J Surg Med. 2025;9(6):85-88.
https://doi.org/10.28982/josam.8029

JOSAM

Journal of Surgery and Medicine

e-ISSN: 2602-2079

Research article
https://jsurgmed.com/

From hashtags to healing: Social media insights on kinesio taping in Türkiye

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Ethics Committee Approval
Considering the absence of an *in vivo* application, the study did not necessitate an ethics committee application, aligning with prior scholarly evidence. Since no patient data were collected, the study did not need to be submitted to a clinical research ethics committee and was exempt from the requirement for informed consent.

Conflict of Interest
No conflict of interest was declared by the authors.

Financial Disclosure
The authors declared that this study has received no financial support.

Published
2025 June 6

Abstract

Background/Aim: Social media provides valuable insights into healthcare practices, including kinesio taping (KT), a technique used for pain relief and stability. Despite its popularity, there is limited research on KT content on social media. This study aims to analyze social media posts related to KT in Türkiye.
Methods: The study was conducted by analyzing posts on social media platforms including Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. The hashtags '#kinezyobant', '#kinezyobantlama', and '#kinezyoteyp', as well as the keywords 'kinezyobant', 'kinezyobantlama', and 'kinezyoteyp' were used as search criteria. The collected data were categorized into different groups: healthcare organizations, commercial entities, physicians, news sources, users, and non-physician healthcare professionals.
Results: A total of 445 posts related to KT were identified across various social media platforms. YouTube boasted the highest number of posts, followed by Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Non-physician healthcare professionals contributed the most posts, whereas physicians and news sources posted relatively less. Twitter saw the highest number of user-generated posts, while Instagram displayed a higher prevalence of posts for commercial purposes. Among all platforms, Facebook accounted for the highest number of posts by healthcare organizations.
Conclusion: Social media platforms, especially YouTube, are crucial in disseminating information about KT. Non-physician healthcare professionals notably contribute to the online discourse, potentially highlighting the need for enhanced KT education among physicians. Facebook offers benefits for patients to communicate with and engage in healthcare organizations. However, addressing concerns about misinformation and privacy, along with promoting responsible usage of these platforms in healthcare, is crucial.

Keywords: kinesio taping, social media, healthcare

Introduction

Social media has revolutionized the way people communicate and interact in the digital era. It encompasses a variety of online platforms and applications that allow users to create, share, and discuss content, ideas, and information. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube have become essential parts of people's lives, shaping personal relationships, business networking, and even political movements [1].

Social media is vital for treatment options and health information, serving as a platform where healthcare organizations, professionals, and patients can exchange valuable insights and resources. It enables users to access a wealth of health-related information, enhancing health literacy and empowering individuals to make informed decisions. Real-time communication on social media bridges geographical barriers, facilitating direct interaction between patients and healthcare providers and improving accessibility to expert advice. Additionally, it fosters peer support by connecting individuals with similar health challenges [2].

Analyzing social media for treatment methods is crucial as it provides valuable real-world data and insights into healthcare practices. User-generated content on social media platforms, such as discussions, testimonials, and experiences, offers a wealth of information about treatment effectiveness, side effects, and patient perspectives [3]. These analyses enable healthcare professionals and researchers to better understand treatment outcomes, identify emerging trends, and recognize patient preferences and potential adverse reactions.

Kinesio taping (KT) is a therapeutic technique that involves applying a specialized elastic tape to the body. This technique aims to provide support, stability, and pain relief. The tape is designed to mimic the properties of human skin, which allows for unrestricted movement while gently giving mechanical assistance to the targeted area [4]. KT is frequently used in sports medicine, physical therapy, and rehabilitation settings to help in managing musculoskeletal conditions and injuries. The technique's popularity can be attributed to its non-invasive nature and the potential benefits it offers for pain management and functional rehabilitation [5].

While there is a plethora of research available on social media treatments [6-8], there is a striking lack of studies specifically targeting KT. This has resulted in a noticeable knowledge gap. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the content posted on social media platforms related to KT. In doing so, this research hopes to fill the void in the current literature and offer valuable insights and data on the topic.

Materials and methods

The research was conducted on August 21, 2022, at the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Clinic of Üsküdar State Hospital. Given the absence of *in vivo* application, the study did not require an application to an ethics committee, in line with previous scholarly evidence [9].

To ensure the integrity of the social media research, specific measures were undertaken. Before beginning the investigation, the browser's history and cookies were cleared to remove any potential bias or influence from previous online activities. In addition, new accounts were established on the targeted social media platforms to avoid undue interference with the resulting data. On Twitter, the hashtags '#kinezyobant', '#kinezyobantlama', and '#kinezyoteyp' were used as search parameters. Similarly, on Facebook, content related to KT was sought using the keyword "kinezyo bantlama". On Instagram, the hashtags #kinezyobant, #kinezyobantlama, and #kinezyoteyp were employed for content search. Lastly, YouTube was explored using the keywords "kinezyobant", "kinezyobantlama", and "kinezyoteyp".

Groups on Facebook that required membership and their related content were excluded from the study. Additionally, videos containing only text or sound, and videos with loading issues were also not included in the analysis. Similar criteria were followed on Instagram and YouTube, where hidden accounts, posts with only text or sound, and posts with connection-loading problems were excluded. Furthermore, the collected Facebook data, categorized into videos, posts, pages, and groups, were analyzed separately. These categories were then combined with the results from other social media platforms, enabling the categorization of posts, groups, and videos according to the content shared by respective accounts. Notably, categories included healthcare organizations like physical therapy centers and private hospitals, institutions offering KT courses, individuals or organizations engaged in the sale and supply of KT, non-physician healthcare professionals, users sharing personal experiences and expressing opinions and concerns about KT, news-related posts, and physicians. Each post was meticulously classified and evaluated within these established categories to extract valuable insights from the collected data.

Statistical analysis

The behavior of quantitative variables was analyzed using measures of central tendency and variance, notably the mean. The One-Sample Chi-Square test was used to compare the percentages of a categorical variable with population proportions. A statistical significance level of $P < 0.05$ was selected for all cases. Statistical analyses were performed using IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software, Version 21.0, which is specifically designed by IBM Corp. in Armonk, NY for Windows operating system.

Results

Across the various platforms, 445 posts on KT were identified. Fifty-four posts were identified on Instagram, 89 posts on Facebook, 149 posts on Twitter, and 153 posts on YouTube. A comprehensive summary of the overall count of posts across diverse categories on social media platforms is presented in Figure 1.

The analysis of posts related to KT across various users revealed the following distribution: 17 posts from news sources, 24 posts from physicians, 58 posts from general users, 64 posts for promotional purposes, 113 posts from healthcare organizations, and 169 posts from non-physician healthcare professionals. Figure 2 depicts the distribution of posts across these categories on social media platforms.

Table 1: Comparison of the number of posts across different categories on social media platforms.

	Commercial	Physician	News	Non-Physician Healthcare Professional	User	Healthcare Organization	*P*-value
Twitter	11 (17.2%) ✢	5 (20.8%)	8 (47.1%)	70 (41.4%)	41 (70.7%) †	14 (12.4%) ✢	**<0.001****
Instagram	15 (23.4%) †	7 (29.2%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (5.9%) ✢	1 (1.7%)	21 (18.6%)	
YouTube	18 (28.1%)	3 (12.5%)	9 (52.9%)	71 (42.0%)	16 (27.6%)	36 (31.9%)	
Facebook	20 (31.2%)	9 (37.5%)	0 (0.0%)	18 (10.7%) ✢	0 (0.0%) ✢	42 (37.2%) †	

Stats: n (%), p* Pearson Chi-Squared Test, p** Fisher Exact Test, When an independent (similar) relationship between groups is assumed, cells with significantly high or low figures at a 0.05 level are indicated with † (high) and ✢ (low) symbols.

Figure 1: Overall count of posts across diverse categories on social media platforms.

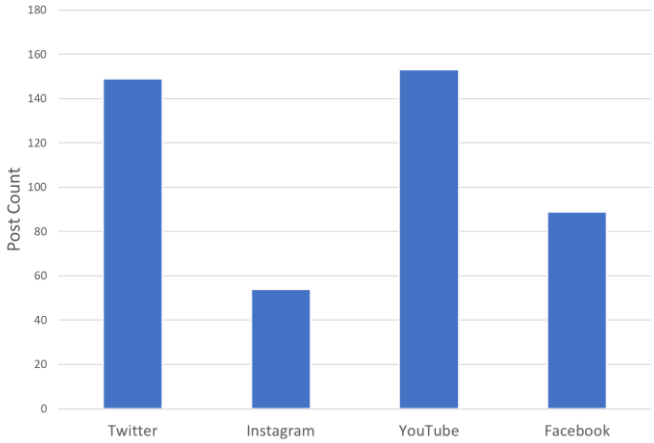
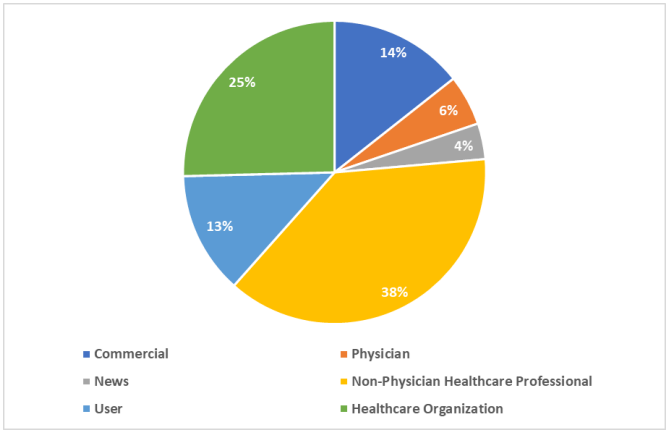


Figure 2: Distribution of posts categorized by the originator of the content.



In comparing the number of posts across various categories on social media platforms, distinct differences were observed. Specifically, Twitter showcased a significantly higher number of user posts, Instagram had a greater frequency of commercial posts, and Facebook displayed a larger volume of posts by healthcare organizations (P<0.001). Table 1 provides a comparison of the number of posts across these categories on different social media platforms.

Discussion

The significance of social media in healthcare and treatment methods is noteworthy. It serves as a potent tool for healthcare practitioners to disseminate valuable information and updates on treatment options, research advancements, and medical technology [10]. Patients can access educational resources, articles, videos, and infographics through social media platforms, simplifying intricate concepts and empowering them to make well-informed decisions about their healthcare [11]. Furthermore, social media nurtures supportive communities where individuals with similar conditions or undergoing specific treatments can connect, exchange experiences, and provide emotional support [12]. It facilitates direct interaction with experts in various modalities, enabling patients and healthcare providers to seek advice and opinions [13]. Additionally, social media allows patients to share real-time feedback and experiences, assisting others in evaluating treatment outcomes [14]. It also serves as a platform for research collaborations, recruitment, and public health campaigns [15]. However, it is crucial to address concerns related to misinformation and privacy while promoting responsible usage and reliance on qualified healthcare professionals [16].

This study aimed to investigate the quantity and distribution of posts related to KT across various social media platforms to provide insights into the online discourse surrounding this treatment modality. To our knowledge, this is the first study that investigates the number and distribution of individuals and organizations posting about KT across different social media platforms in Türkiye.

The social media platform with the highest number of posts identified was YouTube. The prominence of YouTube as a platform for KT-related content can be ascribed to several significant factors. First, YouTube's focus on video content provides an excellent medium for exhibiting KT techniques and offering visual explanations. The interactive feature of videos allows content creators to deliver thorough demonstrations and instructions, making YouTube an ideal platform for disseminating KT-related information [17]. Second, YouTube's wide and diverse user base ensures a vast audience for KT enthusiasts, including healthcare professionals, athletes, and enthusiasts [18]. As a result, this leads to a significant increase in the number of KT-related posts on the platform.

Though physicians play a critical role in diagnosing and managing medical conditions, other professionals such as physical therapists, occupational therapists, and athletic trainers also have specialized expertise in therapeutic interventions [19]. By sharing their knowledge online, these professionals add to the collective understanding and application of KT techniques. The prevalence of posts by non-physician practitioners might suggest the potential limitations of traditional medical education in adequately addressing complementary and alternative therapies. Despite physicians undergoing comprehensive medical training, their curriculum may not extensively cover non-pharmacological interventions or adjunctive therapies. This situation necessitates the involvement of other healthcare professionals who educate patients and fellow practitioners through social media platforms [20].

Twitter has emerged as the platform with the highest number of user posts. This observation aligns with the platform's real-time, fast-paced nature, which encourages users to share their thoughts and updates in concise messages [21]. Twitter serves as a prominent platform for users to communicate and share experiences regarding KT. Users can actively engage in discussions, exchange advice, and disseminate information on this social platform [22].

Instagram shows a higher instance of commercial posts. This is due to the platform's emphasis on visual content and user-friendly features such as shoppable posts and opportunities for influencer marketing, making it an excellent choice for businesses showcasing their products and promotions [23,24]. It seems that fitness influencers, sports therapists, healthcare organizations, physicians, and KT manufacturers have recognized the substantial potential of Instagram's visual content for effectively demonstrating the techniques, efficacy, and versatility of KT.

Facebook has the highest content created by healthcare organizations. By using Facebook as a platform, these organizations can effectively reach and engage with various sectors of the population due to Facebook's diverse user base [25]. This provides healthcare organizations the opportunity to use Facebook to enhance visibility and engage effectively with patients. They can distribute updates, news, and details about their services. Sharing educational materials like articles and videos can help promote health awareness. Direct interactions with patients via comments and inquiries can also foster trust and loyalty [26].

Limitations

The present study has a few limitations that need to be considered. First, the analysis focused specifically on KT posts on social media platforms in Türkiye, which might limit the applicability of the findings to other countries or regions. Moreover, the study examined only the quantity of posts and their distribution in different categories, without evaluating the quality, accuracy, or impact of the information shared on these platforms. To address these limitations, future research could undertake more comprehensive analyses that cover multiple regions, include qualitative assessments of content, and investigate the influence of social media posts on healthcare practices and patient outcomes.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the importance of social media in healthcare is unarguable. It serves as a valuable tool for healthcare professionals, facilitating information sharing, patient connection, and supportive community building. YouTube, in particular, has the highest number of posts, which may be a testament to its effectiveness in demonstrating KT techniques via video. The presence of posts from non-physician practitioners underscores the potential need for comprehensive KT education among physicians. Facebook, on the other hand, offers unique advantages in communication, promotion, and engagement with healthcare organizations regarding KT. However, it is also essential to address concerns over misinformation and privacy issues, while promoting responsible use and collaboration on such platforms.

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