

Social Media Habits of University Students and the Effects of Media on Students

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Abstract

With the effect of globalization and digitalization, remarkable progress has been made in internet and smart phone technology. Nowadays especially, with the increasing number of users, smartphones have become an important need for children and young individuals. In this sense, behavioral disorders in young individuals have become inevitable due to the increasing number of users and the diversity of social media applications. Therefore, the problem of internet abuse and risky social media use has emerged. While this affects the social habits of young individuals, it also leads to psychological disorders. In addition, while serious problems arise in the social lives of university-age students, there are also failures in their educational life. Therefore, the main aim of our research is aimed at examining the social media habits of university students and the effects of social media on students in terms of various variables. For the research, data was obtained by online survey method on 333 university students studying in Cyprus. Personal Information Form and Social Media Addiction Scales for adolescents and adults were used for the research. SPSS programs were used in the analysis of the data. In the analysis of research data, due to the increase in the time spent by university students on social media, a significant relationship was found in social media addiction tests in the context of both genders. Especially since the social media habits of the students at the university are in a controlled manner, negative results have been obtained in their social relations and academic achievements.

Keywords: Internet, smart phone, social media, social media addiction.

Introduction

Undoubtedly, the most experienced development of the current century is the diversity of internet technologies and smart phones. Our changing lifestyle and habits with the rapid development of technology have alternated our entire social life, especially the way we communicate (Yinal, Lesinger, & Şahoğlu, 2019). It is seen that social media applications are gradually shaping our lives and transforming all our real relationships around this lifestyle. In this sense, the development of technology and the spread of smart phones have revealed certain pathological effects in human relations. It is thought that these pathological effects occur with the sense of curiosity about technology and the increase in social media use through smartphones. For this reason and with the increase in the use of social networks, some addiction problems have emerged among users (Baykara & Yinal, 2023).

Technological developments which are in a constant change eventually progressed in line with the needs of individuals and gave rise to some fictitious needs. Particularly, smart phones and social media applications have become an indispensable way of life of human life and almost become a control mechanism through users (İşman, 2001). Therefore, cultural changes in human and social life have become inevitable thanks to the developing technological elements. In the face of this situation, individuals faced serious problems in their academic and business lives, as well as experiencing negative mental problems. As a result of these negative effects, various technology-centered addictions have emerged in the lives of individuals (Sarıçam, 2018).

Smartphones and university social media applications are mostly in the lives of adolescents today (Yılmaz, 2018). Following the widespread of social media applications, some mental disorders and pathological addictions occur in adolescents. According to the research data obtained in this sense; The rate of smartphone use among adolescents was found to be 76%. In this research, individuals also stated that they have a second smartphone at the rate of 46% (Phillips, 2011).

In addition, among the studies carried out, it was thought that sociological, psychological and physical factors may be among various factors on social media and internet addiction (Şeker, 2018). In particular, some studies that have determined the relationship between the internet and depression come to the fore. In these studies, problematic internet use was found to be positively associated with depression (Morrison, 2021).

The use of social media is interrelated and has become a tool used to meet the communication needs of people (Yinal, Kalkan, & Çakici, 2022). Thanks to these social media applications, people have the need to make different friendships and increase their self-esteem. In this age, in which the ways of communicating have completely changed owing it to social media, the problems of adolescents come along with them (Social, 2018). At this point, examining the mental and psychosocial problems faced by adolescents constitutes the basis of our research. To this end, the effects of social media applications on university students will be evaluated through the findings obtained. Below are the research questions:

1. What is the level of social media use of university students and the effect of social media on students?
2. Is there a relationship between students' problematic internet use and its psychological effects?
3. Is there a relationship between social media addiction and academic failure of students?
4. Is there a relationship between students' use of social media and psychological well-being?
5. The effects of university students on the use of social media; Is there a significant difference according to gender, family income level, class level, academic achievement and demographic characteristics?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this research is to examine the social media habits of university students and the psychological effects of these habits. In addition, examining social media habits according to socio-demographic and different variables is among the aims of the research.

Hypotheses

University students;

H1: Social media usage and influence levels are related.

H2: There is a difference between demographic characteristics and social media influence levels.

H3: Social media usage and influence levels of social media differ according to gender characteristics.

H4: Social media usage and influence levels of social media vary according to age.

H5: Social media usage and influence levels of social media differ according to the class.

H6: Social media usage and the effect levels of social media differ according to the education levels of the parents.

H7: Social media usage and influence levels differ according to socioeconomic level.

H8: There is a difference between the time they spend on social media and the effect of social media on students.

H9: Social media usage and influence levels differ according to the means by which social media is connected.

Limitations

1. Findings from the research and our research universe were obtained from 333 students studying at universities in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 2020-2021.
2. The data collection method for the research was applied in the form of an online scale system.
3. It is limited to the findings obtained from the research and the scales used.

Importance of the Study

The global era we live in is moving towards changing our habits with the effect of technology and the internet. Most especially with the spread of internet technologies, social media applications have become a way of life used by all segments both by the young and old. In this sense, many researches are being done on the problem of social media addiction and there are still studies on this area. In this study, the use and effect of social media habits on university level students will be examined. In terms of the importance of the research, it is thought that this study will contribute to the suggestions and shed light for the succeeding researches to be done.

Method

Research Model

The “Social Media Addiction Scale (SMDS-YF)” used for this study and the SPSS 28.0 software package were used in the analysis of sub-dimension data. A frequency table of descriptive data regarding the socio-demographic characteristics collected from the participants was created. In addition, the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients and participant sub-dimensions of the scale were also calculated. The model of this study; The relational survey model, which is related to revealing the variables between the results obtained from the general survey and general survey models of our thesis titled social media habits of university students and the effect of social media on students, was preferred. Quantitative research technique was preferred for this study. In addition, the social media usage purposes of the students at the university and the effects of social media on the students formed the relational screening model of this study. As a relational screening method, it was used to determine the relationship between two or more variables and to determine its level. For the research, this scanning model was applied to analyze both the demographic characteristics of university students and the effect

of social media with the correlation type scanning model and the comparative relational scanning model between the social media usage habits of university students.

Sampling Method

The research group selected for this study is university students residing in Cyprus covering the 2021-2022 academic year. University students were included in the study. The data collection method for the research was applied in the form of an online scale system. The findings obtained from the research are limited to the scales used in the research. The universe of the research consists of 110 thousand university students residing in Cyprus. It includes university students who can be reached as a sample group and who participate voluntarily, with a total of 333 people. As a data collection tool in the research, it was provided through scale forms in the internet environment.

Data Collection

In this research, the analysis of social media usage habits and addictions in university students was made in conjunction with scales, and it refers to a descriptive research among the relational screening models in examining the effects of social media on students.

1. Personal Information Form

The demographic form will be used to determine the age, gender, internet and smartphone usage status, duration of use, purpose of use and social relations of the participants.

2. Social Media Addiction Scale (SMDS-YF)

Van den Eijnden et al. (2016). The scale was initially developed as 27 items, then a short form was created with 9 items. The cut-off point of the scale, which was scored as “No” and “Yes”, was determined as 5. A range of 0 to 9 points was used for scoring the scale. Here, those who answered "Yes" to 5 or more items out of 9 were considered to have social media addiction. Confirmatory factor analysis fit indices in the scale gave good results [$\chi^2(27, n=601) 54.129, p=.002, CFI: .989, RMSEA= .041(90\% CI: .025-.057)$]. 27 items were found to be strongly correlated with social media addiction ($R=.94, P<.001$) The reliability of the scale was measured with Cronbach's Alpha (0.82) and had good reliability ($M=1.52, SD= 2.11$).

Results

The shapiro-wilk values were defined as $p < 0.005$ when the study data were analyzed under the assumptions of normality. In addition, it was determined that the deviation values divided by the error were within ± 1.96 . Therefore, the scale and its dimensions were evaluated by correlation analysis. In addition, Mann Whitney's U test, which is one of the non-parametric tests, was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the scale and its sub-dimensions and the socio-demographic data of the participants. In addition, Chi-square test was performed in the analysis of categorical data.

Table 1. Sociodemographic data of the participants (N=333)

| Demographic variables | N | % |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|
| Gender | | |
| Female | 168 | 50,5 |
| Male | 165 | 49,5 |
| Total | 333 | 100,0 |

Table 1 shows the analysis of the sociodemographic variables of the participants. When the gender of the participants was tested, 50.5% were female and 49.5% were male.

Table 2. Cronbach Alpha Internal Consistency Co-efficient for the Scale and its Sub-dimensions

| Scale Sub-Dimensions | Number of items | Cronbach (α)/KR-20 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Social Media Addiction Scale for Adolescents | 9 | ,465 |
| Social Media Addiction Scale | 20 | ,670 |
| Virtual Tolerance Sub-Dimension | 11 | ,361 |
| Virtual Communication Sub-Dimension | 9 | ,549 |

Reliability analysis results related to the scale and its sub-dimensions are given in Table 2. Looking at the results of the reliability analysis, it was determined that the Cronbach alpha values ranged between .36 and .67.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Scores from Scale and Subscales (N=333)

| | Min | Max | Ort. | SS |
|---|----------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Social Media Addiction Scale for Adolescents (SMBO-KF) Total | ,00 | 9,00 | 3,84 | 1,93 |
| Total | | | | |
| Social Media Addiction Scale (SMBO-YF) | | 82,00 | 57,90 | 10,04 |
| Total | | | | |
| Virtual Tolerance Sub-Dimension | 30,00 12,00 | 42,00 | 29,66 | 6,26 |
| Virtual Communication Sub-Dimension | 11,00 | 40,00 | 25,69 | 5,60 |

In Table 3, descriptive statistics related to the total scores of the SMDS-SF Scale, total and sub-dimensions of the SMDS-SF Scale are presented.

Table 4. Correlation Analysis of the Scale and its Sub-Dimensions

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|------------------------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|---|
| 1- SMBO-KF Total | r | 1 | | | |
| | p | . | | | |
| 2- SMBO-YF Total | r | ,426** | 1 | | |
| | p | <0.001 | . | | |
| 3-Virtual Tolerance Dimension | Sub-r | ,402** | ,889** | 1 | |
| | p | <0.001 | <0.001 | . | |
| 4- Virtual Communication Dimension | Sub-r | ,390** | ,861** | ,597** | 1 |
| | p | <0.001 | <0.001 | <0.001 | . |

Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (Spearman correlation test), ** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (Spearman correlation test)

According to this analysis, a moderately statistically significant positive correlation was found between the SMDS-SF Total Score and the SMDS-YF Total Score ($r=0.426$ $p<0.001$).

A positive moderate statistically significant correlation was found between the SMDS-SF Total Score and the “Virtual Tolerance” score of the SMDS-YF Sub-Dimensions ($r=0.402$ $p<0.001$).

A weak and statistically significant correlation was found between the SMDS-SF Total Score and the “Virtual Communication” score of the SMDS-YF Scale Sub-Dimensions ($r=0.390$ $p<0.001$).

Table 5. Comparison of the Scale and Subscale Scores of the Participants in terms of Gender

| Variables | Gender | N | Ort±SS | Z | p |
|---------------------------------|--------|-----|-------------|-------|----------------|
| SMBO-KF Total | Female | 168 | 3,82±2,04 | | - 0.512 |
| | Male | 165 | 3,88±1,82 | 0,672 | |
| SMBO-YF Total | Female | 168 | 56,48±9,67 | | 0.002 |
| | Male | 165 | 59,35±10,25 | 3,036 | |
| Virtual Tolerance Sub-Dimension | Female | 168 | 28,98±6,08 | | - 0.020 |
| | Male | 165 | 30,36±6,39 | 2,321 | |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------|-----|------------|-------|
| Virtual | Female | 168 | 24,89±5,45 | - |
| Communication Sub-Dimension | Male | 165 | 26,52±5,65 | 2,725 |
| 0.006 | | | | |

Mann Whitney U Test

As seen in Table 5, the scale and sub-dimension scores of the participants were compared according to the gender variable. A statistically significant difference was found between male and female participants in the total score of SMDS-YF. It was determined that the total score of SMDS-YF was higher in male individuals than in females ($Z=-3.036$ $p=0.002$).

The “Virtual Tolerance” score of the SMDS-YF Scale Sub-Dimensions showed a statistically significant difference between the female and male participants. The “Virtual Tolerance” score was found to be higher in male individuals compared to females ($Z=-2.321$ $p=0.020$).

A statistically significant difference was found between the female and male participants in the "Virtual Communication" score of the SMDS-YF Scale Sub-Dimensions. It was observed that the “Virtual Communication” score was higher in male participants than in females ($Z=-2.725$ $p=0.006$).

Table 6. Comparison of Gender and SMDS-SF Scale

| | | | | |
|-------|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Women | N | 100 | 68 | 168 |
| | % Gender | 59,50% | 40,50% | 100,00% |
| | % SMBO KF Group | 52,60% | 47,60% | 50,50% |
| | % of Total | 30,00% | 20,40% | 50,50% |
| Men | N | 90 | 75 | 165 |
| | % Gender | 54,50% | 45,50% | 100,00% |
| | % SMBO KF Group | 47,40% | 52,40% | 49,50% |
| | % of Total | 27,00% | 22,50% | 49,50% |
| TOTAL | N | 190 | 143 | 333 |
| | % Gender | 57,10% | 42,90% | 100,00% |
| | % SMBO KF Group | 100,00% | 100,00% | 100,00% |
| | % of Total | 57,10% | 42,90% | 100,00% |

Chi Square

As seen in Table 6, gender and SMDS-SF scale were compared. According to this analysis, it was determined that 59.5% (n=100) of women were not social media addicts and 40.5% (n=68) were social media addicts. It was determined that 54.5% (n=90) of the men were not social media addicts, and 45.5% (n=75) were social media addicts. This difference between men and women was not statistically significant ($p=0.359$).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Today, it is known that the use of social media covers nearly half of the world's population. Social media, which is a very new fraction of our daily life has started to gain a place in our lives with the development of the technical features of smart phones. Social media which has become the subject of many researches within this area also seeks answers to the socialization needs of people in terms of diversity. In this sense, while social media is an important tool for people to establish social relations, it also encourages the production of digital content. Therefore, due to the increasing frequency of usage, transformations have occurred in human relations and all our life practices have changed in the axis of consumption, economy, socialization, communication, trade and education. A new digital culture has come to the media, especially in areas such as e-commerce, online education and digital media journalism.

Globalization and digital media have a very close relationship with each other. In particular, the fact that social media allows users to interact with users living in different parts of the world has led to the emergence of a digital culture. The fact that users are younger in age also creates a predictive idea for future generations.

On the other hand, it has been determined in the research that the user base of social media users has increased in recent years and covers almost all age groups. Therefore, in the face of this increasing frequency of usage, problems in using the internet and social media have emerged in both young individuals and higher age groups. In this sense, the general subject of our research, the use of social media by university-aged individuals and the effect of social media on university students have been the focus of this research. In the first stage of our research, demographic information and personal information about the students were included. Using this method online, the social media usage levels and addictions of the students were determined. In addition, the social media addiction scale (SMDS) for adolescents and adults was used in the study and the findings were provided through the SPSS program. In the scale study, which was carried out with a total of 333 participants, the participants were reached via the internet by using the Likert type scale method. In the light of the findings obtained in the study, when the statistical data of university students according to gender variables were examined, some different variability in the sociodemographic aspect were determined. When the gender variables of the participants were examined, it was determined that 50.5% (n=168) were female and 49.5% (n=165) were male.

When the obtained findings are analyzed; It has been understood that the students' social media usage purposes are chatting, entertainment, content sharing and following different content, sharing photos and videos, playing games, and being a member of social groups. In addition, disturbing visuals and publications encountered during the use of social media by university students create shock and trauma effects on students. These situations cause students to withdraw from social and social life over time. To a large extent, introverted, high anxiety and anxiety symptoms may be experienced. It was also understood that because the time they spent on social media did not differ in terms of both genders, they faced failures in both genders in their academic lives and lost their control due to the increase in the time they spent on the internet. On the contrary, it has been understood that university students feel very nervous and restless when they spend their time outside the use of social media. However, it was determined that there was no significant relationship on both genders in terms of class, age, number of siblings and family economic levels.

The age of social media, which is a revolutionary era in the field of new media and internet technologies, is known to cause various effects at macro and micro levels for all users. In addition to all these, the social media usage habits of university-aged individuals started from a young age and became the center of their lives. Mostly when staying away from social media, individuals experience significant withdrawal symptoms. Accordingly, while there are deteriorations in family and social relations, there are also failures in educational life. At this point, communication and addiction theorists agreed that social media has become an indispensable life activity for users. One of the prominent approaches among these theories is; uses and gratifications approach. In this approach it emphasizes that social media or internet addicted individuals' cognitive, sensory, psychological needs and socialization needs have become a mandatory requirement for individuals. Individuals feel connected to social media in terms of feeling good both psychologically and physiologically. Similar results were obtained in the light of the data obtained in this study and the literature reviewed. From this point of view, the purpose of this research is to investigate the social media habits of university students and the effect of social media on students and to question their frequency.

Suggestions

Considering the study and its results, it was concluded that the social media usage levels of university students have a negative effect on both genders. For this reason, it has been determined that the level and duration of use of social media have increased negatively in students' academic lives. Therefore, the problematic effects of the internet and social media use of students has become increasingly difficult to control and the duration of use of students has increased. At this juncture, together with the necessary guidance and psychosocial support, students' motivation for their personal success should be provided and their planned studies should be aimed.

Contrarily, it may be necessary to examine the environmental factor and family structure of the individual (family, sibling, friend) as well as guidance studies for the examination of adolescents with social media addiction symptoms.

An approach that is far from a prohibitive attitude towards students should be exhibited and dangerous situations in the use of technology and social media should be mentioned. Social media usage times should be regulated in order to create sufficient awareness for students.

In order to eliminate social media deprivation in students, psychosocial intervention trainings for parents should be given as well as guidance studies. Although families have a great responsibility, information seminars should be held on this subject.

In order to be protected from the harmful effects of social media and the internet, the groups or pages that students follow should be monitored. Pages that are considered harmful can be blocked from following. Security services can be used especially in home internet connection.

In addition, in order to control the use of social media in students' home and school lives, restrictions can be imposed on the time of use and by avoiding a prohibitive attitude, students' spending time and socialization needs can be met by timely planning.

For the students with social media addiction symptoms who have insufficient financial situation, solutions should be sought for the necessary preventive studies and necessary social support plans should be provided on this issue.

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