A Study on Social Media Addiction

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the level of social media addiction among university students. The sample group comprised a total of 238 participants, 56.7% of whom are female and 43.3% of whom are male, enrolled at Istanbul University-Cerrahpasa Faculty of Sports Sciences. The data were collected using a personal information form and the 5-point Likert type "Social Media Addiction Scale" developed by Tutgun-Ünal and Deniz (2015), including 41 items and four sub-dimensions. Descriptive statistical methods, including percentage and frequency, were employed in the data analysis. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was carried out to check whether the data were normally distributed, suggesting a normal distribution. Independent sample t-test for bivariate data and one-way ANOVA test for more than two variables were also performed. The research findings indicated a significant difference between the "Occupation" sub-dimension based on the age of the participants, while no significant difference was observed between gender, grade level, and the level of daily social media use. In this context, social media addiction in young individuals varies according to the socio-demographic characteristics of the individual. As a result, social media addiction can be reduced by determining the demographic characteristics of young individuals.

Keywords: Internet, university students, social media, social media addiction

Introduction

Today, the Internet has become a valuable tool that enriches our daily lives. It has become an integral part of human life because it has revolutionized how we save time and obtain information. Individuals have become able to

perform tasks with minimal effort and cost through the Internet. It is evident that the Internet possesses numerous advantageous attributes for the whole society. However, aside from numerous positive attributes, it has highlighted a new addiction phenomenon (Çiftçi, 2018). Individuals increasingly communicate through virtual relationships in the digital world rather than face-to-face (Ayğar & Uzun, 2018).

According to the Turkish Language Association (2023), dependency means "being reliant on the will, power, and assistance of something else, therefore having no independence and excessively being dependent on something materially or spiritually. "Dependency refers to the state of being dependent/reliant."

Social media usage is on the rise. For instance, 68% and 73% of the adult population in the USA regularly use Facebook and YouTube applications, respectively (Sun & Zhang, 2021). Increased social media use causes individuals to remain up-to-date and connected to social media to follow their posts in their networks (Karadağ & Akçinar, 2019). Social media, which makes life easier in many ways, can lead to social media addiction when used excessively and unconsciously. Behaviors that compel a person to engage excessively in social media addiction can be considered addiction (Balcı & Baloğlu, 2018).

Social media can meet multiple needs of individuals, although the intentions to use social media vary. Social media is not utilized only to communicate with friends and family but also to seek solitude, be alone or to socialize, be approved, followed, or liked (Özgenel et al. 2019).

Social media addiction can be defined as the excessive use and preoccupation with social media sites, leading to reduced motivation to engage in social activities, deterioration of relationships, and harmful impacts on mental health (Demirci, 2019). Before the Internet and social media became widespread, the virtual transfer of needs such as communication, self-expression, and entertainment triggered addiction to social media and led individuals to withdraw from social life, and subsequently mental health problems (Çömlekçi & Başol, 2019). Excessive use social media can be considered a form of internet addiction. Individuals with social media addiction often display an excessive concern towards it and act with an uncontrollable urge to log in and use social media (Hou et al. 2019). Moreover, the widespread use of mobile devices and the ability to access social media tools anytime and anywhere have led to an increase in social media addiction. Considering the relevant findings on social media addiction in the literature, it becomes evident that adolescents are at a higher risk of developing addiction symptoms (Dalvi-Esfahani et al. 2019).

As a result of social media addiction, individuals exert enough effort and time that can adversely impact their mental health. They dwell excessively on

the amount of time they spend on social networks. The motivations they develop to use social media platforms lead to anxiety (Dağlı, 2022). It is believed that it may inhibit academic performance and socialization among university students. In this regard, this study aimed to address the following sub-problems:

- o Are there significant gender differences in social media addiction among university students?
- o Are there significant age-related differences in social media addiction among university students?
- o Are there significant differences in social media addiction among university students depending on their grade level?
- o Is there a significant difference in social media addiction among university students based on the daily frequency of social media use?

Methods

This study aimed to investigate the social media addiction levels among university students. The sample was selected using the purposive sampling method, one of the non-random sampling methods. The purposive sampling method allows in-depth research by selecting informative scenarios based on the research purpose (Başaran, 2017). Individuals studying at university are people who actively spend their free time in social life. Students who are interested in any branch are expected to have a low level of dependence on technological devices. Accordingly, it is aimed to select individuals studying at the faculty of sports sciences and to determine whether social media addiction varies according to variables.

The study population comprised the Faculty of Sports Sciences students, and the sample involved 238 voluntary participants, of whom 56.7% are female and 43.3% are male, studying at Istanbul University-Cerrahpasa Faculty of Sports Sciences.

Data Collection Tools

The data were collected using a personal information form and the "Social Media Addiction Scale."

Personal Information Form

In the first part of the study, a personal information form was employed to ascertain the gender, age, grade level, and frequency of daily social media use of the participants.

Social Media Addiction Scale

In the second part of the study, the "Social Media Addiction Scale" developed by Tutgun-Ünal and Deniz (2015) was employed to determine the

social media addiction levels among the participants. The 5-point Likert-type instrument has 41 items and four sub-dimensions: "1- Occupation", "2- Mood Modification", "3- Relapse" and "4- Conflict". The internal reliability coefficients of the sub-dimensions are as follows: Occupation (.91), Mood Modification (.89), Relapse (.88), and Conflict (.91).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the SPSS 25 software package. Descriptive statistical methods, including frequency and percentage, were employed to summarize the personal information. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed to assess the normality of the data distribution, which revealed a normal distribution ($p>0.05$). Subsequently, the independent sample t-test was applied for analyzing bivariate data and the One-way ANOVA for the data involving more than two variables.

Results

Table 1. Participants' demographic characteristics

Variable		n	%
Gender	Female	135	56.7
	Male	103	43.3
Age	18-20 years old	73	30.7
	21-23 years old	94	39.5
	24 years and over	71	29.8
Grade Level	1st grade	64	26.9
	2nd grade	46	19.3
	3rd grade	57	23.9
	4th grade	71	29.8
Daily Social Media Use	1-2 hours	54	22.7
	3-4 hours	83	34.9
	5-6 hours	49	20.6
	7 hours and over	52	21.8
Total		**238**	**100**

Table 1 shows the distribution of participants based on their demographic characteristics. Accordingly, 56.7% of the participants are "female," 39.5% fall in the "21-23 age" category, 29.8% are "4th graders", and 34.9% report a social media usage frequency of "3-4 hours".\

Table 2. Social media addiction levels based on gender

Sub-dimension	Gender	N	Avg.	Sd	T	p
Occupation	Female	135	2.79	.86	.420	.408
	Male	103	2.74	.91		
Mood Modification	Female	135	2.69	.99	1.164	.169
	Male	103	2.53	1.07		
	Female	135	2.08	.96	.519	.464

Relapse	Male	103	2.02	.93		
	Female	135	1.79	.72	-.179	.773
Conflict	Male	103	1.80	.70		

As seen in Table 2, an independent sample t-test was conducted to assess whether there was a statistically significant difference between the social media addiction levels based on their gender. The analysis revealed no statistically significant difference between gender and social media addiction scale sub-dimensions ($p>0.05$).

Table 3. Social media addiction levels based on age

Sub-dimensions	Age	N	Avg.	Sd	F	p
Occupation	18-20 years old	73	2.98	.89	5.398	**.005**
	21-23 years old	94	2.79	.84		
	24 years and over	71	2.51	.86		
Mood Modification	18-20 years old	73	2.69	1.02	1.220	.297
	21-23 years old	94	2.69	.99		
	24 years and over	71	2.46	1.08		
Relapse	18-20 years old	73	2.24	1.08	2.525	.082
	21-23 years old	94	2.02	.82		
	24 years and over	71	1.90	.93		
Conflict	18-20 years old	73	1.80	.65	.878	.417
	21-23 years old	94	1.85	.76		
	24 years and over	71	1.71	.69		

In Table 3, a one-way ANOVA test was performed to check whether there was a statistically significant difference between participants' social media addiction levels based on their ages. The results indicated a statistically significant difference between age and "occupation" sub-dimension (f= 5.398; $p<0.05$).

Table 4. Social media addiction levels based on grade level

Sub-Dimension	Grade	N	Avg.	Sd	F	p
Occupation	1st grade	64	2.80	.93	.072	.975
	2nd grade	46	2.80	.92		
	3rd grade	57	2.75	.86		
	4th grade	71	2.74	.83		
Mood Modification	1st grade	64	2.60	1.05	.070	.976
	2nd grade	46	2.67	1.13		
	3rd grade	57	2.58	1.01		
	4th grade	71	2.63	.98		

					1.095	.352
Relapse	1st grade	64	2.10	1.04		
	2nd grade	46	2.24	1.19		
	3rd grade	57	1.95	.77		
	4th grade	71	1.96	.79		
Conflict	1st grade	64	1.80	.66	.065	.978
	2nd grade	46	1.77	.87		
	3rd grade	57	1.82	.68		
	4th grade	71	1.77	.66		

In Table 4, a one-way ANOVA test was performed to assess whether there is a statistically significant difference between participants' social media addiction levels based on their grade levels. The analysis revealed no statistically significant difference between participants' grade levels and the social media addiction scale's sub-dimensions ($p > 0.05$).

Table 5. Social media addiction levels based on daily social media use

Sub-Dimension	Daily SM Use	N	Avg.	Sd	F	p
Occupation	1-2 hours	54	2.74	.85	.150	.929
	3-4 hours	83	2.81	.88		
	5-6 hours	49	2.72	.83		
	7 hours and over	52	2.78	.97		
Mood modification	1-2 hours	54	2.50	1.05	.595	.619
	3-4 hours	83	2.59	1.01		
	5-6 hours	49	2.75	1.03		
	7 hours and over	52	2.68	1.06		
Relapse	1-2 hours	54	2.10	.99	.268	.849
	3-4 hours	83	2.09	1.03		
	5-6 hours	49	2.04	.84		
	7 hours and over	52	1.96	.86		
Conflict	1-2 hours	54	1.76	.66	1.696	.169
	3-4 hours	83	1.68	.62		
	5-6 hours	49	1.96	.80		
	7 hours and over	52	1.84	.77		

*SM: Social media

Table 5 shows the result of a one-way ANOVA test conducted to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between participants' social media addiction levels based on their daily social media use. Accordingly, there was no statistically significant difference between the frequency of daily social media use and the social media addiction scale's sub-dimensions ($p > 0.05$).

Discussion

In this study, which examined social media addiction levels among university students, participants' social media addiction levels varied based on socio-demographic characteristics.

Social media is an online platform where people interact and share data and content using internet communication channels. Social media applications can manifest as forums, networks, wikis, and web applications (Aksoy, 2018). Spending excessive time on social media applications indicates a case of social media addiction. Besides, experiencing discomfort or a sense of incompleteness if social media is not accessed could also indicate social media addiction.

The concept of social media addiction is characterized by spending more time than usual on social media platforms. This definition also refers to experiencing discomfort or incompleteness when not using social media (İliş & Gülbahçe, 2019).

According to the analysis results in Table 2, there was a statistically significant difference between participants' social media addiction levels based on their gender (p>0.05). In the literature, Çiftçi (2018) observed a significant difference in the "Relapse" and "Conflict" sub-dimensions among university students based on gender. In a similar study by Deniz and Gürültü (2018) investigating the social media addiction levels among high school students, a significant difference was observed in the "Occupation" sub-dimension. In a study by Yayman (2019) on social media addiction in adolescents, social media addiction varied based on gender. However, Aktan (2018) investigated social media addiction among university students and found no significant difference between social media addiction levels and gender. Our results reveal both similarities and differences when compared to previous research findings in the relevant literature.

According to Table 3, the one-way ANOVA test showed a significant difference between age and "Occupation" sub-dimension in the social media addiction levels (p<0.05). The scores of the participants aged 18-20 were higher than those in the other age group. In a study conducted by Özdemir (2019) in which the social media addiction levels were examined among university students, a statistically significant difference was found between age and "Mood modification" and "Conflict" sub-dimensions. Conversely, Doğan (2021) observed no significant difference between age and social media addiction levels among university students. Similarly, Özgür Güler et al. (2019) found no significant difference between social media addiction levels and age among university students. As understood, our findings share similarities and differences with the findings in the literature.

According to the analysis results presented in Table 4, there was no significant difference between grade level and social media addiction levels

among university students (p>0.05). In a similar study, Çiftçi (2018) observed significant differences between social media addiction and grade level in the "Occupation," "Relapse," and "Conflict" sub-dimensions, while Özdemir (2019) found no significant difference between the grade variable and the social media addiction scale's sub-dimensions. In their study on social media addiction among university students, Demircan et al. (2022) found no significant correlation between grade level and social media addiction. In the literature, we see both similar and different results in this regard.

Table 5 presents no significant difference between the social media addiction levels among participants based on their daily social media use. In a study by Bilgilier (2018) on social media use and addiction levels, a statistically significant difference was observed between daily social media use and social media addiction levels. Similarly, Bozkurt and Bozkurt (2022) found a significant difference between the time spent on daily social media and social media addiction. Ekşi et al. (2019) also measured a significant correlation between social media addiction and daily social media use. In a study by Akbaş Coşar and Gedik (2021), a significant difference was found between social media addiction and daily social media usage frequency. The previous findings in the literature differ from our research findings.

When the research results were examined, a significant difference was found in social media addiction according to age. Age is important in studies conducted on university students. It is thought that social media use decreases as age increases. Social media addiction is especially higher among young individuals. Özdemir (2019), stating that the use of the internet will be more among young people, stated that it also affects the increase in social media addiction in parallel.

Social media is a useful area nowadays. However, social media addiction also increases technology addiction. By reducing social media addiction, young individuals can also enable them to do activities that will improve them physically and socially in their free time. However, doing physical activity allows the individual to have a healthier body. If the situation of young individuals with social media addiction is evaluated and studies are increased, we can support individuals to be healthier.

When evaluating the research findings, a significant difference was found between the age variable and the "Occupation" sub-dimension of the social media addiction scale. However, no significant difference was found between the social media addiction levels based on gender, grade level, and daily social media use.

Conclusion

This study was conducted on students enrolled in the Faculty of Sport Sciences at a university in Istanbul. Future studies can focus on students from

different provinces or departments. Social media addiction is associated with communication skills, loneliness, and leisure activities. Future studies can explore the interrelations among those concepts. The sample group can be enlarged, and qualitative research methods can support the study.

Human Studies: All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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