

# Examining the Social Media Addiction Levels of Young Adults: Turkey Example

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## Abstract

Social media has often started to be used as the first source for accessing information. Country agenda, general issues, research, new ideas, entertainment, shopping, instant communication and cooperation are the positive contributions of social media. Excessive use of social media in every aspect of life certainly causes harm. It causes serious psychological deformation, especially on adolescents, whom we call the young group. While social media can increase technical skills in adolescents, it can reduce social skills and communication and even some of the negative effects they encounter in this area can create psychological trauma. While the feeling of inadequacy, comparison and competition lead to psychological problems such as self-confidence and social anxiety; the virtualized perception of beauty poses dangers such as eating disorders in young people. Social media use, which has reached the point of addiction, adds a number of negativities to young people's lives, such as sleep deprivation, decreased time spent with family and loss of interest in real life. In light of all this, the aim of this research is to examine the social media addiction levels of young adults. The sample of the study consists of 201 university students studying in different departments of a state university in Turkey and whose age range is between 18-30 and more age. "Social media addiction scale - adult form" scale developed by Sahin and Yagcı (2017) was used as a data collection tool in the study, with permission from the developer authors. In the study, the relational screening method, one of the quantitative research methods, was used. As a result, a significant relationship was detected between the variables of young people's gender, age, daily internet and social media usage and their social media addictions. In addition the average social media addiction scores of university students were found to be high.

**Keywords:** social media addiction, young adult, negative effects, Turkey example

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Introduce the Problem

Social media is an inclusive concept. Accordingly, social media is the sum of social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, blogs, microblogs, messaging programs, forum sites, websites and content sharing sites, and are platforms that enable producing and sharing information and content through internet technologies. The increasing use of social media, especially in recent years, has brought about social media addiction. Although there are many definitions of social media addiction in the literature, the most general definition is; it can be defined as the inability to prevent the desire to use it, the time spent without being connected to the internet losing its importance, extreme irritability and aggression when deprived of use, and the gradual deterioration of the person's work, social and family life. In other definition, social media addiction is when people constantly use social media platforms and these environments become an indispensable part of their lives (Braumüller, 2020). It arises from the need to constantly check, update and respond to social media platforms.

Some possible disadvantages of social media are identified by Al-Samarraie et al. (2021):

- low self-esteem
- increased isolation and loneliness

- anxiety or depression
- onset of social anxiety disorders
- fear of missing out (FOMO)
- disruption of sleep patterns
- decrease in physical activity
- poor grades or job performance
- decreased ability to empathize with others

As technology advances day by day and becomes more involved in daily life, digitalized individuals become even more digitalized. Individuals who stay online for abnormal periods of time see social media as a means of escaping from the problems of daily life. This has turned them into digital patients or addicts. According to Yengin (2019), social media use progresses rapidly towards the individual, first towards addiction and then towards addiction. Social media can be used in any environment where there is internet and a technological device that can access accounts. Therefore, it is necessary to monitor the use of social media for children and young people and provide information about conscious use.

The ability of Generation Z individuals, who stand out from other generations with their digital competencies, to learn and use new generation social media platforms has become very rapid. Especially the adolescence period they are in and the fact that they are easily affected by the events they experience cause them to see social media environments as an escape area at this point (Tutgun & Deniz, 2015). Generation Z, which always lives online thanks to the opportunities provided by today's technology, is the generation that has developed a unique language of its own (Tas et al., 2017). Living their daily lives faster within the scope of technological possibilities makes Generation Z more bored, more careless and causes them to feel more asocial in their environments. Generation Z's strong relationship with technology has left them faced with some problems not seen in previous generations. Especially the age group they are in and the fact that their psychological development coincides with adolescence has accelerated their relationship with technology even more. In this regard, addiction types stand out especially among Generation Z individuals. Social media, which is used extensively by members of the generation, is one of the main factors in the formation of these addictions.

Despite their intense use by individuals, social media environments seem to create serious problems especially for the academic performance of younger generation members. These uses, which occur at the level of addiction, are an important factor in adapting individuals especially to their academic lives and friendship relationships. The younger generation members encounter problems in their academic lives and friendship relationships as a result of spending their free time on social media and internet environments rather than scientific research (Duman, 2018).

Starting from this point, the research aimed to examine the social media addiction of university students within the scope of a faculty. Thus, "Social Media Use in Individuals' Addicted Habits" constitutes the problem statement of the research. When the studies in the literature are examined within the scope of the relevant subject in Turkey;

Cömlekci and Basol (2019) have produced a study examining the relationship between young people's social media usage purposes and social media addiction. According to the results of the research conducted with the participation of 763 university students; participants mostly use social media for entertainment, communication and following the current agenda. In addition, as a result of the research, it was determined that young people spend an average of 4 hours and 16 minutes a day on social media.

Sahraç and Urhan (2021), in their study titled Examining the Relationship Between Social Media Addiction and Self-Regulation Processes in University Students, they studied a sample of 329 (234 women, 95 men) university students between the ages of 18-29. As a result, no gender difference was found between social media addiction and self-regulation methods. In the study, the average social media addiction scores of university students were found to be high.

When the results of research conducted by different countries under the same topic are examined, Hand and Elham (2021) conducted a research examining the relationship between social media addiction and depression of students in Afghanistan. The research used the probability-stratified sampling method and distributed a 35-item survey to replicate Kimberly Young's method. Three hundred eighty-four students from three universities of Afghanistan participated. Findings confirmed both theories regardless of the sociopolitical environment such as political stability, low literacy level, a weak economy, and conflict in the least developed countries like Afghanistan.

Rahman and Razak (2019), in their study to examine if the young adult addicted to social media, analyse if social media addiction will affect their emotion and identify their social media level of addiction. This study is conducted

in Universiti Teknologi MARA main campus in Shah Alam. 380 students from different backgrounds, education levels and faculties at the university participated in the survey. This study revealed that the student level of addiction is mild and not severe. Majority of the student have more than three social media accounts. they spent more than five hours on their social media a day. Although majority of them said that they are addicted to the internet, but there are no sign they have been addicted. Additionally, the study found a significant relationship between social media addiction and its impact on emotions. It has been revealed that social media addiction has an impact on the emotions of young adults.

### *1.2 Purpose and Sub-Objectives of the Research & Importance of Research*

The aim of this research is to examining the social media addiction levels of young adults. The sub-objectives developed in line with this general purpose are listed below:

- Is there a significant difference between university students' social media addiction levels according to gender?
- Is there a significant difference between university students' social media addiction levels according to age?
- Is there a significant difference between university students' social media addiction levels according to department?
- Is there a significant difference between university students' internet usage time and social media addiction levels?
- Is there a significant difference between university students' social media platforms usage time and social media addiction levels?
- What is the level of social media addiction of university students?

Using social media has become the form of communication of the 21st century. Especially with the pandemic conditions that entered our lives in 2020, the frequency of social media usage increased all over the world. According to research, the age of social media usage in Turkey is 13 years and above. This age group consists of individuals who were born in the 21st century and therefore were born into technology. Therefore, the use of technology, internet and social media for this age group is much different than other generations. Studies have shown that excessive use of social media brings many negative effects on young people. Fear Of Missing Out (fear of missing social posts), fomo disease are among these. When these individuals stay away from their social media accounts, they show withdrawal symptoms, just like a type of addiction. Such as moodiness, restlessness, anger, tension, distraction, difficulty focusing. It is envisaged that examining the concept of social media addiction, which has such multi-dimensional negative psychological effects on young people and examining it within the scope of a sample of university students will be guiding for future research and researchers. It is thought that the addiction level results obtained in the study can be evaluated in more depth in future studies, paving the way for planning relevant training for young people within the scope of the subject.

## **2. Method**

The aim of this research is to examining the social media addiction levels of young adults. In the study, the relational screening model, one of the quantitative research methods, was used in accordance with the purpose. Relational screening is a research method that aims to reveal the existence of any change between two or more variables (Karasar, 2011).

### *2.1 Research Population and Sample*

The research population consists of university students studying in various departments of the Vocational School of a University in Turkey. The research sample consists of a total of 201 university students studying in various departments of the Vocational School of a University in Turkey and participating in the data collection tool used within the scope of the research. The demographic characteristics of the research sample are presented in the tables below.

Table 1. Gender

Gender	f	%
Female	100	49.7
Male	101	50.3
Total	201	100

When Table 1 is examined; it was determined that “100 of the students participating in the research were female” and “101 were male”.

Table 2. Age

Age	f	%
18-24	171	85.0
25-29	13	6.4
30 age and more	17	8.6
Total	201	100

When Table 2 is examined; when the age ranges of the teachers participating in the research are examined; it is noteworthy that the frequency is in the “25-30” age range.

Table 3. Department

Department	f	%
Computer Programming	70	36.8
Business and Accounting	47	23.8
Electrical & Electronics	24	11.9
Interior design	25	10.4
Furniture Decoration	21	10.0
Machine	5	2.6
Information security	9	4.5
Total	201	100

When the table above is examined, it has been determined that the departments where young people study differ. However, the majority of students are in the “Computer Programming” department.

Table 4. Internet usage times

Internet Usage Times	f	%
1-2 hours	18	8.9
3-4 hours	44	21.8
5-6 hours	64	31.8
6 hours and more	75	37.5
Total	201	100

When the table above is examined, the frequency of internet usage shows 6 hours and above. It is predicted that this result is related to internet addiction.

Table 5. Social media usage times

Internet Usage Times	f	%
1-2 hours	23	11.4
3-4 hours	39	19.5
5-6 hours	63	31.3
6 hours and more	76	37.8
Total	201	100

When the table above is examined, the frequency of social media usage shows 6 hours and above. It is predicted that this result is related to social media addiction.

## 2.2 Data Collection Tools

“Social Media Addiction Scale-Adult Form”, developed by Sahin and Yagci (2017) and proven to be valid and

reliable, was used as a data collection tool in the study, with permission. As a result of the exploratory and confirmatory analyses, it was determined that the scale had a five-point Likert type structure, consisting of 2 sub-dimensions (virtual tolerance and virtual communication) and 20 items. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient for the overall scale is .94; among the sub-dimensions, it was found to be .92 for virtual tolerance and .91 for virtual communication. Analyzes revealed that the scale is a valid and reliable scale for determining adults' social media addiction. As a result of the exploratory and confirmatory analyses, it was determined that the scale had a five-point Likert type structure, consisting of 2 sub-dimensions virtual tolerance and virtual communication and 20 descriptions. The factor loadings of the scale range between .61 and .87. In the confirmatory factor analysis conducted to verify the two-factor structure of the scale, the Chi-square value was  $\chi^2=7051.32$ ;  $sd=190$ ,  $p=0.00$  was found to be significant. Fit index values are  $RMSA=.059$ ;  $SRMR=.060$ ;  $NFI=.59$ ;  $CFI=.96$ ;  $GFI=.90$ ;  $AGFI$  was found to be = .88. Factor loadings of the scale take values between .61 and .87.

### 2.3 Research Variables

Dependent variables of the research; social media addiction levels of young adults and the independent variables are young adults' gender, age, department, daily usage hours of the internet and social media.

### 2.4 Analysis of Data

The evaluation of the data was made through the statistical program SPSS 24. The normal distribution of the scores of young adults on the social media addiction scale was examined with Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests and it was determined that the data were not suitable for normal distribution. The data were found to be significant at the  $p<0.05$  level and it was decided that the distribution was not normal. Accordingly, the research hypotheses were tested with non-parametric test statistics. Mann-Whitney U test was used when the independent variable consisted of two groups, and Kruskal-Wallis H test was used when it consisted of three or more groups. The item-by-item mean and standard deviation values of the items within the scope of the scale were presented through tables.

### 2.5 Processing, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

SPSS 24.0 program was used to analyze the obtained data. Percentage (%), mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), frequency (f) and standard deviation (SD) were used in the analysis of the data collected to answer the sub-objectives. As a  $p<.001$  value was obtained within the scope of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, it was accepted that the data did not show a normal distribution. In this context, non-parametric tests in the research; Kruskal Wallis-H test and Mann-Whitney U test were used. The general average was taken into account when explaining the differences in the data. In all statistical analyses, the significance level was accepted as .05. The item-by-item mean and standard deviation values of the items included in the relevant survey are presented in tables.

## 3. Findings

In this section, the findings and comments obtained in line with the determined purpose and sub-objectives are included.

Table 6. Mean and standard deviation values of social media addiction scale-adult form scale items

Items ve Factors	X	SD
M1	3.32	1.158
M2	3.51	1.251
M3	3.01	1.263
M4	2.75	1.289
M5	3.00	1.173
M6	3.10	1.225
M7	3.24	1.303
M8	2.89	1.290
M9	2.64	1.249
M10	2.82	1.527
M11	2.44	1.358
M12	3.66	1.218
M13	3.36	1.237
M14	3.20	1.140

M15	2.93	1.214
M16	2.98	1.124
M17	2.64	1.308
M18	2.98	1.362
M19	2.53	1.229
M20	3.12	1.207
Total	3.00	1.256

When the mean and standard deviation values obtained within the scope of the scale items are examined according to the table above; it was determined that the general average for 20 items was 3.00. According to the table, it has been revealed that the items questioning young adults' Social Media Addictions generally focus on the "I agree" option. Considering the mean and standard deviation values; It was determined that the item with the highest score was "M2: I stay on social media longer than I planned". It was determined that the item with the lowest scoring was "M11: I do not like using social media", which is a reverse item. From all these results, it has been determined that the social media addiction levels of young adults (university students) are generally high.

Table 7. Comparison of university students' scores from the social media addiction scale by gender

Gender	N	Rank Average	Rank Total	U	p	Significant Difference
Female	100	100.81	9980.00	.4969	.941	There is no significant difference between groups.
Male	101	100.20	10120.00			

The table above shows the results of the Mann-Whitney U test, which was conducted to compare the scores of the university students participating in the research from the Social Media Addiction scale according to their gender. Accordingly, p value; since it was determined as  $.941 > 0.05$ ; no significant difference was detected in students' social media addictions according to the gender variable. In other words, the scores of male and female students on the overall scale were found to be at similar levels.

Table 8. Comparison of university students' scores from the social media addiction scale by age

Age Ranges	N	Rank Average	Df	X2	p	Significant Difference
18-24	171	107.64*	2	17.809	0.01	There is a significant difference between groups.
25-29	13	83.77				
30 and more	17	47.41				

In the table above, the results of the Kruskal Wallis-H Test, which was conducted to compare the scores of university students participating in the research from the Social Media Addiction Scale according to their ages, are given. Accordingly, p value; since it was determined as  $0,01 < 0,05$ ; a significant difference was detected in the social media addictions of university student according to the age variable. When the rank averages were compared; it was revealed that this difference was in favor of the university student groups between the ages of "18-24".

Table 9. Comparison of university students' scores from the social media addiction scale by department

Department	N	Rank Average	Df	X <sup>2</sup>	p	Significant Difference
Computer Programming	70	110.27	2	24.88	0.01	There is a significant difference
Business and Accounting	47	96.15				
Electrical & Electronics	24	87.67				
Interior design	25	86.02				
Furniture Decoration	21	74.76				
Machine	5	147.11				
Information security	9	182.90*				

In the table above, the results of the Kruskal Wallis-H Test, which was conducted to compare the scores of university students participating in the research from the Social Media Addiction Scale according to their department, are given. Accordingly, p value; since it was determined as  $0,01 < 0,05$ ; a significant difference was detected in the social media addictions of university student according to the department variable. When the rank differences were examined, it was determined that this difference was in favor of the students studying in the “information security department”.

Table 10. Comparison of university students' scores from the social media addiction scale by internet usage time

Internet Usage Time (Daily Use)	N	Rank Average	Df	X <sup>2</sup>	p	Significant Difference
1-2 hours	18	66.44	3	14.151	0.03	There is a significant difference between groups.
3-4 hours	44	91.51				
5-6 hours	64	99.01				
6 hours and more	75	119.58*				

In the table above, the results of the Kruskal Wallis-H Test, which was conducted to compare the scores of university students participating in the research from the Social Media Addiction Scale according to their internet usage time, are given. Accordingly, p value; since it was determined as  $0,03 < 0,05$ ; a significant difference was detected in the social media addictions of university student according to the internet usage time variable. When the order differences were examined, it was seen that this difference was found in internet usage of “6 hours or more per day”.

Table 11. Comparison of university students' scores from the social media addiction scale by social media usage times

Social Media Time (Daily Use)	N	Rank Average	Df	X <sup>2</sup>	p	Significant Difference
1-2 hours	23	82.06	3	14.390	0.02	There is a significant difference between groups.
3-4 hours	39	99.29				
5-6 hours	63	114.74				
6 hours and more	76	124.23*				

In the table above, the results of the Kruskal Wallis-H Test, which was conducted to compare the scores of university students participating in the research from the Social Media Addiction Scale according to their social media usage time, are given. Accordingly, p value; since it was determined as  $0,02 < 0,05$ ; a significant difference was detected in the social media addictions of university student according to the social media usage time variable. When the order differences were examined, it was seen that this difference was found in social media usage of “6 hours or more per day”.

#### 4. Conclusion Discussion and Suggestions

Aim of this research is to examining the social media addiction levels of young adults (university students). The sample of the study consists of 201 university students studying in different departments of a state university in Turkey and whose age range is between 18-30 and more age. The research population consists of university students studying in various departments of the Vocational School of a University in Turkey. The research sample consists of a total of 201 university students studying in various departments of the Vocational School of a University in Turkey and participating in the data collection tool used within the scope of the research. “Social media addiction scale - adult form” scale developed by Sahin and Yagcı (2017) was used as a data collection tool in the study, with permission from the developer authors. it was determined that the scale had a five-point Likert type structure, consisting of 2 sub-dimensions (virtual tolerance and virtual communication) and 20 items. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient for the overall scale is .94; among the sub-dimensions, it was found to be .92 for virtual tolerance and .91 for virtual communication. Analyzes revealed that the scale is a valid and reliable scale for determining adults' social media addiction. The results obtained in the research are summarized below:

When the demographic data of the study was examined, it was determined that 100 of the 201 university students participating in the study were female and 101 were male. When the age ranges of the students were examined, a

variety from 18 age to 30 and more ages was detected. Although the departments in which students study vary, students studying in 7 different departments at a vocational school of a state university are included in the category. This 7 different departments are; Computer Programming, Business and Accounting, Electrical & Electronics, Interior Design, Furniture Decoration, Machine, Information Security. Another variable is when students' daily usage frequency of internet and social media environments are compared; the frequency of both daily internet use and daily social media use of university students was determined to be 6 hours or more. When these results are compared with similar studies in the literature; Zıvdir and Karakul (2023) developed a research with the participation of 400 students studying at a state university in order to determine the social media addiction levels of university students. Social Media Addiction Scale and Fear of Missing Out Scale were used as data collection tools in the research. As a result, it has been revealed that the time spent on the internet, duration of use and devices used affect social media addiction and FOMO level.

Other findings obtained in line with the general and sub-objectives of the research; when the mean and standard deviation values obtained within the scope of the scale items are examined according to the table above; it was determined that the general average for 20 items was 3.00. According to the table, it has been revealed that the items questioning young adults' Social Media Addictions generally focus on the "I agree" option. Considering the mean and standard deviation values; It was determined that the item with the highest score was "M2: I stay on social media longer than I planned". It was determined that the item with the lowest scoring was "M11: I do not like using social media", which is a reverse item. From all these results, it has been determined that the social media addiction levels of young adults (university students) are generally high.

No significant difference was detected in students' social media addictions according to the gender variable. In other words, the scores of male and female students on the overall scale were found to be at similar levels. A significant difference was detected in the social media addictions of university student according to the age variable. When the rank averages were compared; it was revealed that this difference was in favor of the university student groups between the ages of "18-24". A significant difference was detected in the social media addictions of university student according to the department variable. When the rank differences were examined, it was determined that this difference was in favor of the students studying in the "information security department". A significant difference was detected in the social media addictions of university student according to the internet usage time variable. When the order differences were examined, it was seen that this difference was found in internet usage of "6 hours or more per day". Similarly a significant difference was detected in the social media addictions of university student according to the social media usage time variable. When the order differences were examined, it was seen that this difference was found in social media usage of "6 hours or more per day". When these results are compared with similar studies in the literature; Ciftci (2017) worked with a total of 114 students, 37 males and 77 females, studying at the Vocational School of a state university and examined the social media addictions of university students. The data of the research was conducted by face-to-face survey method using the "Social Media Addiction Scale" developed by Tutgun-Ünal and Deniz (2015). In the research, gender, age and education level, frequency of internet use play a very determining role in social media addiction. 6 of the participants use the internet between 3-5 hours a day and 6 of them use the internet for 5 hours or more a day. According to gender, it has been determined that boys are more dependent than girls, cannot act in control and are in conflict with themselves. In addition, the level of addiction increases in parallel with the level of education. It has been determined that those who use the internet for more than 5 hours a day experience self-conflict and have antisocial tendencies in this research.

As a general result of the research, it was revealed that social media addiction threatens university students who belong to the young adult group. The results obtained from the item average of the social media addiction scale confirm this situation. In addition, internet and social media usage of 6 hours or more per day reveals this result. In parallel with this result, it was determined that as the amount of daily internet and social media usage increases, the level of social media addiction also increases. Unconscious excessive use has led to new concepts such as "Internet Addiction" or "Social Media Addiction" entering the literature today. These concepts can create negativities on people's daily and academic lives. In this case, in order to minimize the negativities:

- Thanks to the internet's power to transcend borders, young people can connect to the internet whenever and wherever they want. However, they can often experience problems with uncontrolled use.
- Media Literacy course should be made a compulsory course and should be included in curriculum from primary school to university.
- Public service announcements can be made in the media to raise awareness about how young people can benefit from information and communication technologies.



- Although internet addiction and social media addiction are new concepts, people who are found to be addicted to this issue should be given psychological and social support and guidance should be provided by counselors.
- Finally, determining the disadvantaged groups in this context by comparing the social media addiction variable between adults and university students, defined as two separate sample groups, may attract attention as a separate research topic in the field.

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## Authors contributions

Associate Prof. Dr. Ezgi Pelin YILDIZ and Dr. Metin ÇENGEL were responsible for study design and revising. Dr. Metin ÇENGEL was responsible for data collection. Dr. Metin ÇENGEL drafted the manuscript and Associate Prof. Dr. Ezgi Pelin YILDIZ revised it. All authors read and approved the final manuscript. Authors contributed equally to the article.

## Competing interests

The authors had no financial or personal interests and/or conflicts with each other during the study.

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Obtained.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

**Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

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