual support and the carrying out of ideas,
36 projects and new initiatives (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe, 2007). For this purpose, strategic
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3 digital skills allow users to establish and keep relations that generate social capital and improve
4 users' social positions and hence, increase their access to diverse information.
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8 **Purpose of the study**

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10 Based on the above-mentioned theoretical framework, we focused our study on Facebook due
11 to it being the most used social networking site. We based our study on the assumption that
12 digital competences and skills on Facebook might constitute variables from which Social Work
13 graduates can reach a higher social capital and tolerance towards diversity.
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17 The aim is to determine whether Social Work graduates have the necessary digital competences
18 and skills to connect with their peers in a strategic manner and share digital content towards
19 achieving a specific goal. Thus, they would reach the appropriate social capital so as to develop
20 tolerance to diversity and overcome the current tendency to homophily. To that end, we
21 analysed different relations: a) the relation between connectedness and social capital, through
22 the measurement variable of Digital Skills on Facebook (DSF); b) the relation between
23 connectedness and Tolerance to Diversity (TD), explained through the DSF variable; c) the
24 relation between DSF and social capital, through the measurement variable of Digital
25 Competences (DC); d) the relation between DSF and TD, and finally, the relation between SC
26 and TD, explained through the mediation of digital competences.
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36 **Methodology**

37 **Participants**

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40 The final strategic sample comprised 126 Social Work graduates from the University of Malaga
41 (Spain). Participants were selected based on their age (from 21 to 23), with an average of 21.6,
42 and due to being considered as digital natives (Prensky, 2011). We based our hypothesis on the
43 assumption that age determines a series of innate and practical abilities related to the use of
44 technology. Therefore, the younger the age, the greater the digital competences and skills and,
45 hence, the use of social networking sites occurs in a more natural manner. Social Work as a
46 discipline and a profession was chosen because socialization and information and resource
47 exchange are main domains within it. There were a higher number of female students in the
48 Social Work university programme but analysing participants' characteristics was not part of
49 our study. Nevertheless, we considered that a higher number of female participants could
50 improve the analysis as, according to scientific evidence, women tend to use Facebook more
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3 for the achievement of specific goals and social capital reach (Garcia, Kappas, Küster and
4 Schweitzer, 2016).
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8 **Instruments**

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10 A questionnaire was drawn up, which considered four axes: Digital Competences (DC), Digital
11 Skills on Facebook (DSF), Tolerance to Diversity (TD) and Social Capital (SC). These items
12 were respectively designed and adapted to the scales used in previous research.
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15 For the measurement of digital competences the Ferrari scale (2013) was used. This scale
16 comprises 18 items, which are answered through a Likert-type scale of five steps. As it can be
17 seen on Figure 1, this scale has a good internal consistency ($\alpha = .93$).
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20 The Digital Skills on Facebook scale comprises 31 items adapted from the Hargittai and Hsieh
21 questionnaire (2010, 2012), the Lampe, Vitak, Gray and Ellison questionnaire (2012), the
22 Jenkins-Guarnieri, Wright and Johnson questionnaire (2013) and the Ellison, Vitak, Gray and
23 Lampe questionnaire (2014). All of the above are answered by a five-step Likert-type scale and
24 their Cronbach's alpha is also high ($\alpha = .92$).
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28 The Social Capital scale from Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007) was adapted, which
29 comprises 14 items answered by a five-step Likert-type scale, and which has a good internal
30 consistency ($\alpha = .88$).
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33 Finally, the Tolerance to Diversity scale from Gillani, Yuan, Saveski, Vosoughi and Roy
34 (2018) was used. This scale comprises 4 items with a five-step Likert-type scale. This scale has
35 a moderately low internal consistency ($\alpha = .44$).
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39 Based on these tools, a unique score was calculated for each participant according to each
40 variable: Digital Skills on Facebook (DSF), Digital Competences (DC), Social Capital (SC)
41 and Tolerance to Diversity (TD). The variable of Connectivity (C) was added. Participants'
42 connectivity was determined by the centrality of degree. The degree centrality is a
43 measurement used in the social network analysis and it is understood as the number of actors
44 to which a specific actor is directly linked (Freeman, 1979). In the context of social networking
45 sites, the degree centrality determines the leadership skills, influence and level of information
46 to which each graduate accesses based on the number of contacts to which he or she is
47 connected.
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54 **Procedure**

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56 During the stage of social experimentation (March-October 2019) a profile was created on
57 Facebook to guarantee a certain level of neutrality towards graduates. A Facebook group was
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3 subsequently created through this profile for graduates to mutually recognise, in the same way
4 lists are used in the social network analysis. In order to follow ethical criteria we requested
5 participants' informed consent and maintained their anonymity in this study.
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8 This ensured graduates were able to be connected online throughout the entire experimentation
9 procedure. It was important that relations between participants came from a shared offline
10 socialization space, for which in this case the School of Social and Work Studies in which
11 graduated studied was selected. The aim was to assess the superposition between online and
12 offline socialization processes (Subrahmanyam et al., 2008). At a later stage, a questionnaire,
13 comprising the array of questions resulting from the different scales used, was drawn up and
14 provided to participants in online format.
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21 **Analysis plan**

22 Analyses were conveyed through IBM SPSS Statistics 22. Firstly, descriptive statistics and
23 correlations between variables were calculated.
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25 Subsequently and in order to analyse direct and indirect relations between variables, five
26 multiple mediated regressions were performed through the PROCESS tool for SPSS Version
27 3.3 (Hayes, 2018), model 4. The first regression equation considers Connectivity as
28 independent variable, Digital Skills on Facebook as a measurement variable and Social Capital
29 as a dependent variable. The second regression equation follows the same pattern, but
30 introduces Tolerance to Diversity on social networking sites as a dependent variable.
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33 The third and fourth regression equations place Digital Skills on Facebook as independent
34 variables and Digital Competences as a measurement variable – Social Capital and Tolerance
35 to Diversity are considered dependent variables, respectively. Finally, the fifth regression
36 equation suggests Digital Competences as an independent variable, Social Capital as a
37 measurement variable and Tolerance to Diversity as a dependent variable.
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48 **Results**

49 Table 1 shows correlations between variables, descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha for
50 the variables studied. Connectivity is moderately correlated to Digital Skills on Facebook and
51 Social Capital – correlations between Digital Competences and Tolerance to Diversity are low.
52 Digital Skills on Facebook is positively and significantly related to Digital Competences,
53 Social Capital and Tolerance to Diversity. The same pattern occurs with Digital Competences,
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3 which shows a strong relation to Social Capital, which also relates positively with Tolerance
4 to Diversity.
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8 **INSERT Table 1.**
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11 In sum, average scores from participants for each variable are high. Internal consistency
12 indicators, measured through the Cronbach's alpha, show good values for all variables except
13 for Tolerance to Diversity, surely due to this questionnaire only comprising four items.
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15 Figure 1 shows the results corresponding to the first mediated regression analysis. In this
16 analysis, Connectivity is considered as independent variable, Social Capital as dependent
17 variable and Digital Skills on Facebook as measurement variable. As it can be observed,
18 Connectivity is a good predictor and it is positively related to an increase in Digital Skills on
19 Facebook, which also relates to greater Social Capital. There is no direct effect between
20 Connectivity and Social Capital, although there is indeed an indirect effect, mediated by Digital
21 Skills on Facebook. Connectivity improves Digital Competences and, through these, Social
22 Capital also increases.
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32 **INSERT Figure 1.**
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36 In figure 2, Tolerance to Diversity replaces Social Capital. Results are similar to those from
37 the previous regression. Connectivity increases Tolerance to Diversity indirectly through
38 Digital Competences. When Digital Competences increase, so does Tolerance to Diversity.
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43 **INSERT Figure 2.**
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46 Figure 3 shows the results from the third mediated regression analysis. Digital Skills on
47 Facebook is considered as independent variable, Social Capital as dependent variable and
48 Digital Competences as measurement variable. The Digital Skills on Facebook variable is a
49 good predictor for Digital Competences and Social Capital – when DSF increases, SC and DC
50 also increase. Additionally, there is a significant indirect effect between DSF and SC mediated
51 by DC, as Digital Skills on Facebook are related to Digital Competence and the higher the
52 digital competence the higher the social capital.
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60 **INSERT Figure 3.**

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5 The above-mentioned effect does not occur with Tolerance to Diversity (see figure 4). In this
6 case, DSF increases Digital Competence and Tolerance to Diversity, but Digital Competence
7 does not have a measuring effect and it does not increase Tolerance to Diversity.
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17 **INSERT Figure 5.**
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22 Finally, figure 5 considers DC as independent variable, TD as dependent variable and SC as
23 measurement variable. Results show that when DC increases so does SC and the higher the
24 social capital the higher the tolerance to diversity. There is an indirect effect between DC and
25 TD mediated by SC.
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30 31 **Discussion**

32 The aim of the present study was to assess Social Work graduates' connectivity levels on
33 Facebook, their digital skills to use this social networking site and their general digital
34 competence to subsequently relate these measures with social capital and tolerance to diversity
35 scales.
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39 Results show that higher levels of connectivity increase digital skills to use Facebook and
40 improve digital competence in general. Taking into consideration the theoretical framework
41 previously analysed and the scales used, it can be stated that acquiring appropriate digital skills
42 on Facebook means knowing how to use these functions in an improved manner and hence
43 being able to use it towards achieving a specific goal. This allows stablishing strategic
44 connectivity patterns to reach more information. We consider, consistent with the theoretical
45 framework analysed, the fact that when graduates have the necessary digital skills to use
46 Facebook, their connectivity patterns relate positively to higher offline social capital. This
47 means that graduates who acquire these competences create interdependent relations in the
48 offline universe based on their connectivity patterns, which allows them to access more
49 information and resources.
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3 Being more connected might not only help to maintain strong and trust relations with core
4 groups, but also to be more willing to support colleagues, to interact with unknown people, to
5 have contact with new ideas and to have an open mind towards the world. In this respect, the
6 present study shows that being more connected leads to being more tolerant towards diversity.
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8 A diversity that would allow a social intervention more sensitive culturally or competent (Lum
9 2007; Kohli et al. 2010; Harrison and Turner 2011). Even more if we reflect on how today's
10 societies are moving towards superdiverse contexts (Vertovec, 2007), which are understood as
11 population configuration that are constantly changing, where increasingly diverse people
12 gather and cohabit socialization spaces, which are also digital. In these contexts, different social
13 groups have different needs and expectations (Boyle and Springer, 2001). Therefore, social
14 workers must have the necessary competences and skills to satisfy these needs and expectations
15 (Meissner and Vertovec, 2015). These competences must respond to the need to escape from
16 'group' conceptions that are immutable to cultural differences, and they must also advocate for
17 a more sensitive practice from a relational and contextual point of view (Boccagni, 2015).
18 These digital competences should be developed from the approach of diversity and encourage
19 the reflexive assessment of the potential plurality of cultural identities and intersections, of
20 aperture towards a higher connectedness and, therefore, new ideas and diverse beliefs.
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22 Those graduates who have the appropriate digital competences develop higher tolerance to
23 diversity and relate on Facebook with users who have different beliefs and political opinions.
24 Likewise, those graduates who have more digital competences are significantly more tolerant
25 to diversity. These results clash with the idea that people tend to connect with equals, which
26 leads to echo chambers and monolithic information. According to the results of the study, the
27 argument suggested by Dubois and Blank (2018), which notes that the majority of people are
28 not trapped in echo chambers contrary to what we think, might be right.

29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 **Limitations of the study**

47 The aim of the study did not include analysing differences according to gender; however, not
48 having a more balanced sample for the study was considered a limitation. We initially noticed
49 that the majority of Social Work graduates were women and we thought of it as an opportunity
50 to reflect the reality of social work graduates. Nevertheless, it would have been of interest
51 to compare the effect of digital competences and skills by gender. Particularly because as it was
52 previously stated, there is evidence that women tend to use Facebook to achieve specific goals
53 (Garcia et al., 2016). This fact will be an interesting topic to analyse in future studies.
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Conclusion

Social Work both as a discipline and as a profession must embrace digital transformation and consider it an opportunity. It must also redefine its methodology and promote the wellbeing of the population in a society that already comprises digital natives. To this end, social work training programmes must include new methodologies, content and competences. From an educational point of view, digital competences and skills pose a challenge that must be addressed in social work academic programmes. Particularly because these digital competences and skills are key to increase social capital, tolerance to diversity and access to information. In our current society, information is an essential pillar that determines access to basic resources and improves social positions (Van Dijk, 1999). The importance of information is such, that it is considered a primary good (Van Dijk, 1999) that is crucial for all decisions in people's daily lives. We are at a time when accessing reliable information is increasingly difficult, since the use of digital means massively and highly frequently generates noise that leads to less informed opinions. Han (2014) named this concept as digital hive. Knowing how to discern reliable information from unreliable is particularly difficult for those who are more vulnerable. For this reason, it is necessary for social workers to be digitally trained, with appropriate digital skills for them to be able to assess the digital competence and skills of their users and suggest how to better use digital means for the achievement of specific goals. This is particularly relevant for Social Work because it is a discipline that works with contexts, whether offline or online, in which people relate and interact with each other. Therefore, digitally trained social workers will have the possibility to identify needs and potential solutions. To be adequately positioned in the digital universe is a professional opportunity for Social Work, and it is also a moral duty: it is not possible to strengthen and support citizens' lives if the vulnerabilities that affect them and that are related to the technology of each historic moment are not taken into consideration.

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	CON	DSF	DC	SC	TD	M	SD	Rango	α
CON	---					19.92	12.84	0-51	---
DSF	.187*	---				121.96	24.26	68-175	.92
DC	.108	.362**				77.51	9.42	49-90	.93
SC	.196*	.490**	.600**	---		53.41	8.78	26-69	.88
TD	.087	.541**	.229**	.342**	---	13.70	2.69	7-20	.44

** p < .01

*p < .05

For Peer Review

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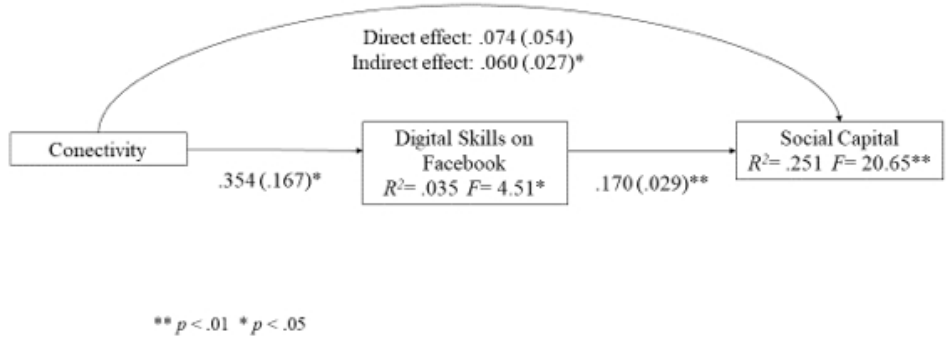


Figure 1
 Path diagram corresponding to the first multiple regression equation. Independent variable: Connectivity.
 Measurement variable: Digital Skills on Facebook. Dependent variable: Social Capital.
 Each arrow shows unstandardized regression coefficients and standard errors in brackets.

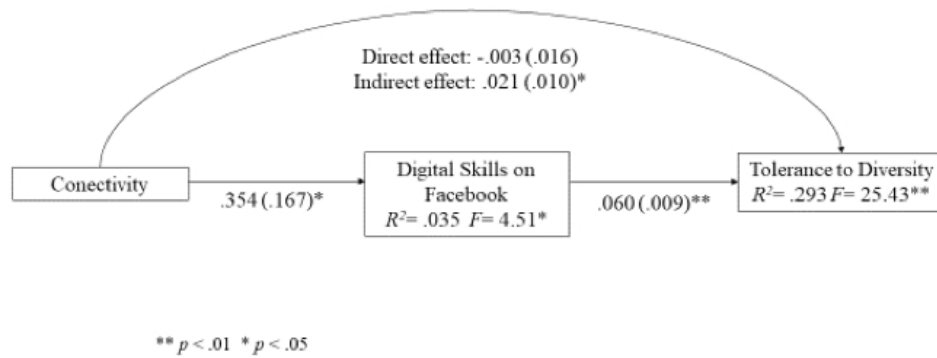


Figure 2.

Path diagram corresponding to the second multiple regression. Independent variable: Connectivity.
Measurement variable: Digital Skills on Facebook. Dependent variable: Tolerance to Diversity.
Each arrow shows unstandardized regression coefficients and standard errors in brackets.

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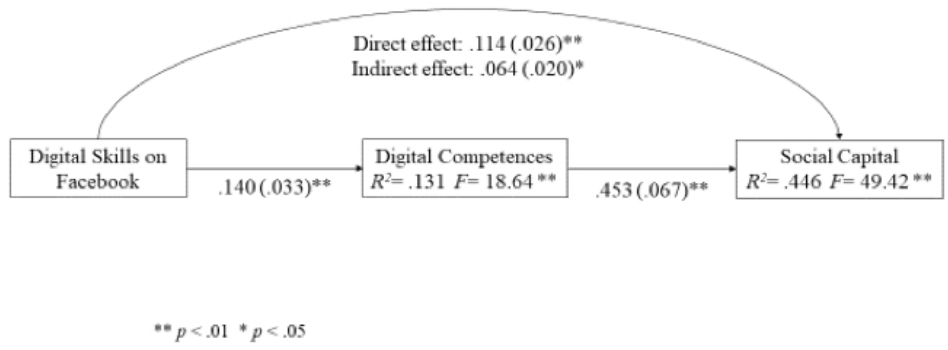


Figure 3.
 Path diagram corresponding to the third multiple regression. Independent variable: Digital Skills on Facebook. Measurement variable: Digital Competence. Dependent variable: Social Capital. Each arrow shows unstandardized regression coefficients and standard errors in brackets.

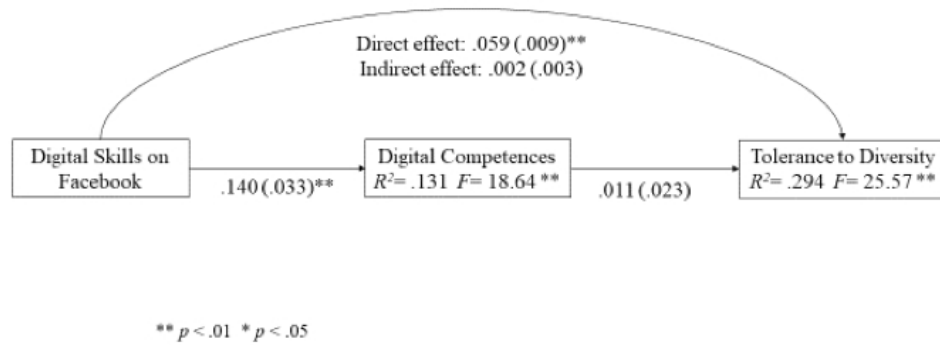


Figure 4.
Path diagram corresponding to the fourth multiple regression. Independent variable: Digital Skills on Facebook. Measurement variable: Digital Competence. Dependent variable: Tolerance to Diversity. Each arrow shows unstandardized regression coefficients and standard errors in brackets.

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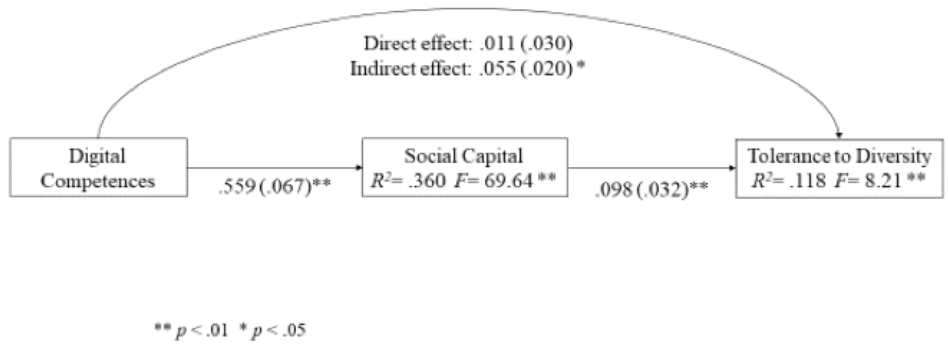


Figure 5.
 Path diagram corresponding to the fifth multiple regression. Independent variable: Digital Competence.
 Measurement variable: Social Capital. Dependent variable: Tolerance to Diversity.
 Each arrow shows unstandardized regression coefficients and standard errors in brackets.