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Fake Accounts and Extended Social Media Use: The Digital Chains of Youth

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Abstract: This study examines students' social media usage patterns and their Technology Addiction Scale (TAS) scores. The research analyzes the relationships between the number of active social media accounts, daily time spent on social media, the use of fake accounts, and technology addiction. The data were evaluated using an independent groups t-test. The findings indicate that students who spend more time on social media have significantly higher technology addiction scores than those who spend less time. Additionally, students who use fake accounts were found to have significantly higher technology addiction scores than those who do not. These findings highlight the significant impact of social media usage duration and the use of fake accounts on technology addiction. Consistent with previous studies, this research supports the notion that increased time spent on social media correlates with higher levels of technology addiction. Furthermore, the findings regarding the influence of fake account usage on technology addiction contribute to the limited body of literature on this topic. The results suggest that young people should manage their social media usage more consciously and avoid using fake accounts to mitigate the risk of technology addiction.

Keywords: Social media, Technology addiction, Digital chains

Introduction

Introduced in a brainstorming event organized by O'Reilly and MediaLive International in 2004, the development of web 2.0 tools has transformed the Internet into more than a communication tool. Web 2.0 is not a structure that can be surfed on the Internet or registered and logged in. It is a concept used to describe more specific resources, websites, and developments (Bartolomé, 2008). Thanks to Web 2.0, one-way communication on the Internet has been replaced with two-way communication with tools such as blogs, wikis, and social media. Thus, users have moved from being just readers to editing and developing roles. Content that used to be developed by developers in Web 1.0 began to be created by users after web 2.0.

Social media (Piotrowski, 2015; Selwyn, 2012), also known as social networking, has deeply affected people's daily and social life with web 2.0. It has also caused many habits of individuals to transform. In this context, social media are internet-based platforms where individuals communicate with each other, create and share their content, and share, like or reshare existing posts (Ellison et al., 2007; Kietzmann et al., 2011). Social media has started to appeal to wider audiences, especially with the development of mobile technologies. One of the most important factors in this sense is the applications developed for mobile devices. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok are some of the social media platforms and applications that are widely used today.

A report published by We Are Social (2022) shows that as of "Digital 2022 Global Overview Report" January 2022, the number of active social media users in the world is 4.62 billion. This number is equal to 58.4% of the total world population. It is seen that the number of active social media users has increased by more than 10% in the last year. The average time of social media use around the world is 2 hours and 27 minutes, corresponding to about 35% of the time spent on the Internet. In terms of monthly time spent on mobile applications, YouTube is used for 23.7 hours, followed by Facebook and TikTok for 19.6 hours, and WhatsApp for 18.6 hours. The report

also indicates that the typical mobile user spends an average of 4 hours and 48 minutes on their phone every day. Considering these data, technology can be said to have a vital place in human life.

In addition to positive effects, such as facilitating human life, technology also brings some negative effects, such as excessive and uncontrolled use. Among these negativities is technology addiction, which is evaluated within the scope of behavioral addictions (Widyanto & Griffiths, 2006). Although technology addiction does not have traumatic symptoms, as in substance addiction, it is known that it negatively affects the mental health of individuals (Karakaya, 2021). In the literature, technology addiction has developed over time into separate forms, such as internet addiction (Young, 1998), digital addiction (Shaw & Black, 2008), social media addiction (Sun & Zhang, 2021), smartphone addiction (Hebebci, 2022), Instagram addiction (Foroughi, 2022), Facebook addiction (Ryan et al., 2008), Twitter addiction (Kircaburun, 2016).

Adolescents and youth are among the groups most prone to technology-related addictions (Yüksel & Yılmaz, 2016). Tsai and Lin (2003) assert that the 12-18 age range is quite critical in terms of internet addiction. Various studies were conducted in the literature covering technology addiction during this period (Anggraeni & Wihardja, 2020; Haug et al., 2015; Jamir et al., 2019). This results from young individuals being more interested in and prone to technology. Arslan (2019) investigated the digital addiction levels of secondary school students in terms of various variables such as gender, class level, and economic status. A similar study was also conducted by Saileela et al. (2020). In Canada, young people's perceptions of smartphone and social media addiction were examined in another research (Adorjan & Ricciardelli, 2021). On the other hand, Jin et al. (2021) investigated the factors correlated with video game addiction.

Various reports around the world suggest that technology use and its components are increasing every year (Ceci, 2022; Dixon, 2022; SRD, 2022). This situation increases the significance of the conscious use of technology even more. Considering that technology use is more common among adolescents and young people (Jasso-Medrano & López-Rosales, 2018), it is anticipated that determining the reasons and consequences of social media use and technology addiction of individuals in this period is expected to contribute to the creation of preventive and intervention programs. It is also essential in terms of being a guide for future studies in this context. In this context, this research aims to determine high school students' social media use and technology addictions. In this direction, the study seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the social media use status of the students?
2. Is there a significant relationship between students' technology addiction scale scores and having a fake account?
3. Is there a significant relationship between students' technology addiction scale scores and the time they spend on social media?

Method

This research was carried out with the screening model, one of the quantitative research methods. The screening model is used to describe the structure of objects, societies, institutions, and the functioning of events (Cohen et al., 2007).

Sample

The sample group of the study consists of 85 high school students of different ages and grades.

Data Collection Tools

The researcher developed the form to collect demographic information such as gender, active social media account, and social media use purpose of the students participating in the research.

TAS is a scale developed by Aydın (2017) to determine the technology addiction levels of students. It consists of four subscales: "Social Network Addiction Scale," "Instant Messaging Addiction Scale," "Online Gaming Addiction Scale," and "Web Site Addiction Scale." Reliability values are 0.786, 0.806, 0.897, and 0.861, respectively.

Data Analysis

The research data were collected by transferring them to the digital environment. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software was used in the analysis of the obtained data. The data were first examined superficially, and the presence of extreme values was checked. Then, the coefficients of kurtosis and skewness were examined to examine the normal distribution of the data. Parametric tests were used because the kurtosis and skewness coefficients were between -2 and +2 (George & Mallery, 2019). Descriptive values and independent samples t-tests were used in the analysis of the data.

Results

Social Media Use Status of Participants

The social media use status of the participant students was examined in terms of the number of active accounts, the platforms they most frequently used, the time they spent on social media, the purpose of social media use, and the use of fake accounts. In Table 1, the number of active social media accounts used by students based on gender is given.

Table 1. Number of active social media accounts

Account Count	**Female**		**Male**		**Total**	
	f	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
1	14	26.41	12	37.50	26	30.58
2	12	22.64	9	28.12	21	24.70
3	7	13.20	6	18.75	13	15.29
4	10	18.86	3	9.37	13	15.29
5 and more	10	18.86	2	6.25	12	14.11
Total	**53**	**100**	**32**	**100**	**85**	**100**

It is seen that high school students actively use one or two social media accounts. 26.41% of female students have one account, 22.64% have two accounts, and 18.86% have more than five accounts. However, 37.50% of male students have one account.The students were asked how much time they spent on social media platforms daily. The results of this question are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of time spent by students on social media platforms by gender

Time	**Female**		**Male**		**Total**	
	f	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
0-2 hours	15	28.30	22	68.75	37	43.52
3-5 hours	38	71.70	10	31.25	48	56.48
Total	**53**	**100**	**32**	**100**	**85**	**100**

Table 2 indicates that students spend a significant part of their days on social media. To this end, it is a notable fact that more than half of the students spend between 3 and 5 hours a day on social media. 70% of females are on social media between 3-5 hours, while the time spent by 68.75% of males on social media is between 0-2 hours.

Examination of TAS Scores by Using Fake Accounts

Table 3 shows the independent groups t-test results applied to determine whether there is a significant difference between students' having fake accounts and their TAS scores.

Table 3. T-test results of TAS scores by using fake account

	N	**$\bar{X}$**	**S**	**df**	**t**	**p**
Using fake account	17	66.76	29.31	83	2.405	0.01
Not using fake account	68	51.96	20.82			

Table 3 suggests there is a significant difference considering the use of fake accounts ($t=(83)=2.405$, $p<.05$).

This finding indicates that the TAS scores of those who use fake accounts ($\bar{X}$=66.76) are significantly higher than those who do not use a fake account ($\bar{X}$=51.96).

Examination of TAS Scores by Time Spent on Social Media

Table 4 shows the independent groups t-test results applied to determine whether there is a significant difference between students' gender, time spent on social media, having fake accounts, and their TAS scores.

Table 4. T-test results of TAS scores by time spent on social media

	N	**$\bar{X}$**	**S**	**df**	**t**	**p**
0-2 hours	37	45.19	20.53	82	-3.464	0.00
3-5 hours	47	61.21	21.43			

Table 4 suggests there is a significant difference considering the time spent on social media (t(82)=-3.464, p<.01). This finding indicates that the TAS scores of who spend more time on social media ($\bar{X}$=61.21) are significantly higher than those who spend less time on social media ($\bar{X}$=45.19).

Discussion and Conclusion

The fact that young people spend more time on social media is one of the determining factors of social media addiction. In this direction, the research findings reveal that spending more than two hours a day on social media increases the technology addiction score. Indeed, excessive use of social media is one of the critical causes of technology addiction (Chou et al., 2005; Savcı et al., 2018). Yüksel and Yılmaz (2016) argue that as the internet use duration increases, the internet addiction level also increases.

There are many studies in the literature that support this result (Aktan, 2018; Demir & Kumcağız, 2019; Sırakaya & Seferoğlu, 2013; Yang & Tung, 2007; Waldo, 2014). It is expected that as the time spent on social media increases, technology addiction also increases. However, this result shows that the time spent on social media exceeds the critical value. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children aged 18-24 months not interact with the screen, except for video chat, and adds that children aged 2-5 should get an hour or less of screen time a day. On the other hand, it is advised that adolescents should not spend more than 2 hours a day for entertainment purposes (Tremblay et al., 2011).

Another result of the research is that the technology addiction scores of students with fake accounts are significantly higher than those without fake accounts. The number of studies dealing with the fake account variable in the literature is quite limited. In one of these studies (Köse & Doğan, 2019), it was concluded that the social media addiction of individuals using fake accounts is significantly higher, likewise in this study.

Suggestions

School-age individuals are among the groups most exposed to the negative effects of technology addiction and its types (internet addiction, game addiction, etc.). In order to eliminate the negative effect, preventive and intervening studies should be carried out effectively. In this context, it is of paramount importance to raise awareness and increase consciousness among young people and their families. Alternative activities (sporting, cultural, etc.) should be offered to reduce interaction with technology. Relevant public institutions, especially municipalities, should organize activities in this direction. Apart from this, it is seen that existing studies generally focus on standard variables such as gender, grade level, and duration of use. In this direction, it can be suggested that the studies be designed to cover different variables such as fake accounts, number of followers, and number of accounts in social media.

Scientific Ethics Declaration

The author declares that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPSTEM journal belongs to the author.

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