The Social Media Addiction Among Turkish University Students

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to examine the place and importance of social media in the lives of university students according to several demographic variables. 323 Turkish students in total, 186 of whom were males and 137 of whom were females, studying in different departments at Selçuk University, participated in the study. A personal information form was used to obtain the socio-demographical information of the students, while "Social Media Addiction Scale" (SMAS), developed by Tutgun Ünal (2015), was implemented to determine the media addiction levels. Although no differences were observed concerning the age factor among the students; statistically significant differences were found among the averages of social media addiction with regards to sex, income, educational background of the parents, the means to access the internet, the number of years of access and the number of hours of access ($p<0.05$; $p<0.01$). Statistically significant variances were also found in all the dimensions of social media addiction concerning the time and the hours the students spend on social media ($p<0.05$; $p<0.01$). Based on the findings of this study, it can be said that the social media addiction levels of the male students are higher compared to that of the female students; this situation is caused by the social roles imposed on men and women depending on social status and responsibilities and the cultural structure; and as the number of days and hours spent on social media increase, so does the addiction to social media.

Keywords: social media, access, conflict, mood state

1. Introduction

According to the report published jointly by We Are Social and Hootsuite in 2018, in which the latest statistics of internet use throughout the world and the statistics of social media were commented on, 53% of the world population, i.e. 4.02 billion people, use the internet. Out of this figure, 3.19 billion people are social media users, and this amounts to 42% of the world population. While 5.13 billion users of mobile phones comprise 68% of the world population, 2.95 billion mobile social media users correspond to 39% of the world population. Again in the same report, it can be seen that the use of mobile phones to access the internet have increased by years, while the use of personal computers for the same purpose have decreased. As of 2018, the number of monthly active Facebook users has reached to 2.1 billion, and it has been reported that 56% of these users are male, while 44% are female (https://hootsuite.com; https://wearesocial.com). In the report by World Health Organization projected to be published in 2018, it is stated that video game addiction is named as a mental disease and the addiction to computers/the internet is mostly manifested as video game addiction (https://www.cnnturk.com).

It can be seen that in our day, technological developments and several electronic items, based on these developments, aiming to ease our lives and increase our life quality, have entered into our daily lives. Tor and Erden (2004) defined technology as the process of obtaining new products that will make our lives easier by making use current tools. Sü Eröz and Doğdubay (2012) defined social media as the name given to social platforms in which the users share their information, experiences and interests through the internet or mobile systems. Social media has become a determining factor in the diversification, proliferation, shape, internalization, free-roaming and share processes of the information; and the process of reaching that information. Now, the individuals can find the possibility to be closely up to date with the current events and be the source and a commentator of the news as the subject, while being able to reach a lot of information through social media (Babacan et al., 2011; Kamiloğlu and Uluğ Yurttaş, 2014). Çildan et al. (2012) inform us that social media is increasing the number of its users with each passing day thanks to its structure that puts the

individual in the centre, and it has currently reached the number of hundreds of thousands of users.

Apart from desktop computers; a lot of electronic materials like notebooks, tablets and smartphones are used as a tool to reach social media. It is observed that the social media tools and software have gradually become and addiction that affects the life quality of the individuals. The mutual point of addiction to the internet based media, such as multiplayer games, social software directed to share and dating and online shopping websites is that they all can have the severity that may cause the tendency to postpone even the vital needs. Şimşek (2010) defines addiction as the state in which the individual cannot control his/her behaviors. Addiction is classified as behavioral and physical addiction in literature (Ögel, 2014; Dinç, 2016). The fact that social media applications have the quality to trigger both addiction types makes the situation all the more interesting. Making a person's life easier in many aspects and being unmatched in accessing education and educational sources, the internet and social media applications may cause disorders and diseases if not put in order. An internet addiction clinic has been launched in Bakırköy Psychiatric Hospital in Turkey. In this clinic, ranging from chat and social addicts to online media addicts, pornographic website addicts and those playing video games for hours; a lot of people, be they adult, male/female adolescent or a child, are receiving treatments here (http://www.milliyet.com.tr). Physical as well as spiritual disorders can be encountered in people spending excessive time in virtual environment. These disorders range from middle and low back pain, visual impairment, sleeping disorder, tiredness, unrest, circulatory disorder to deaths caused by embolism. What is more important than physical disorders is that the individual, being unable to get rid of the addiction by himself/herself, has also difficulties in controlling his/her emotions like anger, aggression and stress.

In our day, the concept of social media is defined as the digital platform in which the share of simultaneous information is followed which is caught thanks to the user convenience and the speed of communication that the new generation web technologies have brought along. The concept of social share, on the other hand, is composed of any kind of visual and aural document and information the individuals share on this platform. No matter how well-intentioned the purpose is and no matter how orderly it is used, addiction to social media maintains its significance as a threat. The internet users generally gain this experience by a trial-and-error method, since they do not receive the basic information on the use of the internet at formal education organizations. The young people can experience a technological miracle than can make their lives convenient as a technological trauma that decreases their life quality. Beard (2005) emphasizes that the damaging and uncontrollable aspect of the internet use is the internet addiction, Davis (2001) defines the internet addiction as a psychiatric state in which there are pathological behaviors. Beard and Wolf (2001) argue that the problematic use of the internet may create difficulties in the psychological, social, school and/or professional lives of the individuals. Young (2007) has defined the internet use that affects an individual's life to the extent that may cause relational, professional and social problems as a clinical disorder. In spite of these undesired effects, it is stated in the literature that social media enables individuals to engage in the groups that they cannot possible engage in real life and express themselves more comfortably by removing geographical, physical and economical barriers (Kakırman Yıldız, 2012).

It is possible to come across a number of studies in literature which indicate high numbers of young social media users (Akyazı and Tutgun Ünal, 2013; Köroğlu and Tutgun Ünal, 2013; Vural and Bat, 2010). Young people put in a lot of effort in order to get used to a new environment and a different atmosphere and maintain the socio-cultural balance, especially because the first years of the university education correspond to the last years of adolescence. The last period of the adolescence is regarded as the period between the ages 16 and 21 for women, and 17 and 21 for men (Koç, 2004). It is especially stated that as of 2018, 34% of Facebook users are comprised of the age group of 18-34 (http://www.dijilopedi.com). This period, in which the foundations of the sense of identity and the sexual, social and professional roles are laid, should be experienced in a balanced and healthy way in order not to be exposed to any identity confusion. Towards the end of the adolescence period, social and cultural traditions are accepted and the sense of morality continues to be developed (Derman, 2008; Gözcü Yavaş, 2012; Gül and Güneş, 2009). Therefore, this period, which is extremely critical for the young university student, is also vitally significant for the use of and the addiction to social media.

Morahan-Martin and Schumacher (2000) argue that the internet addiction cannot be kept under control and damages the life of the individual as a result of its excessive use. Suganuma et al. (2007) inform that using electronic media before sleep affects the sleeping pattern and the daily life. Brunborg et al. (2011), in their study of social media use in the bedroom and sleeplessness done on 2500 participants, report that the use of computers and mobile phones in the bedroom causes undesired sleeping habits. It is possible to find studies concerned with the effects of the social network use on academic performances and the inability to meet the basic physiological needs efficiently (Andreassen, 2012; Kuss and Griffiths, 2011). The values and the emotions that every habit not based on a specific system, not put to use when necessary and directed towards abuse will make the individuals earn or lose, should definitely be elaborated on. Esen (2010) reports that the internet appeals to the sense of curiosity and adventure found in young people since it is a

form of technology that is constantly updated, changed and developed with new applications. Young (2004) argues that the triggers of the internet addiction are free and unlimited internet service, a lack of control or barrage over the access to the internet on parents' part, and the possibility to adopt a different identity by hiding the fears, obsessions and the imperfections in real life on the internet. In our day, social media applications have occupied a silent but effective place in our lives. If we convey our social media habits to our lives in a structure and method that will not negatively affect our life quality, then it will keep its place as the technological aid that is not elevated to a level of addiction. It is thought that examining the levels of social media addiction of the university students depending on socio-demographical factors will provide an insight to the future studies done with different scopes and aspects.

2. Material and Method

2.1 The Study Group

323 Turkish students in total, 186 of whom were males and 137 of whom were females, studying in different departments at Selçuk University, participated in this study. A personal information form was used to obtain the socio-demographical information of the students, while "Social Media Addiction Scale" (SMAS), developed by Tutgun Ünal (2015), was implemented to determine the media addiction levels.

2.2 Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS)

Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS) is a scaling instrument developed to scale the social media addiction levels of the university students. It is a 5-point Likert scale rated with frequency statements varying as "Always", "Often", "Sometimes", "Rarely" and "Never". The scale is composed of four sub-dimensions, namely Occupation (articles 1-12), Mood Modification (articles 13-17), Relapse (articles 18-22) and Conflict (articles 23-41). Besides, the Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient value was found to be .967. This value was determined as 0.745 for this study. The score intervals and the addiction levels, determined for the whole scale, are also specified in the same study (Tutgun Ünal, 2015); they were determined as follows: 41 to 73: "No addiction", 74 to 106 "Slightly addicted", 107 to 139: "Moderately addicted", 140 to 172: "Highly addicted" and 173 to 205: "Extremely addicted".

2.3 Statistical Analysis

Average $\pm$ standard deviation, percentage and frequency values of the data were used. The variables were evaluated after the pre-requisites of normality and homogeneity of the variances were checked (through Shapiro-Wilk and Levene tests). While making data analysis; for comparisons of two groups, when Independent Samples t Test (Student's t test) did not meet the pre-requisites, Mann-Whitney U Test was used; likewise, for comparisons of three or more groups, when Tukey's HSD Test from one-way analysis of variance and multiple comparison tests did not meet the pre-requisites, the Kruskal-Wallis test and the Bonferroni-Dunn test from multiple comparison tests were put to use. For the significance levels of the tests, the values of $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$ were adopted.

3. Findings
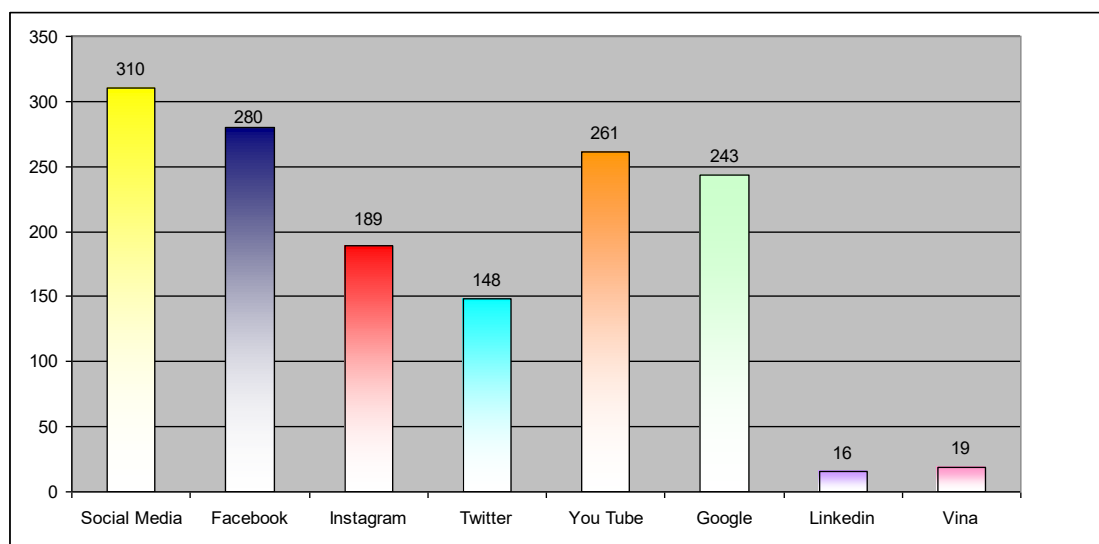
Graph 1. The social media preferences of the students that participated in the study

In Graph 1, the social media preferences of the students that participated in the study and their percentage values in total are seen.

Table 1. The variations in social media addiction levels based on gender factor

Gender Dimensions	female n=137	male n=186	p
Occupation	34,46 ±10,41	32,18 ±10,1	0,049[*]
Mood Modification	13,65 ±4,69	13,11 ±4,82	0,310
Relapse	11,36 ±4,99	12,76 ±4,96	0,010[*]
Conflict	37,61 ±14,92	44,67 ±17,53	0,001[**]
Social Media in Total	97,07 ±28,88	102,73 ±33,06	0,110

[*]p<0.05   [**]p<0.01

As can be understood from Table 1, while no differences can be observed in the dimension of Mood Modification based on gender factor, it has been confirmed that the values corresponding to males are higher than those corresponding to females with regards to the dimensions of Relapse and Conflict, and that these differences are statistically significant (p<0.05).

Table 2. The variations in social media addiction levels based on age factor

Age Groups	17-22 n=248	23-28 n=68	29 and more n=7	p
Occupation	33,53 ±10,3	32,56 ±10,04	25,29 ±10,05	0,10
Mood Modification	13,48 ±4,79	13,13 ±4,71	10,29 ±3,86	0,20
Relapse	11,97 ±4,87	12,94 ±5,48	11,57 ±5,13	0,35
Conflict	41,04 ±16,67	44,38 ±17,25	38 ±17,09	0,29
Social Media in Total	100,02 ±31,07	103,01 ±32,49	85,14 ±34	0,34

As can be understood from Table 2, no statistical differences were observed in any of the dimensions of social media use based on gender factor.

Table 3. The variations in social media addiction levels based on type of access

Type of Access	Desktop n=8	Desktop & Mobile n=168	Mobile n=147	p
Occupation	27 ±10,89[a]	34,32 ±10,16 [b]	32,14 ±10,23[b]	0,04[*]
Mood Modification	10,75 ±5,15	13,69 ±4,82	13,07 ±4,66	0,16
Relapse	11,88 ±6,45	12,7 ±4,97	11,58 ±4,94	0,14
Conflict	39,5 ±21,48	43,4 ±17,2	39,82 ±16	0,16
Social Media in Total	89,13 ±41,47	104,11 ±32,22	96,61 ±29,53	0,06

[*]p<0.05

As can be understood from Table 3, while no differences were observed based on type of access with regards to the dimension of Mood Modification, Relapse and Conflict, it has been confirmed that the values corresponding to the desktop users are higher than those using desktop and mobile or solely mobile connection with regards to the dimension of Occupation, and that this difference is statistically significant (p<0.05).

Table 4. The variations based on the utilization year of social media

Time Spent	0-12 months n=13	1-3 years n=89	4-6 years n=114	7 years or more n=107	p
Occupation	20 ±8,42[a]	33,3 ±8,28[b]	32,92 ±10,22[b]	34,86 ±10,98[b]	0,001[**]
Mood Modification	8,23 ±2,74[a]	13,64 ±4,25[b]	13,55 ±4,6[b]	13,48 ±5,22[b]	0,001[**]
Relapse	8,31 ±4,79[a]	13,21 ±4,78[b]	12,25 ±4,52[b]	11,67 ±5,47[b]	0,01[*]
Conflict	27 ±10,64[a]	43,69 ±14,71[b]	43,56 ±16,97[b]	39,78 ±17,95[b]	0,001[**]
Social Media in Total	63,54 ±25,25[a]	103,84 ±26,4[b]	102,29 ±31,15[b]	99,79 ±33,7[b]	0,001[**]

[*]p<0.05   [**]p<0.01

As can be understood from Table 4, statistically significant differences were observed in all of the dimensions of social media addiction based on time spent (p<0.05, p<0.01).

Table 5. The variations based on hours spent on social media daily

Hours spent	0-59 minutes n=33	1-3 hours n=155	4-6 hours n=101	7 hours or more n=34	p
Occupation	23,03 ±8,59 [a]	31,37 ±9,01[c]	37,87 ±9,72 [b]	37,03 ±9,7 [b]	0,001[**]
Mood Modification	9,79 ±3,77 [a]	12,37 ±4,41[c]	15,2 ±4,67 [b]	15,68 ±4,2 [b]	0,001[**]
Relapse	9,85 ±4,86 [a]	11,61 ±5,03[c]	13,14 ±4,86 [b]	14,09 ±4,34 [b]	0,001[**]
Conflict	32,58 ±15,52 [a]	39,24 ±15,49[c]	46,29 ±17,57 [b]	47,91 ±15,95 [b]	0,001[**]
Social Media in Total	75,24 ±30,38 [a]	94,59 ±29,11[c]	112,5 ±30,1 [b]	114,71 ±24,45 [b]	0,001[**]

[**]p<0.01

As can be seen in Table 5, statistically significant differences were observed in all of the dimensions of social media addiction based on hours the students spend on social media (p<0.05, p<0.01).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, whose objective is to examine the place and the importance of social media in the lives of the university students according to the demographical variances, it can be seen that 310 students from the participants use social media and the most preferred social media software is Facebook (Graph 1) (Tutgun Ünal, 2015). The early studies done on defining social media addiction can be said to have concentrated on Facebook because it is one of the earliest software and it has the biggest number of users an application has. The people addicted to social media and their addiction reasons have been tried to be examined through these studies. Buffardi and Campbell (2008) have found that Facebook users have narcissism tendencies.

While no differences can be observed in the dimension of Mood Modification based on gender factor, it has been confirmed that the values corresponding to males are higher than those corresponding to females with regards to the dimensions of Relapse and Conflict, and that these differences are statistically significant (Table 1;p<0.05). It has also been established that the values corresponding to females are higher than those corresponding to males with regards to the dimension of Occupation, and that these differences are statistically significant (Table 1; p<0.05). Tutgun Ünal (2015) informed that there is no statistical variance among the total social media averages of the university students based on gender factor, while there are statistical differences in sub-dimensions. These conclusions are important in that our study coincides with them. It is observed that the values corresponding to females are higher, and so statistically significant, than those corresponding to males with regards to the dimension of Occupation. This situation gives the impression that women are more occupied with social media and they spend their spare time engaging in social media. In their study on the addiction of high school students to social media, Balcı and Tiryaki (2014) report that the social media values of the females are higher than those of the males. In their study on young and older MySpace users, Pfeil et al. (2009) have determined that female MySpace users tend to have more friends. In their studies on Facebook addiction, Balcı and Gölcü (2013) argue that women use Facebook more than men do. These findings are crucial in that they are in parallel with our study. Even though no statistical differences were observed with regards to the dimension of Mood Modification in our study, it can be seen that the average value corresponding to females are higher than that corresponding to males. In light of these findings, it can be concluded that women are closer to the behavior of receiving emotional support from social media than men. On the other hand, while Tutgun Ünal (2015) informs that there are no statistical differences in the dimension of Relapse based on gender; Balcı and Tiryaki (2014) argue that the differences in the dimensions of Mood Modification, Relapse and Conflict are statistically varied. The reason for these differences can be claimed to result from the extent and the scoop of the study area, and social and cultural differences.

In our study, it is seen that the average value corresponding to the male students in the dimension of Conflict are statistically higher in significance than that corresponding to the female students (Table 1; p<0.05). Tutgun Ünal (2015) has emphasized that the average value of conflict corresponding to males are higher than that corresponding to females; males are in conflict with social media more than women are, and in other words, they are negatively affected by it. This conclusion supports the findings of our study. Jelicic et al. (2007) argue that positive youth development is possible more contributions and less risky behavior levels. In their study named "Internet social network communities: Risk taking, trust, and privacy concerns", Fogel and Nehmad (2009) establish that men take more risks than women do, and so they share their personal information easily. During social media addiction, even if the individuals become aware of the negative effects of social media, they may ignore the decline in their social circles, the decrease in their performances in profession and daily life, and worse, their primary physiological needs to maintain their vital activities.

In our study, no statistical differences were observed in any of the dimensions of social media use based on gender factor (Table 2). It is possible to find studies claiming there is no positive relationship between internet addiction and age in literature (Alaçam, 2012; Şaşmaz et al., 2013; Soydan, 2015). The reason for this pattern in our study and similar studies could be that the ages of the students are really close to each other and the groups coming from near circles display a homogeneous structure. Treuer et al. (2001) argues that the problematic internet use declines depending on age. The interest in social media can be said to decrease with age as the concepts of consciousness in the internet use, forming an awareness of responsibilities, preparation for professional life, establishing a family and a need for trust are revealed due to the increase in age towards the last years of the university life.

While no differences were observed based on type of access with regards to the dimension of Mood Modification, Relapse and Conflict, it has been confirmed that the values corresponding to the desktop users are higher than those using desktop and mobile or solely mobile connection with regards to the dimension of Occupation, and that this difference is statistically significant (Table 3; p<0.05). According to the data obtained in 2018, it is reported that the number of mobile users increase with every passing year and this number has reached 5.13 billion people

(http://dijilopedi.com). Özdemir and Akar (2011) state that the cyber-bullying has increased because of the widespread internet and mobile phone use by the students, this situation brings along significant psychological pressures on the students. Balcı and Tiryaki (2014) argue that as the time spent on Facebook, so does the level of addiction to it; and that depending on the factor of the used material, the people using both computers and mobile phones to use social media are more addicted to it than those who use either a computer or a mobile phone. The similarity between these conclusions and the findings of our study is significant. It can be said that since the use of social media is not limited to any area or region and can be conveyed to and reached from anywhere, it can easily gain the status of being an addiction.

Statistically significant differences were observed in all of the dimensions of social media addiction based on time spent (Table 4; $p<0.05$, $p<0.01$). Biçer (2014) has expressed that the individuals who spend more and more time on the internet can also reveal their "ideal" identities on the internet environment. Kuss and Griffiths (2011) have argued that the use of social network can lead to alienation from real life, increasing decline in academic performance and problems in social relationships. Şahin (2017) it suggests that there is a significant relation between life satisfaction and social media addiction. Postponing the responsibilities needing to be fulfilled in real life as a result of the addiction to the internet and social media causes the primary activities to pile up later, and thus, a waste of time (İşman and Albayrak, 2014). The statistical increase in all of the values after 0-12-month use is a considerable point in our study. It can be claimed that as the time spent on the social media increases, the rise in all of the sub-dimensions may cause social media to become an addiction after some time. Tutgun Ünal (2015) has found out that those using social media for more than 4 years are addicted to social media more than those using it for less than 1 year or 1 to 3 years. Köroğlu and Tutgun Ünal (2013) inform that the teacher candidates using social media for 3-5 years (31.8%) spend more time on social media than those using it for fewer years. Akyazı and Tutgun Ünal (2013) argue that those using social media for more than 5 years occupy themselves with social media more than those using it for fewer years. According to Korkut (2005), communication is witnessed to become harder, rather than easier, when the time divided between social media and real life is not balanced properly.

Statistically significant differences were observed in all of the dimensions of social media addiction based on hours the students spend on social media (Table 5; $p<0.05$, $p<0.01$). Tutgun Ünal (2015) observed a positive relationship between increase in the hours spent and social media addiction, and reported that those using social media for 7 hours a day have the highest average value. In his study, Folaranmi (2013) expresses that university students are extremely inclined and addicted to social media. In the same study, he regarded the use of social media 4 or more times a day as extreme use and addiction. Upon examining the values in this study (Table 5), the statistical differences in social media addiction and its sub-values, brought about by increase in the hours spent, can be clearly seen. It is especially a remarkable point that the use of social media more than 4 hours a day corresponds to being "moderately addicted" degree adopted by Tutgun Ünal (2015). The significant point should be to raise awareness on the purposes and the necessities of social media use, not to limit or organize with regards to the hours spent on social media.

Ekici and Kıyıcı (2012) have stated that education, just like media, is changing its shape by getting rid of its traditional structure, and is assuming a structure concentrating on informal and social learning by giving up school-and-class based, formal structure. It is a necessity that the technological equipments aiming to protect and elevate the life quality of individuals should be implemented and supported by events like presentations, seminars, conferences and panels including factors such as the purpose of the use, necessity, planning and programming, into basic education programs. The use of social media may not necessarily be a situation that entails a problem or needs to be elaborated on; what is really important is that social media addiction does not constitute a very difficult position in the lives of the individuals, as is the case with every other addiction type. Social media addiction levels that are seen to be moderate or high for this study group entail a mutual threat for every person. The structural features and specific patterns of social media software can be claimed to increase the addiction tendency and extremity in individuals because of its ability to bind the individuals with its intensifying applications.

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