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Social Media Addiction among Turkish University Students During the Pandemic: A Descriptive Study

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Main Points

- Youngsters have not developed addiction to social media during the pandemic process. There can be two reasons for this. First, they are aware of the positive aspects of social media, as well as its addictive nature. Second, the variables used for the detection of social media addiction are insufficient to measure their addiction symptoms.
- Among university students, the students who say that they often feel lonely have higher scores on the social media addiction scale than those who do not feel alone. It is seen that students who feel lonely are more prone to social media addiction.
- Youngsters can look at social media with a critical eye. The faults they find in social media are the unethical sharing, an environment of vanity and pretense, false information transfer, lack of privacy, and being addictive.
- The majority of youngsters use the internet for more than five hours. Youngsters who spend most of their days in the virtual environment have a low rate of regular nutrition and regular exercise. This shows the importance of developing suggestions for them as they struggle with social media addiction.

Abstract

Social media is a virtual medium that eliminates the concepts of time and space, and its use is known to have increased during the pandemic. It is estimated that the effects of social media addiction among young people have increased during the pandemic. This study aims to determine the internet addiction levels of young people, specific to the social media, with the restrictions imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic; and to propose solutions for the fight against the technology addiction which is accepted as an addiction type.

The study employed a quantitative model. Two hundred fifty-eight young people in the 18 – 25 age range studying at different faculties of Sakarya University participated in the study. The Social Media Addiction Scale for Adolescents was administered to the participants. This scale is a measurement tool for determining university students' social media addiction levels, which has nine items, consists of a single factor, and is implemented in a five-point Likert form. For homogeneity testing, the Kolmogorov – Smirnov result was found at sig .00, and Cronbach's alpha value was found at .876 in the scale reliability analysis. The frequency, *t*-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and chi-square tests were performed in the analysis of the data. This study is descriptive in terms of the function of the information.

According to the findings, the average scale score was calculated as 2.0693, indicating that young people did not develop an addiction to social media. This result reveals two facts. First, youngsters are aware of both the positive aspects and the addictive nature of social media, and can control their usage behavior. Secondly, they no longer develop signs of addiction based on the variables sought for social media addiction.

Keywords: Addiction, pandemic, social media

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Introduction

Several policy measures have been taken, both globally and in Turkey, to control the coronavirus pandemic in 2019. The shift to distance education, the lockdown for people aged above 65 years and below 18 years, the closure of socializing spaces, intercity travel restrictions, and weekend lockdowns are some of these.

The limitations imposed in Turkey during the pandemic include the cancellation of domestic flights of Turkish Airlines, the lockdown of 30 metropolises and Zonguldak (which had the highest number of Covid-19 cases), lockdown for citizens aged below 20 years and above 65 years, the compulsory wearing of masks and the penalties imposed on those on the street who are not wearing one, the shift to distance education in schools, the limitation of intercity travel, and isolation, among others (Güngör, 2020). Due to these measures, people have started to spend more time at home.

People experienced a significant increase in their social media use to meet their socialization needs when they could not leave their home and switched to the home-office working mode (Güçdemir, 2020). Business apps were downloaded 761 000 times from Google Play and IOS platforms during the first week of March in Italy, when the country was under quarantine. A 135% increase was found compared to the weekly average numbers one year earlier. A similar trend was observed in China. The weekly download rate for games increased by 80% in February 2020, compared to the weekly download rate of the previous year (MMA Türkiye, 2020). These data show that isolation dramatically impacts the rate of social media use. As a result of this increase, problems which can lead to addiction arise with the use of social media, which acts as a platform where the distinction between the virtual and the real world is blurred (Utma, 2019).

According to the results of Turkey Health Research, an analysis of the body mass index, calculated using height and weight, revealed that the obesity rate of people aged 15 – 24, which was 3.8% in 2016, has increased to 4.6% in 2019. The rate of problems associated with the waistline among people aged above 15 was 27.1% in 2016 and grew to 29.7% in 2019 (TÜİK, 2020). The results of Turkey Health Research indicate an increase in the obesity rates and problems related to the waistline among young people.

An addiction is an individual's continued use of something, although it affects them to such a level that their basic requirements of daily life and their cognitive activities such as attention, learning, decision-making, etc. are disrupted. (Düvenci, 2012). Addiction can be classified into two categories, material and behavioral. Addiction to tablet computers, the internet, television, video games, smartphones, gaming consoles, and social media is categorized under technology addiction, and is accepted as a behavioral addiction (TBM, 2015). It is thought that the pleasure derived from playing online games and from time spent using the computer can be attributed to the non-chemical interactions based on neurobiological mechanisms, which produce effects similar to those of psychoactive substances, and create addiction (Ögel, 2010). Internet addiction is a newly proposed condition, derived from the DSM-IV criteria for substance addiction (Armstrong et al., 2000), according to which the length of time spent on the internet is not enough to determine internet addiction; it is essential to know the purpose. The positive and negative consequences of internet use are associated with the cause and purpose of use (Günüç & Kayri, 2010).

While some individuals may limit their internet use to meet their needs, there are others who are unable to restrict their usage and hence experience problems in their academic, professional, and social lives (Gönül, 2002). Individuals with technology addiction lose control when using technological tools, use them disproportionately, and experience deprivation when not using them (Turkish Green Crescent Society, 2018). Similarly, social media addiction is known to have physical, psychological, and social effects on individuals. It is crucial to evaluate the impact of this addiction type, which has been linked with the pandemic.

According to the We Are Social Turkey Report (2021), there are 65.8 million internet users in Turkey, 60 million of whom are active on social media. People spend an average of 7 hours and 57 minutes online, with 2 hours and 57 minutes on social media sites. People aged between 25 and 34 years constitute the largest proportion of social media users, at 33.8%, followed by people aged between 18 and 24 years, at 20.3%. The most widely used social network platform is YouTube, with a 94.5% user ratio, followed by Instagram, at 89.5%. WhatsApp is the third most preferred social media app, with an 87.5% ratio, followed by Facebook, at 79%. The report results show that a large section of the population actively uses social media and spends long hours on the internet.

Social media is a virtual medium that eliminates the concepts of time and space. The status and role identification found in face-to-face relationships are absent when individuals communicate over the online network. The people communicating over the internet have become actors, with non-specific social identities (Budak, 2018). With the use of social media, people have become more curious (Yıldırım, 2014). The information search on social media spurred by this curiosity has often undermined the need for an increasing flow of information during the pandemic; a lot of information that could cause panic, fear, and anxiety reached people through social media (Güçdemir, 2020). Social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and others were at the forefront in this aspect (Çüçen Öke, 2018). As a result, social media played an essential role in the transmission of both accurate information and false information, thus creating mass confusion (Bae et al., 2021).

Social media is an internet environment which is becoming increasingly popular among individuals every day (Erol & Hassan, 2014). Social media is also more popular and widely used among youngsters than among those of other age groups (Duggan & Brenner, 2013). According to the results of a study on social media literacy and social network usage patterns in Turkey, it is seen that the rate of internet access increases as the age decreases. In addition, according to the research, the proportion of youngsters who have access to the internet is also high (Durak & Seferoğlu, 2016). Social media in today's society has become an almost indispensable part of everyday life, especially among university students who are keen social media users (Lau, 2017).

Within this context, a significant increase in the time they spend on technological devices was observed, due to various reasons such as the shift to distance education for university students, the closing of socialization spaces, etc. This increase raises the issue of social media addiction. During the pandemic, social media has become popular in the search for medical information. According to a study, it was found that youngsters have used social media to get support from friends, relatives and colleagues during the pandemic (Saud et al., 2020). In addition, working from home, online training, and social media use have increased the amount of time young people spend in front of the screen (Khan & Smith, 2020). However, the findings related to the effects of social media use on the social media addiction and mental health of young people differ (Ngien & Jiang, 2021).

The number of studies in the literature on social media addiction specific to the pandemic is limited. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute to the literature by shedding light on social media addiction, particularly during the pandemic, and to propose solutions for dealing with this addiction among young people. The study aims to determine the youngsters' internet addiction levels, specific to the social media, which can be attributed to the restrictions imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic, and to propose solutions for the fight against the technology addiction, accepted as an addiction type.

Methods

The general survey model of quantitative research methodology was employed in this study. The correlational survey model from the general survey models has been adopted, and the differences in social media use during the pandemic have been examined. The study is descriptive in terms of the function of the information set forth.

Participants

The participants consist of undergraduate students aged between 18 and 25 years, studying in the different departments of the Faculty of Engineering, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and the Faculty of Theology of Sakarya University. Since the participants in the sample group had different demographic characteristics in relation to the research topic (age, gender, and occupation), stratified sampling – – one of the probabilistic sampling methods – – was employed to achieve a homogeneous distribution. Stratified sampling is a sampling method that aims to determine the subgroups in the universe and to represent them in the sample by their ratio within the size of the universe (Büyüköztürk et al., 2008). A stratified sampling method was preferred since the defined population consists of subunit groups. The sampling was created by drawing a certain number of students from each stratum after defining the ratio of different strata comprising the population. In this way, each stratum can be represented equally within the total sample, and the findings obtained will be more representative. A total of 258 young university students participated in the study, and their introductory characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Participants' Introductory Information

	N	%
Sex		
Female	169	65.5
Male	89	34.5
Age		
18 – 20	42	16.3
21 – 22	141	54.7
23 – 25	75	29.1
Income level		
Low income	13	5
Lower-middle income	150	58.1
Middle-top income	95	36.8
Class level		
Class 1	28	10.9
Class 2	26	10.1
Class 3	104	40.3
Class 4	100	38.8
Place of residence		
Village	33	12.8
County	74	28.7
Province	150	58.1
Abroad	1	0.4
Total	258	100

Note: Of the study participants, 65.5% are female, while 35.5% of them are male. Of these, 54.7% are in the 21 – 22 age range; 58.1% are in the lower-middle-income group; 40.3% of them are in class 3 while 38.8% are in their final year; 58.1% of them experienced the distance education process in the province. The sampling group is mostly from the lower-middle-income group and lives in the city's center.

Data Collection Tools

The data were obtained employing the survey questions on the form prepared by the researcher, and the scale. The data were obtained online, due to the prevailing pandemic conditions. An online survey consisting of 35 questions was conducted to assess participating students' mental impact and social media use during the pandemic. The survey consists of eight open-ended questions (age, number of siblings, department of academic study, academic grade average, things they disapprove of in social media, reasons for feeling the need to undergo social media detox, reasons why they feel that the sharing of information about their private lives is right, and sports played regularly). While creating the survey questions, previous studies on the subject were examined (Aydan, 2018; Babacan, 2016; İnce & Koçak, 2017). The survey was delivered to the participants over the various social networking groups (WhatApp, Instagram, etc.), and data were obtained through volunteer participants. This survey consists of subsections, including socio-demographic data, approaches to social media applications, usage purposes, the devices they use in accessing social media, and the scale questions to measure social media addiction levels. Data collection was carried out after approval by the Scientific Research Board.

The Social Media Addiction Scale for Adolescents, developed by Mustafa Özgenel, Ömer Canpolat, and Halil Ekşi in 2019, was used as the data collection tool. This scale is a measurement tool

Table 2.
One-Way ANOVA and Independent Variables t-Test on the Difference Between Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Young People and Social Media Addiction

Gender	**Scale Average Score**	**F**	***p* (Levene)**	**T**	***df***	***p* (Two-Tailed)**
	Equal variances assumed	2.942	.087	2.470	258	.014
	Equal variances not assumed	-	-	2.590	204.342	.010
	Scale Average Score	**Sum of Squares**	***Df***	**Mean**	***f***	***p***
	Between groups	.131	3	.066	.110	.896
	Within groups	152.591	255	.598	-	-
Marital status	**Scale Average Score**	**F**	***p* (Levene)**	**T**	***df***	***p* (2-tailed)**
	Equal variances assumed	.384	.536	1.346	258	.179
	Equal variances not assumed			1.725	3.160	.178
Department of study	**Scale Average Score**	**Sum of Squares**	***df***	**Mean**	***f***	***p***
	Between groups	1.395	4	.349	.583	.675
	Within groups	151.328	254	598		
Level of Academic Achievement	**Scale Average Score**	**Sum of Squares**	***df***	**Mean**	**F**	***p***
	Between groups	2.103	4	.701	1.182	.317
	Within groups	150.620	254	.593		
Total (n = 258)%						

Note: *df* = degrees of freedom.

for determining university students' social media addiction levels. It has nine items, consists of a single factor, and is implemented in a five-point Likert form. The answers to scale questions are scored as "never" (1 point), "rarely" (2 points), "sometimes" (3 points), "mostly" (4 points), and "always" (5 points).

The scale does not include any reverse-scored item. The minimum score on the scale is 9, and the maximum score is 45. The result of the scale confirmatory factor analysis explains 56.787% of the total variance. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the scale is calculated at 0.904 (Özgenel et al., 2019).

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Frequency analysis, the chi-square test, dependent *t*-test, correlation analysis, and variance tests were used to analyze the data obtained, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 package program. The findings were interpreted with descriptive explanations. In this aspect, the research is descriptive in terms of the function of the information.

The researchers conducted content analysis to determine the answers to the open-ended questions in the survey. The answers were categorized under the themes according to their content by

Table 3.
The Difference Between the Young People's Feeling of Loneliness and Social Media Addiction and the Need for Social Media Detox

		F	***p***	**T**	***df***	***p* (Two-Tailed)**
Scale Average Score	Equal variances assumed	19.324	.000	4.864	258	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			5.219	255.941	.000
		Value	***df***	**Asymp. Sig. (Two-Sided)**	**Exact Sig. (Two-Sided)**	**Exact Sig. (One-Sided)**
Pearson's chi-square		.004[a]	1	.948		
Continuity correction[b]		.000	1	1.000		
Likelihood ratio		.004	1	.948		
Fisher's exact test					1.000	.524
Linear-by-linear association		.004	1	.948		
Total (n)				258		

Note: [a]0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 44.74.
[b]Computed only for a 2 × 2 table.
df = degrees of freedom.

Table 4.
Independent Variables t-Test for the Difference Between the Social Media Addiction Based on the Need for Social Media Detox

		F	*p*	T	*df*	*p* (Two-Tailed)
Scale Average Score	Equal variances assumed	3.184	.076	−349	256	.728
	Equal variances not assumed			−355	250.512	.723
Total (n = 258), %						

Note: *df* = degrees of freedom.

one researcher, and other researchers conducted the reliability control of this categorization.

The level of academic success in the survey was obtained by asking students to write their grade average, in response to an open question. The answers received were divided into four categories, from the lowest average to the highest average. The frequency percentage distributions and arithmetic averages of the variables obtained by grouping the answers such as gender, age, income level, class, and place of residence were calculated by descriptive statistics. The normality of distribution of the data was analyzed with the Kolmogorov – Smirnov test. The most popular normal distribution compliance tests are the Kolmogorov – Smirnov and Shapiro – Wilk tests. A *p* (statistical significance) value greater than .05 for both tests, indicated that the data had a normal distribution (Kul, 2014). Since the gender and social media addiction scores showed normal distribution, the independent variables *t*-test was applied to measure the difference between the two independent variables. A review of the difference between the gender and the social media addiction rating average of the gender and marital status among the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants was interpreted according to the results of the independent variables *t*-test. When the result of Levene's test was greater than .05, the variances were considered homogeneous, and the difference in the *t*-test result in the first row of the table was evaluated. A significant difference was sought over the *t*-value in the second line if the variances were not homogeneously distributed. In addition, the one-way ANOVA was applied because the number of answers to the questions on the number of siblings, the department studied, and the academic achievement level was above the two groups. The ANOVA test result was interpreted as showing no significant difference between the variances when the *p* value, considered statistically significant, was above .05.

Among young people, the percentage of those who often feel alone and those who need a social media detox were compared with the chi-square test. The chi-square test is based on whether the difference between observed frequencies and expected frequencies is statistically significant (Kılıç, 2016). The independent variables *t*-test was used to determine whether there is a difference between the development of social media addiction and the need for social media detox. The youngster's responses regarding their purpose for using the internet were divided into four groups, covering all the answers, by categorizing and creating themes for the open-ended questions. The differences between the average score of social media addiction and the purpose given by social media users were tested with the one-way ANOVA. For cases where the *p*-value was below the significance limit, the difference between sample group numbers was considered. Hochberg's GT2 test was chosen from within post hoc tests to find the reason for the differences between groups.

The one-way ANOVA measured whether the differences between the number and type of devices young people use to access internet differed in terms of social media addiction. If the *p*-value for the difference was above .05, it was interpreted as showing no difference between the variances, and the Games – Howell test was applied due to the equal distribution of the variances.

Results

Data from 258 participants participating in the study were analyzed in the SPSS environment, and homogeneity of distribution was examined. The results of the Kolmogorov – Smirnov test for normality of the data were found as sig .00. In addition, the reliability analysis of the Social Media Addiction Scale for Adolescents was conducted, and Cronbach's alpha value was found to be .876. The frequency, dependent variable *t*-test, ANOVA, and chi-square tests were performed in the analysis of the data. The results of the analysis are interpreted and described below:

As *p*-value was calculated as .087 according to the results of Levene's tests on the young population's gender and social media addiction scale scores, the variance indicates a homogeneous

Table 5.
One-Way ANOVA to Test for the Difference Between the Purpose of Young People for Using the Internet and Social Media Addiction

Purpose of Internet Usage						
		Sum of Squares	*df*	**Mean Square**	**F**	*p*
Scale average score	Between groups	14.116	4	4.705	8.623	.000
	Within groups	138.606	254	.546		
Total (n = 258), %		152.723	258			

Note: *df*, degrees of freedom.

Table 6.
One-Way ANOVA for the Difference Between the Social Media Addiction of Young People and the Types of Devices They Use to Access the Internet

	The Devices Used				
Scale Average Score	**Sum of Squares**	***df***	**Mean Square**	**F**	***p***
Between groups	1.210	3	.605	1.019	.363
Within groups	151.512	255	.594		
Total (n = 258), %	152.723	258			

Note: *df*, degrees of freedom.

distribution. Therefore, it is possible to say that the distribution of variables is normal. According to the independent variables *t*-test, no significant difference was observed between the gender variable of youngsters and social media addiction levels.

The *p*-value of the ANOVA test conducted for the difference between the number of siblings and addiction scale scores was calculated as .896. This result indicates that there is no difference between variances. The Games – Howell test, the most suitable test for the variances with no observable difference, was applied to the data. No difference was observed between the numbers of siblings in terms of *p*-values.

Calculations were performed to check whether there is a significant difference between the marital status of young people and their social media addiction scale scores. The variance indicates a homogenous distribution, as the *p*-value of the Levene's test results is greater than .05. According to the *t*-test result, there is no significant difference, the *p*-value is .179, and it is greater than .05.

One-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there is a difference between the departments of the youngsters' study and their social media addiction levels. As the *p*-value was found as .675 as the result of the ANOVA test, it is higher than .05, the acceptance limit for statistical significance. This result explains that there is no difference between variances. As variances don't indicate a difference, the Games – Howell test, the most suitable among the post hoc tests for the sampling distribution, was applied. There was no significant difference in *p*-value between the youngsters' department of study and their social media addiction scale scores.

The difference between the youngsters' social media addiction levels based on their academic achievement levels was calculated. As the result of the one-way ANOVA, the *p*-value was calculated as .317. As it is higher than .05, the limit of statistical significance, no difference was observed between the variances. As the variances indicate no difference, no *p*-value was observed, giving a significant difference between categories as the result of the Games – Howell test, which is the most suitable one for the working group.

No significant difference ($p < .05$) was observed as a result of the independent variables *t*-test and one-way ANOVA conducted for the difference between the demographic characteristics of the youngsters and the average score they obtained from the social media addiction scale.

The result of Levene's test, conducted to determine the difference between the youngsters' feelings of loneliness and their social media addiction scores, the *p*-value was .000, and it was calculated to be less than .05, which was statistically accepted. This result indicates that variances do not show a homogeneous distribution. According to the result of the *t*-test, the value of *p* (two-tailed) was calculated as .000. There is a significant difference between the university students' feeling of loneliness and their scores from the social media addiction scale. According to the table results, the scores of young people who expressed a frequent feeling of loneliness are higher than the young people who did not. Our calculations indicate that youngsters who feel lonely are more inclined to social media addiction.

The Chi-square test was carried out to calculate the difference in their need for social media detox based on their frequent feeling of loneliness. The minimum expected number at the bottom of the table was calculated as 44.74, and was higher than 25. Pearson's chi-square sig. value was analyzed and was calculated as 0.948, which is higher than 0.05, accepted as the statistical significance level. This result reveals no significant difference between the youngsters who expressed a frequent feeling of loneliness and those who did not, regarding the need for social media detox.

As the result of Levene's test implemented for the difference between the social media addiction of youngsters and their need for social media detox, the *p*-value was .076, and variances indicate a homogeneous distribution. In the result of the independent variables *t*-test, the *p* (two-tailed) value was calculated as .728, higher than .05, and accepted as the statistical limit for significance. No significant difference was observed between the university students who required social media detox and those who did not, in terms of the average scores they obtained from the social media addiction scale.

The one-way ANOVA was applied to determine whether there was a significant difference between the average scores the youngsters obtained from the social media addiction scale based on their purpose in using the internet. According to the result of the ANOVA, the value of *p* was calculated as .000. This value is less than .05, so a difference between the variances was observed. Considering the difference in the number of our sample groups, Hochberg's GT2 test was the most suitable post hoc test. As the result of Hochberg's GT2 test, the *p*-value was higher than .05, which is accepted as the statistical significance value, explaining no difference between variables. No significant difference was observed between the social media addiction of university students and their purpose for using the internet.

The one-way ANOVA was used to identify the difference between the average scores the youngsters obtained from social media addiction scales based on the types of devices they use to access the internet. According to the result of the ANOVA, the value of *p* was calculated as .363. This value is less than .05, so a difference between the variances was is observed. As there was no difference between the variances, the Games – Howell test was implemented among the post hoc tests. As the result of the

Games – Howell test, the *p*-value was calculated higher than .05, which is considered the acceptance limit for statistical significance, which explains that there is no difference between variables. No significant difference was observed between the social media addiction of young people based on the devices they used to access the Internet.

Discussion

According to the study results, the participants obtained a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 39 points on the Social Media Addiction Scale for Adolescents. According to the findings, the average scale score was calculated as 2.0693, indicating that the youngsters did not develop an addiction to social media. Contrary to the hypothetical expectation, the level of social media addiction of students during the pandemic process is low. In the study by Aktan (2018), it was found that the university students were "less dependent" on social media, which supports the results of this study. In addition, in the study by Özdemir (2019), who included the students from Sakarya University and Beykoz University in the sample group, it was concluded that the students were less dependent on social media, based on the total score. However, many studies on young people in the literature show that social media addiction can be widely seen among university students (Kandell, 1998; Tutgun et al., 2011; Tutgun-Ünal, 2019; Tutgun-Ünal & Deniz, 2016).

This result suggests two facts. First, young people are aware of the positive aspects of social media, and also of its addictive nature, and can control their use. Secondly, they no longer develop signs of addiction based on the variables sought for social media addiction.

In the current study, university students' social media addiction levels in the 18 – 25 age range with the limitations they encounter during the pandemic have been analyzed. An analysis of the distribution of the purpose of their social media use during the pandemic, along with the high rates usage rates for participating in social networks indicate the youngsters' need to socialize. It can be said that the prevalence of internet use during the isolation period and the decrease of face-to-face interaction in a real environment have led young people to social media. Other answers that scored high as purpose for social media usage are: using it for accessing information, and following an agenda. Responses mentioning entertainment, gaming, and shopping received the lowest rates. These findings are also supported by other studies (Andreassen et al., 2012; Balcı & Gölcü, 2013; Buran Köse & Doğan, 2019; Tutgun-Ünal & Deniz, 2016). In this respect, the research is similar to other studies in the literature.

An analysis of the types of devices the young people use to access social media revealed that 60.9% of them use only a mobile phone, while the proportion of computers and tablet computers used for accessing social media is quite low. This result may indicate an increase in the rise of nomophobia. A single monitor is sufficient for accessing social media. WhatsApp and Instagram applications are the ones with the highest rate of use among the social media communication platforms. This is an expected result, considering that WhatsApp is a communication application and Instagram is a medium hosting mostly visual information. Other similar studies (Alwagait et al., 2015; Anderson & Jiang, 2018; Mao, 2014; Mert Karadaş et al., 2021; Pew Research Center, 2019) also support the result.

The low participation in the platforms such as YouTube, Telegram, and Twitter may be explained by the fact that none of the participants was a phenomenon or an influencer on these platforms.

The responses received to the question of what young people find wrong on social media, which was posed in the open-ended form, were categorized. The close distribution between 27.5% for unethical posts and 27.1% for showing off and the "wannabe" environment is noteworthy, as they support each other. Misinformation, the addictive aspect, and the lack of privacy are the subsequent answers. Young people often consider the useless features of social media and feel that the posts on these platforms are unethical. However, a relatively high proportion of the same young people do not feel the need for social media detox. A large number of students who feel the need for social media detox would indicate that they are aware of the addictive aspect of social media, and it would not be appropriate to expect those with such an awareness to have a social media addiction. Detox is a conscious attempt by individuals to get away from some negative influences. In this respect, the lack of a significant difference between the need for social media detox and social media addiction is an expected result.

Another finding regarding privacy is that a high proportion of youngsters (81%) regard the acquisition of information regarding their private lives by others as wrong. Atlas (2012), on the other hand, suggested that individual attitudes may cause unethical behaviors on social media sites.

Those who do not mind that other people follow their personal lives use the following precautions for preventing social media addiction during the pandemic: using the social media accounts at their will (the control of privacy settings, etc.), with the ownership of control regarding who has permission to follow their personal accounts (allowing only approved people to follow them), and posting what they desire to share. This finding differs from the literature. Studies have found that people with low self-control have a higher level of social media addiction (Ekşi et al., 2019; Koç et al., 2019).

These results show that, contrary to the studies in the literature, young people are not addicted to social media. Instead, they have a high level of consciousness and a critical attitude toward social media.

The majority of the participants reported that they used the internet daily for 3 – 5 hours or more than 5 hours. Calap and Çebi (2020) found this to be 1 – 12 hours. This result indicates that youngsters spend long hours on social media due to social isolation and lack of social interaction during the pandemic period. It is noteworthy that most young people who constantly spend time on social media do not eat or practice a sport regularly. This result indicates that the long hours spent on social media deprives the users of social relations and physical exercise. The lack of regular exercise and diet can lead to bigger problems in the future. This is a significant result, constituting a major problem that should be emphasized in future studies focusing on the effects of social media on young people.

Another important finding of the study is that youngsters often feel alone. Karagülle and Çaycı (2014) state that individuals become more alienated from each other in virtual communication. Some studies show that people who appear social in terms of numbers are considered lonely by the participants (Calap & Çebi, 2020). The social isolation concept, often voiced in the pandemic, is more associated with physical isolation. However, the findings obtained in this study show that isolation is experienced not only in the physical environment but also in the psychological environment.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies

The participants were reached online in this study due to the restrictive conditions of the pandemic. The lack of a large sampling group and the focus on the students of only Sakarya University limit the study. It is essential to conduct more comprehensive work to understand the participants' views on social media.

It is necessary to reveal new findings on the causes and consequences of social media addiction on young people, children, and seniors. It is also essential to conduct studies on whether social media addiction, assessed within the scope of technology addiction, changes according to the operating system of applications, whether the algorithms of the applications drag the individuals into addiction, the effectiveness of social media detox as a personal solution, and other studies on social policies which need to be implemented on a more social level. More up-to-date and multi-disciplinary studies are required, focusing on whether social media drags individuals into crime, its effects on negligence and abuse of children, senior abuse, and work efficiency. This study only examined the social media addiction among youngsters and investigated the relationship of generation Z with technology. It is recommended that future studies should be conducted on the effects of social media on psychosocial problems such as anxiety, depression, and cognitive disorders in young people, because generation Z is more associated with technology addictions.

Ethics Committee Approval: Ethics committee approval was received for this study from the Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee of Sakarya University, with the decision numbered 17 taken at the meeting dated July 07, 2021, and numbered 36.

Informed Consent: A written consent form was obtained from the participants who agreed to participate in the study.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Giriş

Tüm dünyada olduğu gibi ülkemizde de 2019 yılında ortaya çıkmış olan koronavirüs salgını nedeniyle bir dizi önlem alınmaktadır. Eğitimin uzaktan verilmesi, sokağa çıkma saatlerinin 65 yaş üstü ve 18 yaş altı olarak kısıtlanması, sosyalleşme mekânlarının kapatılması, şehirlerarası seyahat kısıtlamaları, hafta sonu sokağa çıkma yasağı bunlardan birkaçıdır. Salgın sebebiyle evlerinden çıkmayan, ofislerini evlerine taşıyan insanlar sosyalleşme ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak için teknoloji kullanımlarında dikkat çeker durumda artış yaşamıştır.

Gençler teknolojideki yenilik ve gelişmelere kolay uyum sağlamaları, bilgiye ulaşmadaki merakları, eğlence ve oyun ortamına yatkın olmaları gibi etkenlerle yetişkinlere göre teknoloji bağımlılığına daha müsaittir. İnternet kullanımında bağımlı hale gelmiş gençlerde kendini sosyal çevresinden izole etme, internette geçirdiği süre konusunda çevresindekilere yalan söyleme, uyku düzeninde bozulma, kişilerarası ilişkilerinde sorun yaşama, internetten uzak kaldığı zamanlarda huzursuzluk duyma, fiziksel etkinliklerde azalma ve buna bağlı olarak aşırı kilo alımları, uzun süre teknolojik cihaz kullanımına bağlı duruş bozuklukları gibi etkiler görülebilmektedir. Bu bağlamda pandeminin etkisiyle üniversite öğrencilerinin eğitimlerini uzaktan sürdürmeleri, sosyalleşme için uygun ortamların kapalı olması gibi nedenlerle gençlerin teknolojik cihazlarla vakit geçirme sürelerinde önemli artışlar olmuştur. Bu durum da sosyal medya bağımlılığı konusunu gündeme getirmiştir.

Sosyal medya zaman ve mekân kavramlarını ortadan kaldıran sanal bir mecradır. Bu durumun pandemi sürecinde artan bir şekilde yaşandığı bilinmektedir. Sosyal medya bağımlılığının gençler üzerindeki etkilerinin pandemi sürecinde daha fazla olduğu tahmin edilmektedir. Bu tahminlerden hareketle bu çalışmada covid-19 pandemisinde getirilen kısıtlılıklarla gençlerin internet bağımlılık düzeylerinin sosyal medya özelinde incelenerek ortaya koyulması ve bir bağımlılık türü olarak kabul edilen teknoloji bağımlılığıyla mücadelede gençlere yönelik çözüm yollarının geliştirilmesi amaçlanmıştır.

Yöntem

Bir bağımlılık türü olarak sosyal medya bağımlılığına ilişkin literatürdeki çalışmalar pandemi özelinde henüz sayıca sınırlıdır. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmanın pandemi özelinde gençlerde sosyal medya bağımlılığına ışık tutması ve bu sorunla baş etme yollarına ilişkin çözüm önerileri sunması bakımından literatüre katkıda bulunması beklenmektedir

Bu araştırmada nicel araştırma metodolojisinde tarama modellerinden genel tarama modeli kullanılmıştır. Genel tarama modellerinden ilişkisel tarama modeli benimsenerek pandemi sürecinde sosyal medya kullanımındaki farklar incelenerek tespit edilmiştir. Çalışma, ortaya koyulan bilginin fonksiyonu bakımından betimsel bir çalışmadır.

Nicel desende yapılan bu araştırmaya Sakarya Üniversitesi'nin farklı fakültelerinde öğrenim gören 18-25 yaş aralığındaki 258 genç birey katılmıştır. Araştırmaya katılan gençlerin %65,5'i kadın, %34,5'i erkektir; %54,7'si 21-22 yaş aralığındadır; %58,1'inin alt-orta gelir grubuna dahildir; %40,3'ü 3.sınıf ve %38,8'i üniversite 4.sınıf öğrencisidir; uzaktan eğitim sürecini %58,1'i ilde geçirmiştir. Örneklem grubu çoğunlukla alt-orta gelir grubuna sahip olup şehir merkezinde yaşamaktadır.

Veriler araştırmacı tarafından oluşturulan anket formu soruları ve ölçek aracılığıyla elde edilmiştir. Veriler pandemi şartları gereği çevrimiçi ortamda toplanmıştır. Katılımcılara Ergenler için Sosyal Medya Bağımlılığı Ölçeği (ESMBÖ) uygulanmıştır. ESMBÖ üniversite öğrencilerinin sosyal medya bağımlılık düzeylerinin ölçümü için kullanılan 9 maddeli, tek faktörden oluşan ve 5'li likert formunda uygulanan bir ölçme aracıdır. Homojenlik testi için Kolmogorov-Smirnov sonucu sig .00 olarak, ölçek güvenilirlik analizinde Cronbach alfa değeri .876 olarak bulgulanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde frekans, t-testi, Anova ve Chi-Square testleri uygulanmıştır. Bu çalışma bilginin fonksiyonu bakımından betimleyici bir çalışmadır.

Elde edilen veriler SPSS 22. versiyon paket programında frekans, chi-square, korelasyon, bağımlı t-testi ve varyans testlerine tabi tutulmuştur ve ortaya çıkan bulgular betimsel açıklamalarla yorumlanmıştır. Araştırma bu yönüyle bilginin fonksiyonu bakımından betimseldir.

Sınırlılıklar

Bu çalışmada katılımcılara pandemi koşullarının bir gerekliliği olarak çevrimiçi ortamlarda ulaşılmıştır. Örneklem grubunun geniş kitleleri içermemesi, Sakarya Üniversitesi öğrencilerininin odağında gerçekleştirilmesi çalışmayı sınırlandırmıştır. Katılımcıların sosyal medyaya ilişkin düşüncelerini anlamak için çok daha kapsamlı çalışmaların yapılması elzemdir.

Bulgular

Çalışmaya katılan 258 katılımcıdan elde edilen veriler SPSS ortamında analiz edilmiş olup homojenlik dağılımı incelenmiştir. Verilerin normallik testinde Kolmogorov-Smirnov sonucu sig .00 olarak bulgulanmıştır. Ayrıca veriler elde edilirken kullanılan Ergenler İçin Sosyal Medya Bağımlılığı Ölçeğinin güvenilirlik analizi yapılmış olup Cronbach alfa değeri .876 olarak bulgulanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde frekans, bağımlı değişken t testi, Anova, Chi-Square testleri uygulanmıştır.

Elde edilen bulgulara göre ölçek ortalama puanı 2,0693 olarak hesaplanıp, buradan gençlerin sosyal medyaya karşı bir bağımlılık geliştirmedikleri sonucu ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu durum iki gerçeği göstermektedir. Birincisi, gençler sosyal medyanın olumlu yanları kadar bağımlılık yapıcı taraflarının da farkındadır ve kullanımlarını kontrol altına alabilmektedirler. İkincisi gençler artık sosyal medya bağımlılığı için aranan değişkenlere göre bağımlılık belirtileri oluşturmamaktadır.

Tartişma

Yaptığımız araştırmada üniversite öğrenimine devam etmekte olan 18-25 yaş aralığındaki öğrencilerin pandemi sürecinde yaşadıkları kısıtlılıklarla sosyal medyaya olan bağımlılık düzeyleri ˙ i ˙ncelenmi ˙şti ˙r. Gençlerin pandemi sürecinde sosyal medyayı kullanım amacı dağılımına bakıldığında sosyal ağlara katılmak için kullanım oranının yüksek çıkması gençlerin sosyalleşmeye ihtiyaç duyduklarını göstermektedir. İzolasyon sürecinde internet kullanımının yaygınlaşması ve gençlerin reel ortamdaki yüzyüze etkileşimlerinin azalmasıyla sosyal medyaya yöneldikleri söylenebilir. Sosyal medya kullanım amacında alınan diğer yüksek cevaplar; bilgiye erişim için kullanım ve gündemi takip etmek için kullanımdır. En düşük oran eğlence, oyun ve alışveriş amaçlı kullanım cevabı olmuştur.

Gençlerin sosyal medyaya erişiminde kullandıkları cihazlara bakıldığında sadece cep telefonundan bağlananların oranı %60,9 iken bilgisayar ve tablet ile bağlananların oranının oldukça düşük olduğu görülmüştür. Bu da nomofobinin yükselişinde bir artışa işaret edebilir. Ayrıca tek bir monitörün sosyal medyaya bağlanmada yeterli olduğu sonucu çıkarılabilir.

Mahremiyete ilişkin olarak ise katılımcılar gençlerin özel yaşamlarına ait bilgilerin başkaları tarafından edinilmesini yüksek bir oranda (%81) yanlış bulmalarıdır. Özel yaşamlarının başkaları tarafından bilinmesinde sakınca görmeyen gençlerin sosyal medya hesaplarını istekleri doğrultusunda kullanmaları (gizlilik ayarlarının kontrolü gibi), uygulamadaki şahsi hesaplardaki takip sisteminde kontrol sahibi olmaları (istedikleri kişilerin takibine izin verebilmeleri), yapılan paylaşımların kendi iradelerinde olması sosyal medyada gençlerin pandemide sosyal medya bağımlılığının önünde duran noktalardır. Bu sonuç literatürün aksine gençlerin sosyal medyaya bağımlı olmadıklarını, tam tersi bilinç düzeylerinin yüksek ve sosyal medyaya karşı eleştirel bir tutum sergilediklerini göstermektedir.

Katılımcıların büyük çoğunluğunun günlük 3-5 saat veya 5 saat üzerinde internet kullandıkları görülmüştür. Bu sonuç pandemi sürecinde, sosyal izolasyon ve etkileşimin azlığı sebebiyle gençlerin uzun süreler sosyal medyada vakit geçirdiğini gösteren bir bulgudur. Sürekli sosyal medyada vakit geçiren gençlerin çoğunluğunun düzenli beslenmedikleri ve düzenli spor yapmadıkları sonucu dikkat çekicidir. Bu da uzun süre sosyal medyada vakit geçirilmesinin sadece sosyal ilişkilerden değil, fiziksel egzersizlerden de mahrum kalındığını göstermektedir. Gençlerin düzenli spor yapmaması ve düzenli beslenmemesi ileride buna bağlı daha büyük sorunlarla karşılaşabileceklerine işarettir. Bu sonuç, sosyal medya bağımlılığının gençler üzerindeki etkileri konusunda yapılacak diğer araştırmalar açısından üzerinde durulması gereken, önemli bir problemi oluşturmaktadır. Ayrıca araştırmanın önemli bir diğer bulgusu gençlerin kendilerini sıklıkla yalnız hissetmeleridir. Bu hususta pandemi döneminde yapılan diğer araştırmalarla örtüşmektedir.