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INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA, LONELINESS AND DEPRESSION

Yağmur Çerkez[1i], Dönay Kara[2]

[1,2]Near East University, Faculty of Education, Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance, Nicosia, North Cyprus

Abstract:

It is observed that the relationship between the use of the social media by people and the loneliness and depression increases day by day. The main aim of this study is to examine the loneliness, depression and use of the social media by university students with different variables. The study group of the research consists of a total of 530 students during the spring term of the academic year 2014-2015. There was a significant difference among the faculties in terms of using the social media between the Faculties of Education and Theology and the average use of social media by the Faculty of Education was determined to be significantly higher. A significant difference emerged when the relationship between the use of the social media and the levels of depression is studied.

Keywords: loneliness, depression, social media, university students

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the Internet is a very important communication and information sharing tool in education, work and human life. The Internet that is easily accessible with the increase in technological opportunities is presented to the users as freedom in terms of facility in information access, communication and socialising and as an individual that does whatever it wants. The positive and negative results that the Internet use may lead are related to the reasons and aims of using the Internet (Bayraktutan, 2005).In a study on young adults, it is observed that the Internet users start to use the Internet for information and news purposes and that their time of use decreases in the case that the

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[i] Correspondence: email yagmurcerkez@yahoo.com

websites that lead to addiction such as chat and game pages are filtered which means the access is blocked (Günüç and Kayri, 2008). People post their daily thoughts on the social media, they can discuss on these thoughts and put forward new ideas. In addition, they can share various photographs and videos together with personal information, they can look for jobs and they can even find one as well as living the real word in the virtual environment without getting bored. This situation directs all the attention to this field day by day and draws a new conceptual frame for the renewed virtual world. The Internet used as a source of information and communication appears as an addiction for some people. They can comfortably express the relationships that they cannot have in the real world and the feelings or thoughts that they cannot express in the Internet environment. The use of the social media that became an addiction of the virtual environment users of today addresses the social demands of broad masses from all cultures and all communities as well as being in the focus point of the criticizers of the social media environment. The development of new communication environments and the increase in the interest of all communities in the information and communication technologies increase the popularity of the social media and add a new dimension to the concept of socialising.

It is observed that the relationship between the use of the social media by people and the loneliness and depression increases day by day. The main aim of this study is to examine the loneliness, depression and use of the social media by university students with different variables. It is investigated whether the relationship between the use of the social media by university students and the loneliness and depression differ in terms of variables such as age, gender, socio-economic situation of the family.

2. Method

Explanations regarding the method of the research, study group, sample, data collection tools and the statistical methods that the data have been analysed are given in this chapter.

2.1 Research Model
The research is a descriptive relational scanning model. With regard to the topic, the relationship between the use of the social media, loneliness and depression will be determined. As scanning models, they are the studies that aim to describe a past or ongoing situation as it completely is.

This research investigated whether the point averages significantly differ with regard to the levels of the use of social media by university students, loneliness and depression; it also did a relational examination on whether the point averages of the levels of the use of social media by university students, loneliness and depression differ

depending on gender, faculty, time of using the social media, the aims of using the social media and the marital status of the parents.

2.2 Study Group

The study group of the research consists of a total of 530 students of studying at Faculty of Theology, Faculty of Pharmacy and Faculty of Education in the spring term of the academic year 2014-2015.

2.3 Data Collection Tools

As data collection tools within the scope of the research, a 5-article Demographic Information Form was used in order to determine the demographical information of the sample group, a 10-article Scale of Social Media Usage was used so as to determine the levels of the use of the social media, a 21-article Beck Depression Inventory was used to determine the levels of depression and a 20-article UCLA Loneliness Scale was used in order to determine the levels of loneliness.

3. Results

Findings on the sub-problems of the research and the comments on the studies in the literature within the context of these findings are studied in this chapter. A total of 600 participants contributed to the research but the survey forms of only 530 students were analysed because 70 students filled in the survey forms incompletely and due to the cancellation as some students did not submit the survey forms. 439 of 530 students forming the study group were in the age group 18-25 (82.8%), 62 were in the age group 26-30 (11.7%) and 29 were in the age group 31-40 (5.5%). Moreover, when the gender factor is considered, 332 students of the study group were female (62.6%) and 198 were male (37.4%). When the daily use of the social media by the study group was considered in terms of hours, 83 students used it between the range of 0-1 hour (15.7%), 127 students used it between the range of 1-2 hours (24.0%), 124 students used it between the range of 2-3 hours (23.3%) and 196 students used it between the range of 3 or more hours (37.0%). Regarding the aim of the participating students of using the social media, 341 students use it to communicate with their friends (64.3%), 314 students use it for recreation purposes (59.2), 216 students do not use it for recreation purposes (40.8%), 179 students play games (33.8%) and 204 students use it for research purposes (38.5%). Concerning whether the students forming the study group live together with their parents, it is found out that 292 students live together with their parents (55.1%) and 238 students do not live with their parents (44.9%). Finally, regarding the faculties of the students forming the study group, 219 students are from

Ataturk Faculty of Education (41.3%), 162 students are from Faculty of Pharmacy (30.6%) and 149 students are from Faculty of Theology (28.1%).

According to the results of the t-test analysis (see Table 1), it is stated that the use of social media does not differ in terms of gender (t= -0.506, p>0.05). According to the analyses performed on the basis of gender in the previously performed studies in the literature, a difference was found in favour of men in the use of social networking websites with the aim of "meeting and recognition". Accordingly, men use the social networking websites more compared to women with the purpose of meeting and recognition. On the other hand, when the use of social networking websites with education purposes was analysed, a difference was found in favour of women (Akyazı and Ünal, 2013). Significant differences were found in terms of gender in the previously performed studies. However, no significant difference was observed in this research in terms of gender.

Table 1: T-test results regarding the effect of gender on the use of the social media

Gender	N	Average	Ss	T	P
Female	332	27.07	12.54	-.506	.613
Male	198	27.64	12.48		

A significant difference was observed depending on the marital status of the parents of the students using the social media according to the t-test analysis results (see Table 2) (t=2.234, p<0.05). This difference that emerged in the study are consistent with the findings in the literature that state that behaviour of tracking the adolescents of the married parents are more than the divorced parents (Laird et al.,2003). A highly significant difference was observed in this research on the use of the social media in terms of in the marital status of the parents.

Table 2: T-test analysis results on the basis of whether the students live with parents

Parent	N	Average	t	P
Yes	292	28.37	2,234	,026
No	238	25.94		

A significant difference was found out among the faculties according to the results of ANOVA analysis in terms of the effect of faculty on the use of the social media (see Table 3) (F(2, 527)=3.255, p<0.05). As a result of the conducted post-hoc test, this difference was between Faculty of Education and Theology and the averages of social media usage of Faculty of Education are found significantly higher. Considering other studies, the highest rate of adopting Facebook on the basis of faculties appears to be at Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences. This result is consistent with the result that the students in this faculty do not use the social media in academic sense as they enter

this faculty with lower marks compared to other faculties. According to the findings obtained from the subscale of Facebook acception, it is shown that the students use their phones to access the Internet (Bilen et al., 2014).

Table 3: Results of ANOVA analysis regarding the difference of the social media usage based on the faculty where the students study

	KT	KO	Df	F	p
Between groups	1010.430	505.215	2	3.255	,039
Within group	81795.549	155.210	527		
Total					

According to the correlation analysis result performed in order to study the relationship between the use of the social media and depression levels, a significant level of relationship was observed between two variables (see Table 4) (r=0.257, p<0.05). In the conducted research, the individuals with high social information processing levels have low depression levels while the individuals with average social information processing levels have gradually increasing depression levels and the individuals with low social information processing levels pertain the highest average of depression. Nevertheless, as a result of the conducted VARIANCE analysis in order to find out the score averages of depression levels of the students with different social information processing levels, no statistically significant difference was found in terms of the average depression levels of the students.

Table 4: Relationship between the use of the social media and the levels of depression

	N	r	p
Scale of Social Media Usage	530	,257	0.00
Beck Depression Inventory	530		

Considering the effect of the gender factor on the social media usage, no significant difference was observed in this study (see Table 5). Considering the conducted studies, as a result of the independent group t-test in order to determine whether the the time consumed on social networking-sharing websites by the students forming the study group shows a significant difference depending on the gender variable, it can be said that a statistically significant difference is observed. It is also concluded that most of the time spent on the Internet by female students are spent on social networking-sharing websites (Tektaş, 2014).

Table 5: Results of T-test analysis of the use of the social media in terms of gender

Gender	N	Mean	t	p
Integration and emotionalism				
Female	331	14.11	,-442	,659
Male	198	14.44		
Routines				
Female	332	12.96		
Male	198	13.19		

According to the analysis results of the conducted t-test subscales, a significant difference was identified regarding the social media usage based on living with/away from the parents (see Table 6). In addition, the statistical data shows that Aggression Scale mean scores and aggression levels are higher in the students whose parents are divorced/live separately compared to the students whose parents live together. As a result of the conducted t-test, this difference was at a significance level of 0.001. According to this obtained result, it can be suggested that the Aggression Scale scores of the students whose parents are divorced/live separately are higher than the students whose parents live together. The current meaning of life, sought meaning of life and general meaning of life possessed by young adults who participated in another study do not show any significant difference according to the marital status of the parents. According to this, the meaning given to life does not change according to the fact that the parents are married or divorced (Yüksel, 2012).

Table 6: T-test analysis results of subscale of the social media usage based on living with/away from the parents

	Parent	N	Mean	Sd	t	p
Integration and emotionalism						
	Yes	292	14.88	8.39	1.992	,047
	No	237	13.45	7.96		
Routines						
	Yes	292	13.49	6.47		
	No	238	12.51	5.03		

A significant difference was found out in terms of hourly social media usage according to the results of ANOVA analysis (see Table 7) (p<0.05). According to post-hoc test results, significant differences were observed in terms of the hourly usage of the social media between the 0-1 hour users and 3 or more hour users and between 1-2 hour users and 3 or more hour users. Similarly, a significant difference was discovered in the integration and emotionalism subscale between 3 or more hour users and 0-1 hour

users. The hourly usage of social media for different faculties was studied by using post-hoc test according to the analysis results.

Table 7: Analysis of the subscales of ANOVA analysis in terms of hourly social media usage by post-hoc technique

	KT	Df	KO	F	p
Routines					
Between groups	714.625	3	238.208	7.106	,000
Within group	17632.789	526	33.522		
Total	18347.413	529			
Integration and emotionalism					
Between groups	2568.841	3	856.280	13.558	,000
Within group	33157.669	525	63.157		
Total	35726.510	528			

A significant difference was identified among faculties in the subscale of routines according to the conducted ANOVA analysis (see Table 8). A significant difference was found between Faculty of Education and Faculty of Theology in the subscale of routines as a result of the performed post-hoc test p<0.05. Furthermore, a significant difference was also found between Faculty of Theology and Faculty of Pharmacy in the analysis carried out by post-hoc technique.

Table 8: Studying the hourly usage of the social media by different faculties in terms of subscales

	KT	df	KO	F	p
Routines					
Between groups	332.881	2	166.440	4.869	,008
Within group	18014.532	527	34.183		
Total	18347.413	529			
Integration and emotionalism					
Between groups	189.433	2	94.717	1.402	,247
Within group	35537.077	526	67.561		
Total	35726.510	528			

No significant difference was identified among faculties in the subscale of integration and emotionalism (F(2, 528)= 1.402, p>0.05). According to the results of the T-test analysis, it is stated that the use of social media does not differ in terms of gender (t= -0.506, p>0.05). According to the analyses performed on the basis of gender in the previously performed studies in the literature, a difference was found in favour of men in the use of social networking websites with the aim of "meeting and recognition".

Accordingly, men use the social networking websites more compared to women with the purpose of meeting and recognition. On the other hand, when the use of social networking websites with education purposes was analysed, a difference was found in favour of women (Akyazı and Ünal, 2013). Significant differences were found in the previously performed studies.

4. Conclusion

According to the data obtained from Demographical Information Forms in the research, a significant difference was observed by considering the marital status of the parents. It is confirmed that there is a significant difference among the faculties in terms of using the social media. It is identified that this difference is between the Faculties of Education and Theology and the average use of social media by the Faculty of Education was determined to be significantly higher. A significant difference emerged when the relationship between the use of the social media and the levels of depression is studied. In the social media usage, significant differences were observed in terms of the time of using the social media between the 0-1 hour users and 3 or more hour users and between 1-2 hour users and 3 or more hour users. Similarly, a significant difference was discovered between 3 or more hour users and 0-1 hour users.

5. Recommendations

Paying sufficient attention to the relationships due to the intensive access to the social media environment particularly by the young adults and taking necessary precautions with the determination of the case by conducting studies are considered important. On the basis of aforementioned reasons, this research conducted on university students will be effective on the identification of some negativities that young adults experience. Identifying the aim of social network usage by the university students who participated in the study and their level of acceptation is considered important in terms of determining their perspective towards these environments.

Together with this, as the research includes the loneliness and depression factors, it is considered as an opportunity that will significantly contribute to the research that will study the relationship between the psychological factors and the social networks. Insufficiency of the pace of development of the technology against the steps taken in the context of secure Internet, inability to sufficiently feed the neutral scientific evidence of existing applications and failure to sufficiently disclose the well-intentioned steps to the society may render achieving the desired goals difficult.

Media organizations are obliged to enlighten the public should include the opposing viewpoints rather than only taking into account the scientific explanations of

the movement that they follow. It may be recommended to include integrative and constructive publications.

Finally, creation of a scientific study environment that eliminates the need of behaviours to throw the scientific identity to the second plan due to refraining from the central authority while sharing the views with the society or in order to feel that they are close to the authorities will allow the relevant issue to be examined much healthier and in an integrated manner.

Technology provides new independent social media tools so the young adults communicate in this way, find opportunities to explain their experiences and form their personalities. Young adults are also in a hurry and flexible in order to include these tools in their lives. University youth particularly possesses the opportunities in terms of having most of the social amenities and they can use this opportunity at will.

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