



## DOES SOCIAL MEDIA USE AFFECT OUR REAL-LIFE RELATIONSHIPS: FOCUS ON GENDER

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### **Abstract:**

This paper explores two relationships. Firstly, the relationship between the time students spend on social media and the time they spend socializing face-to-face with friends in real life was tried to uncover. Secondly, the researcher wanted to see if gender is a factor in the amount of time students spend on social media or socializing face-to-face with friends in the real world. Data were collected from a preparatory school at a state university in Istanbul through a questionnaire. Sixty-nine B1 level students (46 males, 23 females) were included in this study. All of the participants were aged between 18 and 20. This is quantitative research, and a survey method was adopted. In order to analyze the data, firstly, descriptive statistics were analyzed, and a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was implemented. As none of the data was normally distributed, a non-parametric test was conducted to see the correlation between time spent on social media and time spent with friends. The correlation between the two variables mentioned was not found to be significant. Secondly, so as to see whether there was a relationship between gender and both the time spent on social media and socializing with friends in real life, a Mann-Whitney U test was implemented. The data revealed that there was not a significant difference between the time spent on social media and time spent socializing with friends. The results of this study also demonstrated that gender and the time spent on social media and face to face in real life is not significantly related.

**Keywords:** social media, gender and social media, time spent with friends face to face

### **1. Introduction**

There has been a tremendous change in how people interact in today's world compared to the way people communicated only a decade ago. Social media have become such a global phenomenon all around the world that it has something to offer to people of all ages, education levels, and interests. Social media is defined as "*forms of electronic communication such as websites for social networking and microblogging through which users*

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*create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content such as videos*" (Merriam-Webster, 2019). The most commonly visited social network sites these days are Facebook, LinkedIn, Myspace, Instagram, and they offer both similar and different features. Different individuals have different reasons as to which social media account to use depending on the services or features they offer. These reasons include but are not limited to communicating with friends or making new friends, following people of their interest, getting news, and for academic purposes by following some educational pages. Social media has obviously become an indispensable part of our daily lives; therefore, to have a profile on any of the social media accounts or not seems to be out of the question these days, what matters is the preference of people as to which one to use. This research aims to identify the relationship between the time spent on social media and the time spent socializing with friends face to face and to see if this relationship depends on gender.

## **2. Literature Review**

Developments in communication technologies have profoundly influenced our social life. Especially, thanks to advances in smartphone technology, what we are able to do with mobile phones has expanded dramatically. These technological developments have made it possible for new media to emerge (Sozbilir & Dursun, 2018). This new kind of media, namely social media, under the favor of audiovisual and visual components which it contains in itself caused some new forms of content to emerge (Aktas, 2013). These days, people are able to do various things through social media depending on which social media accounts they are using, and it has become a part of our society, and as (Wolf et al., 2015) puts, sharing personal information and contents are considered a social desire these days. In this way, many people construct social identities and communicate with each other through online tools. The fact that social media offers superabundant activities to spend time on is likely to damage the real relationships we have. There are concerns that many people appear to be substituting virtual, online connections for real-life, social relationships (Galosso, 2018). Much research has shown that the amount of time spent on social media cannot be underestimated. For example, Solmaz, Herzem and Demir (2013) reported that 97% of the 500 participants in her research indicated that they spent 1-3 hours on Facebook a day. Similarly, Tektas (2014) revealed that undergraduate students spent 76% of their time on social media. Unal (2018) stated that the time we spend at home with family members was limited compared to traditional families of the past and communication among the family members is hampered by using Facebook excessively. Unal (2018) found out in her research that the number of friends the participants had on Facebook was higher than the number of friends in real life; in fact, some reported that they had no real friends. As for the reasons to use social media, according to (Dogan & Karakus, 2015), teenagers use social media to avoid loneliness and also not losing contact with their actual friends. Chou and Hsiao (2000) claimed that as the amount of internet use raises, people tend to be more alienated in their social lives.

Another issue about using social media that has been researched a lot is whether gender plays a role in the amount of time spent on social media. In their research, Sozbilir and Dursun (2018) found out that there is a significant relationship between time spent on social media and gender. Bujala (2012) argues that men tend to have more time for social media use yet most of the findings of related research are not in line with this finding. Vollkovich, Laniado, Kappler and Kaltenbrunner (2014) found out that women outnumbered men for many social network sites, their research revealed that while men used social media to make new friends, women used it to keep their friendships alive. This finding is in line with research by Mazman and Usluel (2011). Women spend an average of 30% more time on social media than women in North America and Europe ("Women spend more time social networking than men," 2011).

To contribute to the existing literature, this research will also investigate the relationship between the time spent on social media and the time spent face-to-face with friends, and between gender and social media use.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Research Questions

This research seeks to address the following questions:

**Research Question 1:** Is there a relationship between the amount of time students spend on social media and the amount of time they spend socializing with friends face-to-face?

**Research Question 2:** Does the amount of time spent on social media and for face-to-face communication differ in males and females?

#### 3.2 Research Design and Data Collection

This is quantitative research, and a survey method was adopted. The participants were required to fill out the questionnaire which inquired the amount of time the students spent on social media, the amount of time they spent socializing with friends face-to-face, and the reasons why they use social media with four options they could check; to share information, get the news, chat, and shop. Students were also asked to write their gender in the questionnaire.

#### 3.3 Participants and setting

The participants were 69 (46 males, 23 females) students at a preparatory school at a state university in Istanbul. All of the participants were B1 level students and aged between 18 and 20. They had to attend lessons five days a week from 9 a.m until 1.40 p.m.

### 4. Results

Firstly, to check the normality of the data, and decide on what tests to be used, the descriptive statistics were analyzed, and a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was implemented. The results are displayed in the tables below.

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics for Time Spent on Social Media and Time Spent Socializing Face-to-face with Friends

	Time Spent on Social Media	Time Spent Socializing Face-to-face with Friends
N	69	69
Mean	180.97	265.03
Median	150.00	240.00
Mode	120	300
Standard Deviation	130.965	217.925
Skewness	1.668	2.592
Std. Error of Skewness	.289	.289
Kurtosis	3.763	11.507
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.570	.570

**Table 2:** Normality Test for Time Spent on Social Media and Time Spent Socializing face-to-face with Friends

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
<b>Time spent on social media</b>	.141	69	.002	.865	69	.000
<b>Time spent socializing face-to-face with friends</b>	.146	69	.001	.785	69	.000

The results indicate that the time spent on social media was between 10 and 690 minutes ( $M = 180$ ,  $SD = 131$ ) with Skewness of 1.66 ( $SE = 0.289$ ) and Kurtosis of 3.76 ( $SE = 0.570$ ) as seen in Table 1. Also, as seen in table 2, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that time spent on social media does not have a normal distribution,  $D(69) = 0.141$ ,  $p = .002$ ." The time spent with friends was between 10 and 1440 minutes ( $M = 265$ ,  $SD = 218$ ) with skewness of 2.59 ( $SE = 0.289$ ) and Kurtosis of 11.50 ( $SE = 0.570$ ). Kolmogorov-Smirnov test shows a non-normal distribution for time spent with friends as well,  $D(69) = 0.146$ ,  $p = .001$ ." For both cases, it was also observed that mean, median and mode values were not close to each other. As none of the data was normally distributed, a non-parametric test was conducted to see the correlation between time spent on social media and time spent with friends.

**Table 3:** Spearman's Rho Correlation between Time Spent on Social Media and Time Spent Socializing face-to-face with Friends

		Time spent on social media	Time spent socializing face-to-face with friends
<b>Time spent on social media</b>	Correlation	1.000	.063
	Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.607
	N	69	69
<b>Time spent socializing face-to-face with friends</b>	Correlation	.063	1.000
	Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.607	.
	N	69	69

Results of the Spearman correlation indicated in table 3 that there was not a significant positive correlation between the time students spend on social media and the time they spend socializing with their friends  $rs = .063, p = .607$ .

**Table 4:** Descriptive Statistics for Time Spent on Social Media Depending on the Gender

	Female	Male
N	25	44
Mean	190.00	175.84
Median	140.00	165.00
Mode	120	240
Standard Deviation	131.846	131.708
Skewness	1.090	2.053
Std. Error of Skewness	.464	.357
Kurtosis	.322	6.279
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.902	.702

In order to answer the second research question, the normality of the data which was collected by women and man were separately analyzed through frequencies and Skewness and Kurtosis values as seen in table 4. The time spent on social media by women was between 30 and 500 minutes ( $M=190, SD = 132$ ) with Skewness of 1.09 ( $SE = 0.464$ ) and Kurtosis of 0.322 ( $SE = 0.902$ ). Similar results were observed for the male group who spent on social media was between 10 to 690 minutes ( $M = 175, SD = 132$ ) with Skewness of 2.05 ( $SE = 0.357$ ) and Kurtosis of 6.27 ( $SE = 0.702$ ). The mean median and mode values were not observed to be close to each other in both groups. Therefore, the data collected from both female and male groups was not normally distributed, so Mann-Whitney U test was implemented to analyze the data.

**Table 5:** Mann-Whitney U test results for Time Spent on Social Media and Time Spent Socializing face-to-face with Friends Depending on the Gender

	Sig.	U
The distribution of The Time Spent Face-to-face with Friends Depending on the Gender	.876	537.5
The distribution of The Time Spent on Social Media is Depending on the Gender	.471	607

As seen in Table 5, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test showed that neither females ( $Mdn = 140$ ) or males ( $Mdn = 165$ ) did not spend more time on the social media than the other one,  $U = 537.5, p = .876$ . Similar results were obtained for the time spent with friends for both groups,  $U = 607, p = .471$ , which show that there was not a significant difference between females and males both for the time spent on social media and time spent socializing with friends.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

In this research, first of all, the relationship between the time students spend on social media and time students spend socializing face-to-face with friends was tried to be revealed. Secondly, the effect of gender on the amount of time students spend on social network and socializing with friends were searched.

It has been revealed that there was not a significant positive correlation between the time students spend on social media and the time they spend socializing with their friends. This finding cannot be compared to the ones mentioned in the literature, because, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is not a similar study. Therefore, further research is definitely needed to see this relationship. However, findings of this research show similar patterns to the ones in the literature in terms of the high amounts of time students spend on social media a day (Solmaz et al., 2013; Tektas, 2014).

The findings of this study contradict the findings of the studies by Sozbilir and Dursun (2018), Volkavich et al., (2014), and Mazman and Uslubel (2011). Unlike what they found out, the data in this study reveals no relationship between the time students spend on social media and gender. However, more research on this topic needs to be undertaken before the association between the amount of time spent on specific social media sites such as Facebook or LinkedIn and gender is clearly understood.

### 5.1 Limitations of the Study

This study has some limitations that need to be addressed. First of all, the sample is only 69 B1 level students, and they are all prep school students of very similar ages. They all live in Istanbul, which is a cosmopolitan city. A larger sample with students from different cities, different proficiency levels, and age groups might generate different results. Secondly, it is not within the scope of this research to address how much time students spend on certain social media sites, or the amount of time they are on social media even when they are together with their friends; those questions could be answered in a separate study. Also, due to time limitations, this study could just make use of a survey; therefore, it could be repeated by triangulating the data and including qualitative data collection tools to reach more detailed results.

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