Adolescents' Social Media Habits, Social Media Addiction and Perceived Social Support

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Abstract: The research aims to reveal the social media habits of 7th and 8th grade students attending secondary school and the relationship between social media addiction and perceived social support. The research model was determined as a correlational screening model (correlation research). Social Media Addiction Scale for Adolescents and Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale were used as data collection tools. Face-to-face data were collected from 292 students by simple sampling method. Spss 27 and Jamovi version 2.3.28 were used as analysis programs. Gpower version 3.1.9.7 was used to calculate the power of statistical tests. Social media addiction and perceived social support were analyzed according to various demographic information. In the continuation of the research findings, the relationships between social media addiction and perceived social support and its sub-dimensions were determined by t-test and regression analysis.

Keywords: Social Media, Social Media Addiction, Social Support, Perceived Social Support

1. Introduction

In a period of about 20 years, "social media" has become a big part of our lives. While Internet and World Wide Web tools have been used for social interactions, in the early 2000s with the rise and rapid spread of Web 2.0 and there has been a forward-leaping in the social components of internet usage. Social media tools have emerged along with this leaping. In 2004, the leaping has adopted a tendency becoming widespread along with the foundation of the platform called "Facebook". Although it includes different definitions, social media is seen as an environment where experiences, emotions, pictures, videos, music and similar content are shared. At the same time, social media is defined as platforms that offer their users the opportunity to express themselves, make friends, have fun and share (Obar & Wildman, 2015; Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Kaplan ve Haenlein, 2010; Vural & Bat, 2010).

Social media described as online applications and social media are categorized as social networking sites, wikis or blogs (Carr & Hayes, 2015). Among the most popular emerging social media tools are applications such as Facebook, Google +, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube, Tiktok Pinterest, Instagram (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). According to the "Digital 2024 April Global Statshot" report, the number of active social media users has been identified as 5.07 billion, and this figure is equal to almost 63% of the world's population. The report also states that the number of Facebook users exceed 3 billion, and that the number of YouTube users reach 2.5 billion, and WhatsApp users are close 2.0 billion (Kemp, 2024).

Social media usage is divided into various categories in the book "The Social Media Bible" written by Safko and Brake (2009). These are taken as social networking, music, live broadcasting, content aggregation, mobile, broadcasting, video, gaming, interpersonal, painting, blogging, productive applications, searching, virtual world. Brailovskaia et al. (2020), on the other hand, categorized the purposes of social media use as seeking information and ideas, social interaction, recovering boredom and free time, escaping from negative emotions, and seeking positive emotions.

The increasing diversity usage of areas of social media has also increased the time to follow the content on social media. The increase in the duration of use and the diversification of the contents gradually brought up the concept of "addiction" to the agenda. With the increase in the time spent on social media, various problems have started to occur. Not being able to fulfill our responsibilities in our daily life, being deceived by the reality of social media, delaying plans to spend time on social media, making concessions from our family and social life, negativities in sleeping and eating patterns,

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irregularities in work or school life are among the problems experienced (Wolniczak et al., 2013; Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010; Al-Menayes, 2015; Sanzari et al., 2023).

On the other hand, in order to say that an individual is a social media addict, some criteria must be observed. According to the definition made by different researchers, the person addicted to social media may show signs of conflict, deprivation, relapse and prevalence. Accordingly, the person addicted to social media starts to prefer the virtual world by breaking up from his real-world relationships during the conflict phase; exhibits negative emotions when not using social media during the deprivation phase; in the relapse phase, the person tries to get rid of social media addiction but fails; in the prevalence stage, the person starts to spend his time on social media anywhere any time (Turel & Serenko, 2012; Griffiths, 2005; Kuss & Griffiths, 2011).

Recently, the number of the studies in the field of social media addiction are increasing. Among the most important reasons for this is that it causes serious problems on adolescents (Boer et al., 2021). Therefore, there occurs the need to determine the current and future effects of social media addiction of adolescents. On the other hand, considering the characteristics of the developmental period, it is thought that the social support received from the environment is valuable in terms of overcoming the difficulties faced by adolescents. Studies show that there is a negative relationship between risky behaviors and social support in adolescence (Rigby & Slee, 1999; Lai & Ma, 2016; Reininger et al., 2012; Bender & Lösel, 1997; Sever & Tunç, 2020; Spohr et al., 2016; Mazzaferro et al., 2006; Coker et al., 2002; Hefner & Einsenberg, 2009).

When the adolescent cannot get enough social support from his/her environment, he/she may want to meet this need through social media. Signs of "addiction" with increasing exposure time can be observed. From this point of view, it can be said that social support plays an important role in adolescence. It is thought that the adolescent will be healthier emotionally and behaviorally with the social support he will receive from his environment. For this reason, it is necessary to focus on the concept of social support.

Eker et al. (2001) stated that social support is can be provided from family, friends and other special people. In this respect, social support means meeting the needs such as belonging, love, and appreciation by interaction with the close environment (Thoits, 2011). The first environment where an individual feels emotionally and physically safe is the family. Social support provided by the family contributes to critical psychological outcomes such as social integration and self-regulation as well as reinforcing the sense of trust (Repetti et al., 2002). Research shows that family support increases an individual's ability to cope with stress and strengthens psychological resilience in the long term (Uchino, 2009). In adolescence, peers are an important source of social support. In this period, individuals start to attach more and more importance to peer relationships in the processes of identity development and emotional independence (Brown & Larson, 2009). Peer support plays a critical role in adolescents' psychosocial development by positively affecting their identity development, social adjustment and emotional well-being (Scholte & Van Aken, 2020). Thus, adolescents meet their needs such as peer-sharing, belonging to the group, and approval with social support from friends. Studies have shown that social support and well-being levels of adolescents (Chu et al., 2010; Sarriera et al., 2012), their academic achievements (Song et al., 2015), self-esteem (Arslan, 2009; DuBois et al., 2002; İkiz & Çakar, 2010), self-efficacy (Adler-Constantinescu et al., 2013), life satisfaction (Azpiazu Izaguirre et al., 2021), skills to cope with stress (Camara et al., 2017; Dumont & Provost, 1999) was found to be positively correlated.

In this context, how adolescents use social media platforms to meet their social support needs gains importance, because although social media provides perceived social support by increasing peer interactions, it also brings the risk of addiction in case of excessive use. Social media addiction, which can occur especially with the developmental characteristics of adolescents, can negatively affect adolescents in terms of many different variables. Therefore, it is of great importance to have people who can provide social support such as family, friends and teachers in the environment during adolescence. However, it has been observed that research on social media addiction and perceived social support in adolescents is limited. In addition, it was realized that the relationship between social media addiction and perceived social support was mostly studied on university and high school students. This research, which examines the relationship between social media addiction and perceived social support, can help parents and adolescents recognize social media addiction and intervene early by guiding families, psychological counselors and teachers. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between social media addiction and perceived social support among 7th and 8th grade students.

2. Method

This research is a quantitative study that aims to examine the relationship between variables. Relational survey model, which is one of the survey models, was used in the study. In this method, variables are measured to determine the nature of the relationship between them and the correlation coefficient is calculated. The correlation coefficient shows the direction and strength of the relationship between variables. Values vary between +1 and -1; as it approaches +1, it is accepted that there is an excellent positive relationship between the variables, and as it approaches -1, it is accepted that there is an excellent negative relationship (Ratner, 2009).

2.1. Study Group

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between social media habits, social media addiction and perceived social support among adolescents. The sample consisted of 292 middle school students studying in the 7th and 8th grades. Of the participants, 38.7% (113 students) were in 7th grade and 61.3% (179 students) were in 8th grade. In addition, 54.5% (159 students) were male and 45.4% (133 students) were female. The power analysis of the research sample is calculated using G Power 3.9.1.7. program. For a sample group of 292 people, power analysis was applied. According to the results of the power analysis, f^2=0.16, power=0.99 and p=0.05. This power analysis shows that the sample size is sufficient for multiple regression analysis and the model has a high probability of detecting a significant effect. The effect size of 0.16 indicates that the effect of the model is moderate and the results are reliable.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

There are totally three data collection tools in this study. "Personal Information Form" has been used to get to know the participant closely, the "Social Media Addiction Scale for Adolescents" to measure the social media addiction levels of the participants, and the "Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale" to measure the perceived social support of the participants.

Personal Information Form. A personal information form was used in the study, which included variables such as students' gender, grade, whether they have an internet connection at home, whether they have a personal computer, whether they have a personal phone, frequency of weekly social media use, social media platforms they use most frequently, purposes of social media use, average hours spent on social media per day, marital status of parents, mother's education level, father's education level and socioeconomic level of the family. This form was prepared to get to know the participant students better and to be used in data analysis.

Social Media Addiction Scale for Adolescents. The validity and reliability studies of the social media addiction scale were conducted by Özgenel, Canpolat, and Ekşi (2019). The research data were collected with the participation of middle and high school students studying in public schools, and the data obtained from a total of 439 students were used for exploratory factor analysis, and the data collected from 195 students were used for confirmatory factor analysis. The scale consists of 9 items in total and the Cronbach-Alpha reliability coefficient was determined as 0.90. The scale is graded on a five-point Likert scale and does not include a reversal option. Participants can score a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 45 points. As a result of the calculation, a high total score indicates high social media addiction and a low total score indicates low social media addiction. In this study, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient and McDonald's Omega value were found to be .77.

Multidimensional perceived social support scale. Within the scope of this study, in order to measure the level of perceived social support, the second study conducted by Eker, Arkar, and Yaldız (2001) to adapt the multidimensional perceived social support scale originally created in the United States of America to Turkey was used. The scale is a 7-point Likert-type scale consisting of a total of 12 items, and each of the four items includes three groups related to the source of support: family, friends and a special person. The internal consistency coefficients of the scale were found between 0.80 and 0.95. The total score is obtained by summing the subscale scores, and a high total score indicates that the individual's perceived social support is high; on the other hand, a low total score indicates that the individual's perceived social support is low. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale and similarly the McDonald's Omega value was found to be .83.

2.3. Data Analyses

Simple regression analysis was applied to test the relationship between variables in the study conducted to examine the relationship between social media addiction and perceived social support in adolescents. SPSS 27.0 program was used for data analysis and Jamovi 2.3.28 version was used for McDonald's Omega values of the scales used. Before the t-test was applied, the assumptions of independence between groups, normal distribution and equality of variances were meticulously checked. Skewness and kurtosis values were examined to assess whether the data obtained had a normal

distribution, and the results obtained supported the assumption of normal distribution. In addition, the equality of variances between groups was examined using Levene's test and it was determined that the variances were equal for all groups. A similar method was followed for regression analysis; Q-Q plots and histogram graphs of the variables were examined to assess whether they were normally distributed. As a result of these examinations, it was determined that the variables met the assumption of normal distribution. In addition, scatter plot analysis revealed that linearity between the variables was observed. The Durbin-Watson coefficient was calculated as 1.7, indicating that the independence of errors was ensured.

2.4. Ethical Statement

This research was found ethically appropriate with the decision of the Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee of Necmettin Erbakan University, dated 14/01/2022 and numbered 2022/17.

3. Findings

Table 1. Socio-demographic variables of the students participating in the study

	Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Girl	133	45,5
	Male	159	54,5
	Total	292	100
Class	7th grade	113	38,7
	8th grade	179	61,3
	Total	292	100
Do you have internet connection at home?	Yes	280	95,9
	No	12	4,1
	Total	292	100
Do you have a personal computer?	Yes	95	32,5
	No	197	67,5
	Total	292	100
Do you have a personal phone?	Yes	224	76,7
	No	68	23,3
	Total	292	100
Mother's education level	Elemantary school	163	55,8
	High school	87	29,8
	University	47	14,4
	Total	292	100
Father's education level	Elemantary school	112	38,4
	High school	96	32,9
	University	84	28,8
	Total	292	100
Socioeconomic status of the family	Low	6	2,1
	Medium	232	79,5
	High	54	18,5
	Total	292	100

When the demographic information of the students participating in the study is analyzed, it is seen that almost 96% of the participants have internet at home. While the rate of students who have a personal computer is 32.5%, the rate of those who have a personal phone is 76.6%. This shows that the majority of the students own a phone rather than a computer. It was also observed that the majority of the students' mothers were primary school graduates, while the educational status of their fathers showed a more balanced distribution. The majority of the students evaluate the economic status of the family as average.

Table 2. Demographic information about students' social media use

	Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Frequency of social media use	Never	14	4,8
	1-2 days a week	54	18,5
	3-5 days a week	78	26,7
	Everyday	146	50
	Total	**292**	**100**
Average time on social media	Never	9	3,1
	Less than 1 hour	50	17,1
	1-2 hours	144	49,3
	More than 2 hours	89	30,5
	Total	**292**	**100**
The platform that spends the most time on social media	Facebook	3	0,7
	Twitter	6	1,4
	Instagram	136	32,1
	Youtube	183	43,2
	TikTok	60	14,1
	Snapchat	35	8,2
	Total	**423***	**100**
Purpose of social media use	Play a game	132	27,3
	Chatting	102	21,1
	Homework	132	27,3
	Sharing	41	8,5
	Follow the news	75	15,5
	Total	**482***	**100**

*multiple marking

According to the results of the study, 50% of the students use social media every day. This shows that social media is widely used among adolescents. When the frequency of daily use was analyzed, it was found that 49.3% used social media between 1-2 hours and 30.5% used social media for more than 2 hours. YouTube and Instagram stand out among the most used social media platforms. The fact that these platforms are popular platforms shows that young people tend to consume video content and visual content. This reveals that young people use social media for information, entertainment and social interaction. When the purposes of using these platforms were analyzed, it was found that 27.3% of the students played games, 21.2% chatted, 27.3% did homework, 8.5% shared and 15.5% followed the news. Especially the 27.3% rates of playing games and doing homework show that social media is used as an important tool for both entertainment and education. However, the low rate of sharing may indicate that students use social media more for content consumption. We can think that social media plays an important role in communicating with friends and providing social support. The 21.2% rate of chatting shows that young people need social interaction through social media.

Table 3. Social media usage purposes according to gender variable

	Gender	n	x̄	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Play a game	Girl	133	,25	-6,6	288,5	,00	,77
	Male	159	,61				
Chatting	Girl	133	,36	0,65	290	,53	,07
	Male	159	,33				
Homework	Girl	133	,51	1,8	278,9	,06	,21
	Male	159	,4				
Sharing	Girl	133	,11	-1,2	289,8	,20	,14
	Male	159	,16				
Follow the news	Girl	133	,16	-3,3	289	,00	,39
	Male	159	,33				

As a result of the t-test for playing games on social media, a significant difference was found between genders (p = .001). Male students scored higher than female students in terms of playing games on social media. Cohen's d value was .77, indicating a large effect size. This result suggests that boys are significantly more likely to play games on social media than girls. The t-test on the purpose of doing homework on social media did not find a significant difference between genders (p = .06). However, the p-value remains close to the significance limit at .06. This indicates that the frequency of male and female students using social media for homework is very close to each other, but this difference is not statistically significant. Cohen's d value was calculated as .21, indicating a small effect size. As a result of the t-test conducted for the purpose of following news on social media, a significant difference was found between genders (p = .001). Male students follow news on social media platforms more than female students. Cohen's d value of .39 indicates a medium effect size. This finding indicates that boys use social media more for information and news monitoring than girls. There was no significant difference in the topics of chatting and sharing according to gender.

Table 4. Examination of perceived social support and social media addiction by gender

	Gender	n	x̄	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Perceived social support	Girl	133	60,2	,63	290	,52	,07
	Male	159	59,1				
Social media addiction	Girl	133	18,9	-1,3	290	,19	,15
	Male	159	19,9				

According to the independent sample t-test results, there was no statistically significant difference between gender and perceived social support (p = .52). This finding indicates that the perceived social support levels of male and female students are similar. In addition, Cohen's d = .07, which indicates that the effect size is very small. As a result of the independent sample t-test examining the relationship between social media addiction and gender, no significant difference was found (p = .19). This result shows that the effect of gender on social media addiction is not statistically significant. Furthermore, Cohen's d = -.15, indicating that the mean of the first group was lower than the second group and the effect size was very small.

Tablo 5. The relationship between perceived social support sub-dimension and social media addiction

	1	2	3	4	x̄	sd	Skewness	Kurtosis
1.Social media addiction	-				19,4	6,4	,58	,13
2.Perceived family support	-,37**	-			20,5	5,6	-,67	-,2
3.Perceived friend support	-,14*	,27**	-		21,2	6,2	-,95	,22
4.Perceived significant other support	-,21**	,61**	,30**	-	17	7,6	-,13	-1,15

p<.01**, p<.05*

As a result of the analysis, it was determined that there was a moderate negative relationship between family support and social media addiction (r = -.37, p < .01). This finding indicates that students who receive more support from their families tend to have lower levels of social media addiction. The relationships between friend support (r = -.14, p < .05) and significant other support (r = -.21, p < .01) and social media addiction were weakly negatively significant. The category of significant other support includes the social environment outside the family, such as teachers, relatives and neighbors, and this support is weakly inversely related to social media addiction. In addition, the sub-dimensions of perceived social support show significant positive relationships among themselves. In particular, there was a high correlation between family support and significant other support (r = .61, p < .01). In addition, the relationship between family support and friend support is low level significant (r = .27, p < .01), while the relationship between friend support and significant other support is moderate (r = .30, p < .01).

Table 6. Multiple regression results between perceived social support sub-dimensions and social media addiction

Variables	B	sd	β	t	p
Perceived family support	-,43	,08	-,37	-5,4	,00
Perceived friend support	-,04	,06	-,04	-,76	,44
Perceived significant other support	-,02	,05	-,27	,39	,69

R=,37 R²=,14

19

The results of the multiple regression analysis reveal that there is a strong negative relationship between social media addiction and perceived family support. This finding indicates that adolescents who receive more support from their families tend to have lower levels of social media addiction. When the relationship between social media addiction and perceived friend support was analyzed, it was determined that friend support did not have a significant effect on social media addiction. Similarly, the regression results between personal support and social media addiction do not show a significant relationship. The social support variables of the model explain 14% of the variance in social media addiction. This suggests that although there is a significant relationship between social support and social media addiction, other factors that affect social media addiction may also be important.

5. Discussion

The findings related to demographic variables show that social media is widely used among adolescents. While half of the students use social media every day, most of them spend 1-2 hours a day (49.3%) or more (30.5%). The most preferred platforms are YouTube and Instagram, indicating that young people mainly consume video and visual content. When the purposes of use are analyzed, it is revealed that adolescents use social media not only as an entertainment tool but also as an important platform for information and social interaction. In particular, the need for social interaction and the existence of a game/education balance show that social media has a multifaceted function in the daily lives of adolescents.

Different studies also point to similar points. For example, it shows that obtaining information has an important role among students' purposes of using social media (Bal & Bicen, 2017; Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012). Different studies on students' purposes of using Facebook have found that it is used in different purposes such as communication, obtaining information, playing games and entertainment. At the same time, it has been observed that users have habits related to consuming rather than producing content (Pempek et al., 2009; Junco, 2012). These findings are in parallel with the socio-demographic findings of the study.

When the differences in social media use by gender were examined, it was found that the behaviors of playing games and following the news were higher and significant among male students. However, no significant difference was found between genders in usage purposes that require social interaction such as chatting, doing homework and sharing content. This suggests that gender has an impact on certain usage habits, but some common purposes of use on social media platforms are similar for both genders.

Other studies partially support these findings. For example, in a study conducted on adolescents, it was found that girls use social media more for chatting while boys use social media platforms more for gaming (Twente & Martin, 2020; Svensson et al., 2022; Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Another study emphasized that while women use social media for communication and chatting, men use it more for entertainment purposes (Krasnova et al., 2017). These findings reveal that social media use is shaped differently according to gender, but some purposes of use are similarly used by both groups regardless of gender.

When perceived social support and social media addiction are analyzed in terms of gender, there is no statistically significant difference. Male and female students show similar characteristics in terms of perceived social support levels and social media addiction. This suggests that the effect of gender on these two variables is limited and that the level of social support and addiction may be affected by other factors.

However, different studies on the relationship between social media addiction and gender present contradictory results. For example, a study conducted on university students found that male students had higher social media addiction scores (Alnjadat et al., 2019). On the other hand, a meta-analysis found that women had higher social media addiction scores than men (Su et al., 2020). These findings suggest that the relationship between social media addiction and gender is complex and may vary from context to context.

The findings of this study provide important information about the relationship between perceived social support and social media addiction. The results show that there is a negative relationship between perceived social support and social media addiction. In particular, the relationship between family support and social media addiction has a moderate negative correlation and students who receive more support from their families tend to have lower levels of social media addiction. This finding suggests that family support may function as a controlling factor for social media use.

The relationships between peer support and significant other support and social media addiction were found to be weaker and negatively significant. At this point, partially similar findings were found in the study conducted by Bilgin and Taş

(2018). In this study conducted on university students, a significant and negative relationship was found between social media addiction and perceived family support, perceived friend support and perceived significant other support. However, in a different study, no direct significant relationship was found between social media addiction and friend support (Huang et al., 2021). These findings suggest that the relationship between social media addiction and perceived types of support is complex and the impact of each type of support may vary for different groups or individuals.

The study suggests that family support plays a crucial role in reducing social media addiction among adolescents. Therefore, programs aimed at enhancing family communication and involvement may help mitigate the negative effects of excessive social media use. Given the gender differences observed in social media usage behaviors, interventions may benefit from being tailored to address the distinct patterns and needs of male and female adolescents. For example, targeting the gaming habits of boys or the communication patterns of girls could improve the effectiveness of digital wellness programs. Although peer support showed weaker correlations with social media addiction, it still plays a role. Schools and community programs should encourage positive peer interactions and peer-led support networks to create an environment where adolescents can support each other in managing their social media use. The contradictory findings regarding the relationship between gender and social media addiction underscore the need for more research to better understand the contextual factors influencing these relationships. Future studies should explore how factors like socio-economic status, cultural influences, and family dynamics impact social media addiction across different gender groups. This study highlights the complex relationship between social media addiction and perceived social support. A holistic approach, addressing multiple factors such as family dynamics, peer relationships, and individual psychological traits, should be considered when designing prevention and intervention programs for social media addiction.

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Conflict of Interest

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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