An Examination of the Purposes of Facebook Usage of Undergraduate and Graduate Students with regard to Several Variables

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Abstract

In this study, the purposes of Facebook usage of undergraduate and graduate students were examined with regard to several variables. The study is a descriptive survey model. The participants in the survey consist of 349 undergraduate and graduate students who have memberships in the Facebook social network. As the tool for data collection, "Purpose of Facebook usage scale" (Mazman, 2009), and to determine the personal characteristics of the participants, "Personal Information Form" were used. The results reached were such that, there were no significant differences among purpose of Facebook usage score averages in the sub-factors of social relationships, work-related usage and daily activities with regard to sex, level of education, and possession of continuous internet access; whereas there was a significant difference among purpose of Facebook usage score averages in the sub-factor of daily activities with regard to the device used to connect to Facebook while there was no difference in the rest of the sub-factors.

Keywords: *Facebook, college students, Facebook usage purposes*

1. INTRODUCTION

Technological developments have rendered the communication between people easy and fast. The social networks born out of Web 2.0 technology provide the users with the ability to meet human needs such as communication, sharing, work-related usage, and cooperation. Thanks to the Internet, instantaneous data sharing of various types such as video, music, and photographs and access to information has become easier (Yılmazsoy and Kahraman, 2017).

Upon a review of the literature on social media, it can be seen to have diverse definitions. Some of these are:

- Tiryakioğlu and Erzurum (2011) defined social networks as an online service where communication and social relationships can be established; one that provides people with the possibility to share personal information such as ideas, activities and areas of interest with their network.
- Lai and Turban (2008) define social media as a set of tools and platforms, which people use to share with each other their thoughts, experiences, perception abilities, impressions, and media such as music, video and photographs.
- Bartlett-Bragg (2006) defined social networks as a range of applications that augments group interactions and shared spaces for collaboration, social connections, and aggregates information exchanges in a web-based environment.

Social networks, which enable dual communication, facilitate interaction via users, who are in mutual communication, affecting each other in various ways by way of having influence over each other. Social networking sites are the software that supports information exchange, interaction and communication between people in different environments and that brings them together in line with their own interests, needs and objectives (Pettenati and Ranier, 2006).

Social networks develop the ability to communicate, participation and social cohesion, enable learning through cooperation and peer support (Gülbahar, Kalelioğlu & Madran, 2010), and are being used widely for chiefly educational, entertainment and commercial purposes.

One of the social sharing networks, which provide a medium for people to spend time together, make posts and have fun together (Kobak and Biçer, 2008), Facebook is the most used social network website in the world and in Turkey.

Facebook was first developed by the Harvard University student Mark Zuckerberg in February 2004 (Şener, 2009). After a short while, more than half of Harvard student subscribed to Facebook. With increasing popularity of membership, Facebook began accepting members from other universities in Boston like MIT, Boston University and Boston College. With the number of colleges included in the website increasing, the number of users of the site reached 1 million in December 2004 (Toprak et al., 2009).

Characteristics of social networks and their rapid development process considered, they can be seen as having the nature to meet and facilitate people's needs. Upon examining statistical data, it can be seen that social networks increase the number of their users in proportion with their diversifying features allowing their usage in different areas. It is stated in the 2016 report "Internet and Social Media User Statistics" by "WeAreSocial" that Facebook is the most widely used social network medium in the world. In the same report, Facebook comes as the first among the most used social networks in Turkey with 32% (Ayvaz, 2016). Moreover, according to the data in the "Digital in 2017 Global Overview" report issued by "WeAreSocial" and "Hootsuite", the number of social media users in Turkey is 42 millions and the most used social networks in Turkey are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google Plus, and LinkedIn, respectively (WeAreSocial, 2017).

The Goal Of The Research

The effects social networks create on communication, academic success, social interaction, etc. may vary depending on how and for what purpose people use social networks (Çetin, 2009). The fact that social networks have both positive and negative effects (Kabilan, Ahmad, and Abidin, 2010) and that they are used by wide masses causes the research done in this field to increase. Facebook social network, with the number of its subscribers multiplying, being widely used by young people, the increase in the time spent on social networks, its widespread use as a communication tool, its position to directly influence people's lives, its extensive use by the younger population, and its guidance into different fields of study all augment its importance.

The goal of this research is to study the purposes of Facebook usage of undergraduate and graduate students. The answers to the below questions were sought in light of the goal:
Do the purposes of Facebook usage of undergraduate and graduate students vary according to their
   a. Sex
   b. Level of education
   c. Possession of continuous internet access
   d. Device used to connect to Facebook social network?

2. METHOD

In this section the survey model, participants of the survey, the tool for data collection, and the data analysis are outlined.

2.1. The Model of the Study

This research is a descriptive study, designed in the survey model, in which the purposes of Facebook usage of undergraduate and graduate students were examined with regard to several variables. Survey models are a way of approaching the problem of describing a situation, which may have existed in the past or is currently present, as it is. The phenomenon, the individual or the object in question is attempted to be described under its own circumstances and as it is. Survey models are survey arrangements conducted on the entire universe or a group, samples or specimens taken for the purpose of reaching a judgment on the universe consisting of many elements (Karasar, 2012).

2.2. The Study Group

The study group of the research consists of 349 undergraduate and graduate students who have memberships in the Facebook social network and who completed the questionnaire distributed among several groups. The study aims at examining the purposes of Facebook usage of undergraduate and graduate students with regard to several variables.

Table 1 below shows the distribution of the undergraduate and graduate students who participated in the study according to sex, level of education, possession of continuous internet access, and the device used to connect to Facebook social network.

Table 1. Distribution of the Study Group by the Variables.

Variables	Categories	N	%
Sex	Male	128	36,7
	Female	221	63,3
Level of Education	Undergraduate	174	49,9
	Graduate	175	50,1
Possession of Continuous Internet Access	Yes	333	95,4
	No	16	4,6
Device used to Connect to Facebook	Smartphone	304	87,1
	Computer	45	12,9
	Total	349	100

2.3. Data Collection Instrument

In the data collection phase, a scale and a personal information form were used. "Facebook Addiction Scale", which was prepared to determine the students' Facebook addictions, was a scale that was developed by Kimberly Young with the purpose of measuring the internet addiction and also that was adapted to Facebook and translated into Turkish by Çam (2012). The Facebook addiction scale, which is a 6 point Likert type scale and consists of 19 questions, has a total internal consistency coefficient of 0.93. In this study, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the scale was computed as 0.91. The maximum score to be attained on the scale is 114, while the minimum is 19. High or low score indicates the level of Facebook addiction for that particular individual.

"Aim of Using Facebook Scale" was developed by Mazman (2009) within the scope of their Master's thesis to determine the purpose of students in using Facebook, and was proven in validity and reliability analysis. The scale was developed as having 11 items under 3 factors named "social relationships", "work-related usage", and "daily activities". The questions in the scale are of a five-point Likert-type, and have the answers "Never", "Rarely", "Occasionally", "Frequently", and "Always". In ascertaining the validity of the scale developed within the scope of the study expert opinion method was used, and to determine the reliability of the scale total item correlations and Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient were utilized. According to the results of the reliability analysis of the Aim of Using Facebook Scale, the internal consistence coefficient of the 11 items on the scale, computed with Cronbach Alpha, was found out to be (0.86). The internal consistence coefficients of the scale with regard to its three sub-factors were (0.79) for social relationships, (0.80) for work-related usage, and (0.86) for daily activities, respectively. The maximum score to be attained on the scale is 55, while the minimum is 11.

In the study, for the purpose of collecting data on the students' demographic characteristics, a Personal Information Form, structured with regard to the survey variables, was used. In this form, data on the study participant students' sex, level of education, possession of continuous internet access, device used to connect to Facebook was collected.

2.4. Analysis of the Data

The questionnaire data obtained in the survey was analyzed in the SPSS 20.0 software. Descriptive statistics was used in the analysis of the data. The mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values, percentage and frequency values of the scores that the students took from the entirety and the subscales of the scale were used.

3. FINDINGS

In this section the opinions of undergraduate and graduate students about the Aim of Using Facebook Scale and findings about the sub-factors were outlined.

Table 2. The Distribution of Students by their Facebook usage purpose with regard to the Sex variable (t-test)

Factor	Variable	N	$\overline{\mathrm{x}}$	ss	df	t	p
Social Relationships	Male	128	2,9866	,72565	347	,212	,832
	Female	221	2,9696	,71953	263,497		
Work-Related Usage	Male	128	2,6016	1,22049	347	-2,040	,042
	Female	221	2,8869	1,28128	275,969		
Daily Activities	Male	128	3,7383	1,19541	347	-1,061	,289
	Female	221	3,8710	1,08413	244,756		

In Table 2 whether the Facebook usage level of the students varied according to the Sex variable or not was examined with a t-test. It can be seen that there were no significant differences among the students' purpose of Facebook usage score averages in the sub-factors of social relationships, work-related usage and daily activities. The lack of a significant difference notwithstanding, it can be seen that in social relationships-oriented usage male students (X=2.98) lead as compared to female students (X=2.96), in work-related usage female students (X=2.88) lead as compared to male students (X=2.60), and in daily-activities-related usage female students (X=3.87) lead as compared to male students (X=3.73).

Table 3. The Distribution of Students by their Facebook usage purpose with regard to the Level of Education variable (t-test)

Factor	Variable	N	$\bar{x}$	ss	df	t	p
Social Relationships	Undergraduate	174	2,9343	,72804	347	-1,074	,832
	Graduate	175	3,0171	,71317	346,759		
Work-Related Usage	Undergraduate	174	2,6552	1,26036	347	-1,878	,042
	Graduate	175	2,9086	1,26067	346,990		
Daily Activities	Undergraduate	174	3,8793	1,14287	347	,942	,289
	Graduate	175	3,7657	1,11002	346,578		

In Table 3 whether the Facebook usage level of the students varied according to the Level of Education variable or not was examined with a t-test. It can be seen that there were no significant differences among the students' purpose of Facebook usage score averages in the sub-factors of social relationships, work-related usage and daily activities. The lack of a significant difference notwithstanding, it can be seen that in social relationships-oriented usage graduate students (X=3.01) lead as compared to undergraduate students (X=2.93), in work-related usage graduate students (X=2.90) lead as compared to undergraduate students (X=2.65), and in daily-activities-related usage undergraduate students (X=3.87) lead as compared to graduate students (X=3.76).

Table 4. The Distribution of Students by their Facebook usage purpose with regard to the possession of continuous internet access variable (t-test)

Factor	Variable	N	$\bar{x}$	ss	df	t	p
Social Relationships	Yes	333	2,9876	,71628	347	1,386	,167
	No	16	2,7321	,79433	16,194		
Work-Related Usage	Yes	333	2,7853	1,26812	347	-1,878	,838
	No	16	2,7188	1,23786	16,549		
Daily Activities	Yes	333	3,8423	1,12337	347	,942	,131
	No	16	3,4063	1,14337	16,422		

In Table 4 whether the Facebook usage level of the students varied according to the possession of continuous internet access variable or not was examined with a t-test. It can be seen that there were no significant differences among the students' purpose of Facebook usage score averages in the sub-factors of social relationships, work-related usage and daily activities. The lack of a significant difference notwithstanding, it can be seen that in social relationships-oriented usage students who have continuous internet access (X=2.98) lead as compared to students who do not (X=2.73), in work-related usage students who have continuous internet

access (X=2.78) lead as compared to students who do not (X=2.71), and in daily-activities-related usage students who have continuous internet access (X=3.84) lead as compared to students who do not (X=3.40).

Table 5. The Distribution of Students by their Facebook usage purpose with regard to the device used to connect to Facebook variable (t-test)

Factor	Variable	N	$\overline{\overline{\text{x}}}$	ss	df	t	p
Social Relationships	Smartphone	304	2,9633	,71301	347	-,842	,400
	Computer	45	3,0603	,77441	55,608		
Work-Related Usage	Smartphone	304	2,7467	1,26321	347	-1,365	,173
	Computer	45	3,0222	1,26561	57,751		
Daily Activities	Smartphone	304	3,8865	1,07528	347	2,793	,006
	Computer	45	3,3889	1,36052	52,448		

In Table 5 whether the Facebook usage level of the students varied according to the device used to connect to Facebook variable or not was examined with a t-test. It can be seen that there was a significant difference among the students' purpose of Facebook usage score averages in the sub-factor of daily activities with regard to the device used to connect to Facebook whereas there was no difference in the other sub-factors. The lack of a significant difference notwithstanding, it can be seen that in social relationships-oriented usage students who connect to Facebook using a computer (X=3.06) lead as compared to students who connect with a smartphone (X=2.96), and in work-related usage students who connect to Facebook using a computer (X=3.02) lead as compared to students who connect with a smartphone (X=2.74).

4. CONCLUSIONS

In this study, the purposes of Facebook usage of undergraduate and graduate students were examined. It was seen that there were no significant differences among the students' purpose of Facebook usage score averages in the sub-factors of social relationships, work-related usage and daily activities with regard to the Sex variable. The lack of a significant difference notwithstanding, a conclusion was reached that in social relationships-oriented usage male students lead as compared to female students, in work-related usage female students lead as compared to male students, and in daily-activities-related usage female students lead as compared to male students. It can be stated that in the results coming out as such the facts that male students feel the need to use the social networks in friendship and social relationships more, and that female students have a higher usage for homework and projects are the main source.

It was seen that there were no significant differences among the students' purpose of Facebook usage score averages in the sub-factors of social relationships, work-related usage and daily

activities with regard to the Level of Education variable. The lack of a significant difference notwithstanding, a conclusion was reached that in social relationships-oriented usage graduate students lead as compared to undergraduate students, in work-related usage graduate students lead as compared to undergraduate students, and in daily-activities-related usage undergraduate students lead as compared to graduate students. It can be stated that in the results coming out as such the fact that graduate students have a higher educational usage for homework, projects, and coursework and are oriented toward usage of this purpose is the main source.

It was seen that there were no significant differences among the students' purpose of Facebook usage score averages in the sub-factors of social relationships, work-related usage and daily activities with regard to the possession of continuous internet access variable. The lack of a significant difference notwithstanding, a conclusion was reached that in social relationships-oriented, work-related, and in daily-activities-related usage students who have continuous internet access lead as compared to students who do not. It can be stated that in the results coming out as such the fact that the students who have continuous internet access can connect to Facebook easily and for flexible durations at any place, whereas those students who do not can only use it for fixed periods of time and for the relevant purpose.

It was seen that there was a significant difference among the students' purpose of Facebook usage score averages in the sub-factor of daily activities with regard to the device used to connect to Facebook, whereas there was no difference in the other sub-factors. In Facebook usage for daily activities, students who connect via a smartphone are in the majority as opposed to those students who connect through a computer. The lack of a significant difference notwithstanding, it can be seen that in social relationships-oriented usage students who connect to Facebook using a computer lead as compared to students who connect with a smartphone, and in work-related usage students who connect to Facebook using a computer lead as compared to students who connect with a smartphone.

4.1. Suggestions

When it is considered that the users of the social network websites are predominantly student groups, the importance of the usage of social networks for educational purposes grows. Research directed toward enabling the usage of social networks for educational purposes can be conducted; courses can be taught in a way that is integrated with social media, with chiefly distance learning lectures over education management system; the same study can be repeated in high schools and universities at different educational levels and comparisons of the results can make a contribution to the field.

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