The Attitudes of the Young towards Social Media

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the attitudes of young individuals towards social media. The study sample consisted of 391 university students studying at different faculties (172 males and 219 females) and with an age average of 22.47±2.29. The participants were selected using the appropriate sampling method, which is one of the non-random sampling methods. The data collection tools involved a personal information form and the "Social Media Attitude Scale" developed by Otrar and Argın (2015). Descriptive statistics were applied to determine the distribution of personal information (*e.g.*, frequency, arithmetic mean, standard deviation) and the Shapiro Wilks normality test to check whether the data had a normal distribution. Since the data were appropriate for parametric tests, an independent t-test and ANOVA were applied to find the differences in social media use by specific demographic characteristics. According to the study findings, there was a significant difference in social media use by gender and faculty ($p < 0.05$), but no significant difference was found by age ($p > 0.05$). It was concluded that the participants' attitudes towards social media varied by only gender and faculty.

Keywords: Young individuals, Social media attitude, Social media use

1. Introduction

Beyond being a network to access information, the Internet has become a medium that

connects individuals and facilitates the socialization. Social media is one of the most important communication tools today.

The changing and developing technology has converted the communication procedures into a multidimensional, interactive, democratic, and equal patterns rather than a one-dimensional 'transmission' from top to bottom (Tuncer, 2013). Computer and Internet use rate was 59.6% among 16 years-older, and 72.9% among 74 years-older in 2018. These rates were 56.6% and 66.8% in 2017, respectively (TSI, 2018). When the purposes of internet use were considered, it was found that 82.4% used the Internet to create profiles on social media, send messages, or share photos in the first three months of 2016. Besides, 74.5% used it for watching videos; 69.5% for reading online news, newspapers, or magazines; 65.9% for searching health information; 65.5% for searching about goods and services; and 63.7% for listening to music (web radio) (TSI, 2016). Today, people are confronted with a new interaction pattern and media that intensely affect societies and individuals in the 21st century when global interaction is peak. It is called "social media" through which individuals are involved in simultaneous interaction, rather than a unilateral connection (Poytner, 2010). The social web applications based on mutual social interaction were typical in web 2.0 network and became popular with Friendster and Myspace in 2002-2003, then Flickr and Youtube in 2004-2005 and Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and Linkedin in 2006-2007 (Boyd & Ellison, 2010; Jenkins-Guarnieri et al., 2012). Social network theory is also applied in sociology, anthropology, and psychology and refers to the relationships between network users (Scott, 1991). Social media is based on sharing and communication and integrates technology with words, images, sounds, and videos. Social media is "a common term for online tools and websites that create interaction by providing users with the opportunity to share information, thoughts, interests, and knowledge" (Sayımer, 2008). According to Binark (2014), features such as digitality, interaction, hyper-textuality, and content production by users are the distinctive advantages of social media. The definition and scope of social media tools that integrate technology and social entrepreneurship with photos, videos, and audio files vary from person to person. However, the main elements supported by computers and mobile phones appear in various forms such as blogs, microblogs, online chat, RSS feeds, social networks, social bookmarking sites, forums, podcasts, video sharing sites, and virtual worlds (Hatipoğlu, 2009; Koç & Karabatak, 2011). Social media is one of the latest ideas that offers opportunities as a new type of online media (Mayfield, 2008). It is known that the users of social networking sites are mostly young adults, but the young generation skillfully uses them in many different areas (ComScore, 2015). Social networking sites are web-based systems that allow individuals to (1) create a public or semi-public profile, (2) help them list other users of the same sites, and (3) share their list of connections (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). In this sense, although it is a new communication environment and gains new meanings as users show interest in this technology (Vural & Bat, 2010), it is especially important due to its direct effects on behaviors (Kirschenbaum, 2004). Besides, it has some advantages in affecting other people's behaviors, such as quick feedback (Gilbert & Karahalios, 2009). Attitudes are not innate, but learned; they are not temporary and provide stability in the relationship between the individual and the object, yet there is also a bias in this relationship (Tavşancıl, 2010). According to the literature, there are many types of research on the purpose and habits of social network use, cultural differences in social media use, the usage patterns of social networks, the

relationship between social media use and academic success, motivation, and interaction (Ajjan et al., 2008; Mazman, 2009; Matney & Borland, 2009; Hytten, 2010; Schroeder et al., 2010). In their study, Brady et al. (2010) stated that many lecturers benefitted several social networks such as Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn in distance education. This study aimed to examine the students' attitudes from different faculties towards social media by certain variables.

2. Method

2.1 Research Group

The study sample consisted of 391 volunteer university students (172 males and 219 females), with an average age of 22.47±2.29 years. The participant students studied at different faculties and selected with an appropriate sampling method from non-random sampling methods.

2.2 Data Collection Tools

A "Personal Information Form" and the "Social Media Attitude Scale" were used as the study's data collection instrument.

2.3 Personal Information Form

The researcher developed the form and used to collect data on participants' gender, age, faculty, class level, and social media use.

2.4 Social Media Attitude Scale

The "Social Media Attitude Scale" was developed by Otrar and Argın (2015) to measure the social media attitude levels. It is a 5-point Likert type scale consisting of 23 items and four sub-dimensions: sharing necessity, social competence, social isolation, and relation with teachers. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was 0.85, and it was 0.80 for the current study.

2.5 Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was carried out with the SPSS 20. Descriptive statistics were applied to determine the distribution of personal information (*e.g.*, frequency, arithmetic mean, standard deviation), and the Shapiro Wilks normality test was to find out whether the data had a normal distribution. Once the suitability of the data was confirmed, an independent t-test and ANOVA were performed to describe the differences in social media use of the participants by certain demographic characteristics.

3. Results

Table 1. Distribution of personal information

Variables		F	%
Gender	Female	219	56.0
	Male	172	44.0
	Total	**391**	**100**
Age	17-20	93	23.8
	21-23	226	57.8
	24 years and older	72	18.4
	Total	**391**	**100**
Faculty	Education Faculty	158	40.4
	Sports Faculty	127	32.5
	Fine Arts Faculty	106	27.1
	Total	**391**	**100**
Class level	1.Sınıf	75	19.2
	2.Sınıf	113	28.9
	3.Sınıf	80	20.5
	4.Sınıf	123	31.5
	Total	**391**	**100**
Social Media Use	Yes	321	82.1
	No	70	17.9
	Total	**391**	**100.0**

Table 1 shows the statistical findings of personal information. According to the analysis results, 56.0% of the participants were male, 57.8% were 21-23 years old, 40.4% were studying at "Education Faculty," 31.5% were 4th class, and 82.1% used social media.

Table 2. Distribution of the scores by gender

Sub-dimension	Gender	N	Avg.±Sd.	t	P
Social Competence	Female	219	3.46±.94	2.749	**.006***
	Male	172	3.20±.91		
Sharing Necessity	Female	219	2.48±.76	-2.329	**.020***
	Male	172	2.26±.79		
Relation with Teachers	Female	219	3.19±1.14	.366	.715
	Male	172	3.15±1.10		
Social Isolation	Female	219	3.40±.96	2.299	**.022***
	Male	172	3.20±.92		

Table 2 demonstrates the scale scores by gender. In this sense, a significant difference was found "Social Competence," "Sharing Necessity," and "Social Isolation" sub-dimensions ($p < 0.05$). The average scores of female participants were higher than male participants in these sub-dimensions.

Table 3. Distribution of the scores by age

Sub-dimension	Age	N	Avg.±Sd.	F	P
Social Competence	17-20 years	93	3.31±.92	1.432	.240
	21-23 years	226	3.41±.90		
	24 years and older	72	3.20±1.03		
Sharing Necessity	17-20 years	93	2.39±.84	.530	.595
	21-23 years	226	2.40±.72		
	24 years and older	72	2.29±.79		
Relation with Teachers	17-20 years	93	3.30±1.16	1.737	.177
	21-23 years	226	3.18±1.08		
	24 years and older	72	2.97±1.21		
Social Isolation	17-20 years	93	3.30±.95	2.212	.111
	21-23 years	226	3.40±.95		
	24 years and older	72	3.14±.91		

Table 3 includes the distribution of scale scores by age variable. According to the analysis results, although the 21-23 years old participant had high average scores in all sub-dimensions, no statistically significant difference was found (p > 0.05).

Table 4. Distribution of the scores by social media use

Sub-dimension	Social Media Use	N	Avg.±Sd.	t	P
Social Competence	Yes	321	3.23±.94	-2.005	**.046***
	No	70	3.42±.92		
Sharing Necessity	Yes	321	2.36±.77	.272	.780
	No	70	2.38±.76		
Relation with Teachers	Yes	321	3.09±1.11	-1.167	.244
	No	70	3.22±1.13		
Social Isolation	Yes	321	3.23±.96	-1.719	.086
	No	70	3.40±.93		

Table 4 presents the distribution of scores by social media use. There was a significant difference only in the "Social Competence" sub-dimension (p < 0.05). The average scores of the participants who did not use social media were higher than the other participants.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Social media is a means of entertainment, relaxation, and leisure activity, offering many opportunities such as sending or receiving messages, following the agenda and accessing information. Daily errands have become dependent on the Internet and social media. According to the results of the current study, males used social media more than females. According to Yetiş (2018), Koçer (2012), and Batıgün and Kılıç (2011), male university students used the Internet more frequently than females, which supports the current findings. However, in their studies, Kaymak (2012), Balcı and Tiryaki (2014), Altunbaş and Kul (2015), and İnce and Koçak (2017) found that females used social media more frequently than males. Besides, Akyüz (2018), Doğruluk (2017), Akçay (2011), and Toruk (2007) emphasized that the attitudes towards social media did not vary by gender.

According to the analysis results, there were significant differences in the sub-dimensions of "Social Competence," "Sharing Necessity," and "Social Isolation." The average scores of female participants were higher than male participants. Argın (2013) and Akyüz (2018) found a statistically meaningful difference in social isolation and social competence sub-dimensions and indicated that females' average scores were higher than males by social isolation sub-dimension, which is parallel to the current study. They also showed that males scored

higher than females in the social competence sub-dimension. According to the study data, 82.1% of the participants used social media. This rate was 97.6% in the study by Solmaz et al. (2013). İnce and Koçak (2017) investigated university students' social media habits at Necmettin Erbakan University and concluded that the more university students spent time on the Internet daily, the higher dependence on social media they developed. It is found that young individuals considered certain websites or computer and mobile phone applications as social media means. That proves that they did not fully grasp the concept of "social media." They also suggested that Facebook was the most popular application among participant university students (93.3%) (Erol & Hassan, 2014; Solmaz et al., 2013). In his study, Güney (2018) listed the most frequently visited social media application among the teacher candidates as Instagram, Whatsapp, and Facebook, respectively. A large part of Turkey's population consists of young individuals, and Internet use and social media applications have remarkably risen. Since young people mostly use those applications, it is not surprising that Turkey has become the top country in the world by social media usage rates. However, it is stressed that young people should be assisted to benefit these networks for beneficial purposes (Aydın, 2016). The increasing frequency of social media use among students for many useful purposes such as chat, game, and sharing objects/news also increased social media addiction. Thus, it is concluded that high rates of social media use to achieve specific goals and get satisfaction among students leads to social media addiction (Tutgun Ünal, 2015). It is suggested to use the challenges and criticisms shared on social networks to improve and develop those applications (Yağmurlu, 2011).

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