

Examination of the attitudes of middle school students towards social media*

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Abstract

This study aims to identify middle school students' general attitudes towards social media. Participants of this descriptive study were middle school students from three public schools (n=367) in Ankara. Data was collected using "Demographic Information Form" and "Social Media Attitudes Survey for Students" developed by Ferhat Suleyman Argin in 2013. Data was analyzed using ANOVA, t test, Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal Wallis-H test, frequency (f) and percentage (%). In this study, demographic information such as students' gender, school type, grade level, perceived income levels, mother's education level, and father's education level; and social media use information such as membership to social media services, duration of social media use, frequency of social media use, time spent on social media at each use, medium that they use social media, tools to access social media and most used social media were collected. Students' scores for Social Media Attitudes Survey were compared between groups based on this demographic and social media use variables. There were not a significant difference of Social Media Attitudes scores between the groups based on gender, schools, grade levels, perceived income levels, mother's education level, father's education level, membership to social media services, medium that they use social media, and tools to access social media variables. There were a significant difference of Social Media Attitudes scores between the groups based on frequency of social media use, and time spent on social media at each use variables. Since most used social media services variable was not distributed homogeneously, it couldn't be compared. Based on the students overall Social Media Attitudes scores averages and score distribution and standard deviations it could be claimed that students' general attitude toward social media was positive and high.

Keywords: Type your keywords here, separated by semicolons

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1. Introduction

In this information age, information and data driven technological tools are being used more and more every day and their use spreads through all parts of the society. Our life style, habits, entertainment preferences, educational needs, work habits, and communication changes very rapidly due to this information age. As a result these new emerging structures and tools become indispensable to us. Among these structures and tools that are based on information is internet; it is seen as an unavoidable part of our education, work and daily life.

Around the middle of 2000s, second generation (Web 2.0) internet services enabled us not only to access the information but also participate. Flexible web design that enables interaction with other web sites, and other users brought interaction and communication to another level. Microblogs and blogs, content sharing web sites, social networks emerged from these changes (Argin, 2013). All these new emerged Web 2.0 components are defined as social media. This media refers to the system created by internet users collaboratively by sharing their content. Internet users can share and distribute all kinds of ideas freely in the social media; post news about any relevant topic to social media sites, can access and find the information with social media tags and cloud services.

The idea to use the internet for educational and instructional purposes is not a new one; when we look at the period of the internet development. As computer supported educational practices, distance education, and e learning get widely used in practice, use of social media for educational purposes seen more often (Karademir & Alper, 2011). Smith (2007) suggests that it is unavoidable that social media will take part in education, further suggests that we should call it academic networks instead of social networks. Today, social networks are used as supplementary tools to support educational processes or in e learning systems to increase student-student, student-content, and student-instructor interaction; to improve students' inquiry, questioning and problem solving skills (Gulbahar etc., 2010; Gulbahar, 2012).

Research shows that social media enrolment and participation has increased significantly in recent years; especially among the teenagers and young adults. Especially, school aged teenagers spent a lot of time on social networks (Argin, 2013). Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others are being used to reach to friends, to share their personal life, and to introduce themselves to strangers by these users.

A study to analyze 9 to 16 years old social media users habits were conducted with the support of Middle East Technical University (METU), and Information Technologies and Communication Board (BTK) by Transportation Ministry of Turkey. According to this February 2011 Children's Social Media Use Habits report; almost 70 % of the children use internet daily and 66 % use social networks at least once a day and spent 72 minutes in average daily on these sites. These rates show that children spent most of their time on internet on social networks. Facebook with 99% use rate was the most used social network. With the long average times spent on social networks it was reported that social media affected their daily life negatively. 60 % of the children reported social networks took away from their study time while 25 % claimed they spent less time with their family and friends because of social media.

In another more recent report conducted by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies in 2013, named Turkish Teenagers Report, shows more computers, tablets, and smart phones are being used by teenagers and children. According to this report 65 % of the teenagers between the ages of 12 and 15 have personal computers at home, 48 % have mobile phones and half of these are smart phones, 82 % of the households have computers and internet access. As the socio economic status increases computer and smartphone ownership increases.

When we look at the social media related studies, there were studies done on college students (Vidal etc., 2011; Vural & Bat 2010; Hazar, 2011; Dikme, 2013), high school and college students (Kahyaoglu & Celik, 2011), vocational schools students (Kose, Gencer ve Gezer, 2007), teenagers (Akbulut ve Yilmazel, 2012), primary and middle school students (Aksut etc. 2011; Celik, 2012; Ok, 2013), middle school and high school students (Turnalar Kurtaran, 2008; Argin, 2013), adults (Ergenc, 2011). When we look at the reviewed studies general attitude towards

social media is positive and it is seen as socialization tool however it was not as innocent as it was perceived. When social media is used without proper awareness it reduces face to face communication, reduces time spent with friends and family, causes time loss, took away from daily chores, and seen as an entertainment (Storm & Storm, 2004; Hinduja & Patchin, 2013). Also, cyber bullying, internet and game addiction are some of the unwanted consequences of too much time spent on social media without appropriate awareness (Spada, 2014). Another result of this problematic use is decreased academic achievement and it warrants investigation of current conditions and attitudes toward social media for educational purposes. The goal of this study is to identify middle school students' general attitudes towards social media and to assess whether certain variables effect students attitudes towards social media.

2. Method

This study was conducted as descriptive survey study. The Participants of this study were at three public middle school students from in Ankara. 389 students originally participated to study however 22 did not use any social media so they were exculuded from the study and 367 students' data was used. Data was collected using "Demographic Information Form" and "Social Media Attitudes Survey for Students" developed by Ferhat Suleyman Argin in 2013. While analyzing the data, parametric test were used for the data that fit to normal distribution assumptions and non-parametric test were used for the data that did not fit to normal distribution assumptions. Following statistical analysis methods were used.

- One way ANOVA was used to test whether students' social media attitudes scores were differ based on, school, class, mothers education, fathers education, social media membership, social media use length, social media use frequency, time spent on social media sties, location, and tool.
- Independent t test was used to test whether students' social media attitudes scores were differ based on gender.
- Mann-Whitney U test was used to test whether students' social media attitudes scores differ based on social media site membership since it was not normally distributed.
- Non parametric Kruskall Wallis-H test was used to test whether students' social media attitudes scores were differ based on students' perceived income levels.

SPSS 17.0 for Windows statistical program was used for the analysis of the data. Also frequency and percentages was calculated.

3. Findings

Based on the goal of the study findings were reported under two categories. First, Findings related to participants' demographical information. Second, Findings of any potential difference of participants social media attitudes scores.

Findings Related To Participants' Demographical Information

- 168 (%43.2) female, 221'i (%56.8) male students participated to study.
- 153 (%39.3) were from middle school, 157 (%40.4) were from middle school B, 79 (%20.3) were from middle school C.
- 116 (%29.8) were 5. grade, 102 (%26.2) 6. grade, 127 (%32.6) 7. grade, 44'u (%11.3) 8. grade students.
- 18 (%4.6) were low income, 313 (%80.5) middle income, 58 (%14.9) high income students.

- 111 (%28.5) participants' mother was primary school, 60 (%15.4) middle school, 145 (%37.3) high school, 30 (%7.7) community college, 43 (%11.1) undergraduate degree holders.
- 72 (%18.5) participants' father were primary school, 59 (%15.2) middle school, 145 (%37.3) high school, 40 (%10.3) community college, 73 (%18.8) undergraduate or graduate degree holders.
- While 349 (%89.7) reported that they had membership to a social media site, 40 (%10.4) said they were not member to any social media site.
- 69 (%18.8) participants were using social media less than a year, 83 (%22.6) between one and two years, 117 (%31.9) between 3 and four years, 98 (%26.7) more than 4 years.
- 109 (%29.7) participants were using social media more than once a day, 87 (%23.7) everyday once, 53 (%14.4) every week more than once, 67 (%18.3) every week once, 51 (%13.9) few times every month.
- 73 (%19.9) participants were using social media 5-10 minutes each time, 80 (%21.8) 11-30 minutes, 123 (%33.5) 31-60 minutes, 46 (%12.5) 61-120 minutes, 45 (%12.3) 121 minutes or more.
- 284 (%77.4) participants used social media at home, 17 (%4.6) at internet cafe, 51 (%13.9) at any Wi-Fi locations, and 15 (%4.1) at other locations.
- 95 (%25.9) participants were using desktop computers, 65 (%17.7) laptop computers, 207 (%56.4) mobile tools (smart phones, and tablets etc.) to connect to social media.
- 228 (%62.3) participants were member to Facebook, 7 (%1.9) to twitter, 102 (%27.9) to YouTube, 1 (%0.3) to friendfeed, 1 (%0.3) to Wikipedia, 5 (%1.4) to blogger, 1 (%0.3) to Tumblr, 22 (%6.0) to other sites.

Findings of any potential difference of participants social media attitudes scores based on demographic variables.

In this section, whether participant students' social media attitudes scores differed based on the demographic variables of gender, school, class, mothers education, fathers education, students' perceived income levels, social media membership, social media use length, social media use frequency, time spent on social media sties, location, and tool was reported.

Participant students' social media attitudes scores did not differed between the genders based on t test ($t=-.299$; $p>.05$). Participant students' social media attitudes scores did not differed between the schools based on one way ANOVA ($f= 1.636$; $p>.05$). Participant students' social media attitudes scores did not differed between the grades based on one way ANOVA ($f= 2.396$; $p>.05$). Participant students' social media attitudes scores did not differed between the mothers education level based on one way ANOVA ($f= 1.188$; $p>.05$). Participant students' social media attitudes scores did not differed between the fathers education level based on one way ANOVA ($f= .121$; $p>.05$). Participant students' social media attitudes scores did not differed between the perceived income levels based on Kruskal Wallis-H test ($\chi^2= 1.603$; $p>.05$). Participant students' social media attitudes scores did not differed between the membership status to social media sites based on Mann-Whitney-U test ($u= 3104.00$; $p>.05$).

Participant students' social media attitudes scores did not differed between the social media use length based on one way ANOVA ($f= 1.746$; $p>.05$). Participant students' social media attitudes scores differed significantly between the social media use frequency based on one way ANOVA. Scheffe test was conducted to determine the differences. Participants who were using more than once had higher score than participants using few times every month ($p<.01$), every week once ($p<.01$), every week more than once ($p<.01$), everyday once ($p<.01$). There were not any significant difference among other groups ($p<.05$).

Participant students' social media attitudes scores differed significantly between the average time spent on social media based on one way ANOVA. Scheffe test was conducted to determine the differences. Participants who were using more than 121 minutes or more had higher score than participants using between 31-60 minutes ($p < .01$), between 11-30 minutes ($p < .01$), between 5-10 minutes ($p < .01$). Participants who were using between 31-60 minutes had higher score than participants using between 5-10 minutes ($p < .01$). There were not any significant difference among other groups ($p < .05$).

Participant students' social media attitudes scores did not differed between the locations used to connect to social media based on Kruskal Wallis-H test ($\chi^2 = 5.418$; $p > .05$).

Participant students' social media attitudes scores did not differed between the tool used to connect to social media based on one way ANOVA ($f = .127$; $p > .05$).

Whether participant students' social media attitudes scores did differed between the most used social media sites couldn't be tested because groups were not distributed homogenously.

4. Results and Conclusions

It could be said that general attitudes scores of the participant students towards social media was high based on mean and standard deviation scores. There were not any significant differences based on gender, school, class, mothers education, fathers education, perceived income level, social media membership, social media use length, location to connect to social media, tool used to connect to social media. As expected middle school students attitudes toward social media differed based on by social media use length and social media frequency. Parents and teachers should be aware of students social media use length and frequency and should mediate their use when it intervenes to their daily life. Teachers can share course materials, assign homework and check student submissions through social media. This could be a beginning for positive educational use of social media.

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