Original Article

The Use of Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Youtube) and Perception of Gender in University Students

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Abstract

Objective: This study was conducted to determine the effect of social network usage among university students on perception of gender.

Methods: This descriptive study was conducted at the Faculties of Health Sciences and Nursing at a state university. Its sample consisted of 415 students. A personal information form, the purposes of social network usage scale and the perception of gender scale were used to collect the data.

Results: The present study revealed that 95.1% of the students were female and all of them used at least one social network site. There was a very weak correlation between the students' mean score of the perception of gender scale and their total score of the purposes of social network usage scale, and its research, collaboration, communication initiation, maintaining communication, and entertainment subscales (p<0.05).

Conclusions: The students had a high rate of social media and Internet use. Furthermore, the intended use of social networks was weakly correlated with perception of gender but it was an important predictor for perception of gender

Keywords: Society, Gender, Social media, Students, Midwifery, Nursing, Audiology.

Introduction

Young people in Turkey like their international counterparts widely use social media sites (Villanti et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2020; TSI 2019). The most frequent social media sites they use include Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (Villanti et al., 2017). They use them to make new friends, converse with others on variety of topics, follow people they have an interest in, and share their thoughts and ideas, thereby socialising online (Keating et al., 2016). However, this can come with negative consequences as well. They are more likely to have decreased academic success, have problems with their parents, suffer from anxiety and depression, and develop a negative sense of self (Wang et al., 2020; Keating et al., 2016; de

Vries & Kühne., 2015). People usually portray themselves and their lives in a positive manner on social network sites. They are likely to share only their best appearance and happiest moments. This in turn may cause them to think that other people's lives are better than their own lives. Social media users strive to be followed, liked, and thus accepted by others. Perceptions of other users on such sites about them plays a key role in their developing the sense of self (de Vries & Kuhne., 2015). Individuals begin to develop their sense of self during youth. They try to create their own value judgements, perceptions, and ideas in relation to life (Coyne et al., 2013). Likewise, their heavy use of social media sites is an important factor in shaping how they perceive gender (de Vries & Kuhne., 2015). They may even attempt to

create their own gender roles in line with what they watch on the internet (i.e. YouTube) and who they interact with online via social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube (Akkaş., 2019). From this point of view, this study was conducted to determine the effect of the use of social media on perception of gender in university students .

Methods

Study setting: This descriptive study was carried out with students studying in the Faculties of Health Sciences and Nursing at a state university in Turkey between November 5 and 30, 2018.

The Population and Sample of the Study: The sample of this study consisted of 415 university students. They were selected using convenience sampling method and were continuing their education in their respective faculties. The population of the study comprised 1,800 students (n=1800) studying at the Faculties of Health Sciences and Nursing at a state university during the fall term of the 2018-2019 academic year (N=1800). Since no sampling method was used to calculate the sample size, it was aimed to reach the entire population.   Thus, only 23% of the population was reached. The inclusion criteria were determined as being aged 18 years and over, having no psychiatric disorder and using a smartphone. 150 students did not fully fill out the data collection form, and therefore were excluded from the study. Furthermore, 70 students were also excluded because they refused to participate in the study. Thus, the study's sample consisted of 415 students who agreed to participate in the study (n=415). The students filled out the data collection tools in the classroom environment after class.

Data Collection Tools: The data were collected using a personal information form, the perception of gender scale, and the purposes of social network usage scale. The personal information form prepared upon the literature review has a total of 20 questions, While eight questions were about their socio-demographic characteristics, twelve questions were about social media and its use (Filiz et al., 2014; Oztürk & Akgun., 2012).

The usage purposes of social networks scale: This scale was developed and validated by Usluel et al.10 It has a total of 26 items and seven subscales. The validity and reliability study of this seven-point likert scale was conducted (Usluel et al., 2014). Responses range from "strongly agree" (7) to "strongly disagree" (1). The highest score is 182, whereas, the lowest score is 26. High arithmetic mean of any subscale of the scale can be interpreted to mean that the individual uses social networks intensely for the usage purpose in question. The subscales of purposes of social network usage scale include research, collaboration, communication initiation, communicating with somebody, maintaining communication, content sharing, and entertainment. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is 0.92 (Usluel et al., 2014). In this study, its Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be 0.91.

The perception of gender scale: This scale was developed and validated by Altınova et al. to measure individuals' gender perceptions (11). It includes 25 items and is a five-point likert scale. It does not contain any subscale. Ten items are positive, whereas fifteen are negative. Individuals are asked to express their opinions related to the items with one of five options ranging from strongly agree (5), agree (4), uncertain (3), disagree (2) to strongly disagree (1). Items 2, 4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24 and 25 are negative and are reversely scored. Accordingly, total score ranges between 25 and 125. The higher the score, the more positive the gender perception. Its Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is 0.87 (Altınova & Duyan., 2013). In this study, its Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be 0.89.

Ethics Committee Approval: Before data collection, written permission was obtained from the related institution. Likewise, verbal consent was obtained from the students who were included in the study. The Principles of Declaration of Helsinki were followed at all stages of the study.

Informed Consent: Informed consent of the participants was obtained.

Ethical Considerations: Before collecting the data, written permission from the institution, where the study would be carried out, and verbal consent from the students, who were included in the study, were obtained. The Principles of Declaration of Helsinki were followed in all stages of the study.

Data Assessment: In the data analysis, SPSS for Windows 22.0 was used, Independent samples t-

test, ANOVA, Pearson's correlation analysis, and descriptive statistics (percentage distribution, arithmetic mean, standard deviation) were used to analyse the data. The statistical significance was accepted to be $p<0.05$.

Results

Table 1 shows the distribution of the students' descriptive characteristics. It was determined that 53.7% of them were 20 years old and over, 85.1% were female, 50.1% spent a large part of their lives in one province and 87% had an income equal to expenditure.

Table 2 shows the distribution of the departments of the students and of their characteristics related to the use of social media. It was determined that

The findings of this study revealed that there was a very weak correlation between the participants' mean score of perception of gender scale and their

total score of the purposes of social network usage scale, and its research, collaboration, communication initiation, maintaining communication, and entertainment subscales ($p<0.05$).

43.1% of the subjects studied midwifery. 65.3% used mostly. Instagram. 39% made friends via social media. 56.6% were asked on a date by a man via social media. 65.5% were added as a friend on social media. 92.3% never asked anyone on a date via social media. 4.3% asked a man on a date. 45.3% turned down a possible date.

Table 3 shows the correlation between the participants' total score of perception of gender scale and the total and subscale scores of the purposes of social network usage scale.

Table 1. Distribution of the Students' Descriptive Characteristics (n=415)

Descriptive Characteristics	n	%
Age (year)		
20 years and below	192	46.3
Above 20 years	223	53.7
Gender		
Female	353	85.1
Male	62	14.9
Residence place where they lived for the longest time		
Village-Town	77	18.6
District	130	31.3
Province	208	50.1
Income level		
Income less than expenditure	43	10.4
Income equal to expenditure	361	87.0
Income higher than expenditure	11	2.7

*Age (X ± SD) 20.96 ± 2.40

Table 2: Distribution of the departments of the students and their characteristics regarding the use of social media

Descriptive Characteristics of the students	n	%
Department		
Midwifery	179	43.1
Nursing	144	34.7
Audiology	92	22.2
*Social media accounts they used		

Instagram	271	65.3
Whatsapp	184	44.3
Twitter	47	11.3
Facebook	35	8.4
Other social media	69	16.6
Status of making friends via social media		
Yes	162	39.0
No	253	61.0
Status of being added as a friend on social media		
Yes	272	65.5
No	143	34.5
*Gender of person adding as a friend on social media		
Female	102	24.6
Male	235	56.6
Status of asking someone to date via social media		
Yes	32	7.7
No	383	92.3
Gender of person asked to date		
Female	14	3.4
Male	18	4.3
**Acceptance status of the offer		
Yes	25	6.0
No	188	45.3

*The participants gave multiple answers to the questions. **Only those asking dating offer answered the question.

Table 3. Correlation between the participants' total score of perception of gender scale and total and subscale scores of the purposes of social network usage scale (n=415)

	UPSSN Total Score	Research	Collaboration	Communication initiation	Communicating with somebody	Maintaining Communication	Content Sharing	Entertainment
PGS	0.197	0.243	0.205	-0.084	0.237	0.207	0.041	0.142
Total Score	**0.001**	**0.001**	**0.001**	0.087	**0.001**	**0.001**	0.408	**0.004**

Discussion

In Turkey, conservatism and gender inequality can both negatively affect individuals' social status as well as public health. The use of social media by almost all young people may be effective on their gender perceptions. Healthcare professionals have important responsibilities for determining, preventing, and solving related problems Looking at young peoples' attitudes towards gender perception and raising their sense of awareness are crucial if we want them to view gender in an equalitarian perspective (Komurcu, et al., 2016).

This study was conducted to determine the correlation between social media use and gender perception in young people.

In the study, it was determined that almost all of the participants were social media users; this was significantly correlated with how they perceived gender (p=0.001). The more knowledgeable those who use social media are, the more elevated their sense of gender awareness might be. In fact, Basar (2012) found that social media users tended to have a more positive attitude about gender and adopted an equalitarian approach to the topic. In addition, it seems that the more young people use social media, the more likely communication between them will strengthen. Social media seems to encourage them to collaborate and act together when addressing social problems. Indeed, in the present study it was found that those who used social media to collaborate and communicate with others, maintain communication with them, and have fun, had a more positive attitude towards gender. Therefore, it is thought that it will be more useful to provide trainings that may affect young people's gender perception levels positively via social networks.

There was a significant correlation between the students' use of social media for research and their gender perceptions (p=0.001). If we consider that the more educated a person is, the more inquisitive they are, we see that education can have a positive impact on gender perception. In fact, some studies have even shown that there is a direct correlation between education level and whether a person perceives gender in an equalitarian approach (Esen et al., 2017; Altuntas & Altinova., 2015; Kodan Cetinkaya., 2013). Likewise, the more educated a person is and thus the more inquisitive they are, the less likely they are to fall under the influence of their traditional society and culture16 and the more likely they are to acquire a more modern stance towards gender perception (Yilmaz et al., 2009).

Additionally, in their studies, Ozden (2018) and Gokcay (2018) both found that education played a huge role in teaching people how to think about approaching gender through an equalitarian perspective (Ozden., 2018; Gokcay., 2018).

Moreover, gender perception is believed to be more positive in young people. The increase in the level of education as the generations progress, the more active individuals in social and economic life, and women's benefitting equally all the rights and freedoms men benefit will have important effects on the establishment of a healthy and egalitarian gender perception. It was stated in a study that individuals having parents who were working in jobs requiring qualifications had a more flexible perception of gender and showed a more egalitarian lesson in sharing duties and responsibilities within the family (Dalkilic., 2019).

Thus, when assuming that the socially determined roles and responsibilities of women and men have changed over time, it is predicted that there may be significant differences between generations in the change of gender perception.

Conclusions

This study revealed that students used social media and the Internet at ver high rates. It also observed that the intended use of social networks was weakly correlated with perception of gender but it was an important predictor for perception of gender.

We therefore believe that different policies aimed at developing how students perceive gender via how they use social media will help make them more equalitarian.

Additionally, young people can also help prevent and reduce gender inequality. Thus, it is necessary and crucial to raise students' awareness and sensibility on gender throughout their education. Young people who are raised with an equalitarian perspective will play an active role in bringing this healthy perspective in society.

Therefore, young people who use social media need to be trained about gender.

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