Usage Purposes and Perceived Effects of Social Networks*

Sosyal Ağların Kullanım Amaçları ve Etkilerine İlişkin Algılar

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ABSTRACT: This study was conducted on social network users aged 12-15 who freely use the opportunities offered by social networks with the purpose of establishing new relationships or maintaining their existing relationships. The purpose of the study is to determine the study group's perception on the effects of social networks and whether their perceptions affect their usage purposes. In this study, the data was collected via two scales that were developed in the scope of the study. Accordingly, it was concluded that the usage purposes did not change according to sex, however; usages did change according to variables such as age, number of used sites and frequency of usage. Some significant relationships were found between the users' perceptions on the effects of using social networks and the purposes thereof.

Keywords: online social networks, usage purposes of social networks, effects of social networks, users' perceptions on effects of social networks, young social network users

ÖZ: Bu çalışma çevrimiçi sosyal ağlarda, ağların sunduğu olanakları yeni ilişkiler kurmak ya da mevcut ilişkilerini sürdürmek için özgürce kullanan 12-15 yaş grubu kullanıcıların, sosyal ağların etkilerine ilişkin algıları ve bu algıların kullanım amaçlarını etkileyip etkilemediğini belirlemek üzere gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmada veriler araştırma kapsamında geliştirilen iki ölçekle toplanmıştır. Kullanım amaçlarının; cinsiyete bağlı olarak değişmediği; yaş, kullanılan site sayısı ve kullanım sıklığı değişkenlerine bağlı olaraksa değişim gösterdiği belirlenmiştir. Kullanıcıların sosyal ağların etkilerine ilişkin algılarıyla, sosyal ağları kullanma amaçları arasında ise bazı anlamlı ilişkiler saptanmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: çevrimiçi sosyal ağlar, sosyal ağ kullanım amaçları, sosyal ağların etkileri, sosyal ağların etkilerine ilişkin kullanıcı algıları, genç sosyal ağ kullanıcıları

1. INTRODUCTION

Online social networks can be defined as a new social environment that people create within the virtual world. It can be thought as a form of a real-life social environment, which is connected to the virtual world, the limits of which are defined. In this regard, according to the survey of Intel (2012) titled, "Young Turkey Research", which was administered to 3000 young people between the ages of 13-29 and in 26 different provinces, 2/3 of the participants stated that they saw no difference between the relationships and communication that they had made in online environments and the traditional relationships and communication. On the other hand, online social networks offer more alternative roles to individuals compared with the social networks that exist in real life; this is because of the fact that the users, themselves, choose the social networks which they will be members of and create their own network. The individual user's virtual profile can rely on real or fake information. The user can create more than one profile and establish different relationships within different social networks. Thus, social networks are web-based applications that provide the opportunity for individuals to create open or half-open profiles to public within the limits set by the system. Furthermore, individuals can control how they share their information with other users with whom they are connected, as well as can see the listed links of other users in the system and can browse these links (Boyd and Ellison 2007), and, to what extend these facilities will be used is determined by the users.

In the context of this study, the main question is what the young generation actually does within virtual social environments they are involved in and how they perceive the effects of such social environments on themselves or others. Of specific concern are the users whose social network histories do not date far back and who are within the age groups of 12-13 and 14-15. According to the data of the European Union Kids Online Research Project (2010), the rate of children who are members of a social networking website are 26% for age 10, 49% for ages 11-12, 73% for ages 13-14 and 82% for ages 15-16. In Turkey, 49% of the children who reported being members of a social networking website are between the ages of 9-16. According to Intel's "Young Turkey Research" (2012), individuals between the ages of 13-17 spend more time on social networks. Despite the difference in the age range, this age group, reports more than 50% participation in social networking websites. In the light of given data, considering our target population, our question can be reexpressed as follows: what do individuals within the ages of 12-15 who have created their own social network do and how do they perceive the effects of this virtual environment on themselves and others? Is there a relationship between their perceptions and usage purpose? The literature points out that those social networks are generally used for social communication. Individuals share the news about themselves, join groups about topics that interest them, create their own groups, connect with existing friends, follow their current friends 'updates, and make virtual shares with them (Mazman and Usluel 2011; Toprak et al. 2009). It can be assumed that such interactions will affect an individual's socialization. However, socialization is a process that is influenced by all the institutions, groups and individuals with whom the individual interacts in addition to the influences of social media (Dilmen and Öğüt 2010). So, what kind of socialization environment do social networks offer? In particular, it can be said that social networks present a multifaceted and random socialization environment. This opinion is supported by the information cited by Göker, Demir and Doğan (2010) from hurriyet.com.tr in 11/28/2009.

"According to the Facebook Initial Strategist Trevor Johnson, in Facebook page view of over 200 billion occurs per month. Applications are run in 250 platforms with 1 million active users…In Facebook, 50% of the 300 million active users (the number of users in 11/28/2009) are daily visitors. 1.4 million photographs are shared per second. 1.6 billion instant messages are written per day…"

In such an environment in which millions of people participate and many subjects are presented, 26% of children's profiles, 46% of which are the profiles of children from Turkey, are accessible to everyone (EU Kids Online II Turkey 2010). Also, 10-19% of children see no harm in sharing their addresses; 8-10% of children also see no harm in sharing their phone numbers (Fogel & Nehmad 2009; Çelen, Çelik and Seferoğlu 2011). Şener (2009), in her article that reviewed Facebook user tendencies in Turkey, reported the following: Users generally believe that their number of Facebook friends is a reflection of their social status. Moreover, 42.5% of users add people they recently met as friend and 15.7% of users add the friends of friends to their Facebook list. Once an individual has added a person into their Facebook page, they are incorporating that person into their unique social network. Similarly, declining a friend's request, or being declined by a request, is interpreted as a "rejection or exclusion". Sometimes Facebook users feel pressurized to accept a request as they think it may be rude or embarrassing to decline it so they, add that new friend, though reluctantly. Interestingly, the information that Facebook users do not share in their daily life .may be shared online without hesitation. They are often unaware of how many people this information will reach beyond their friends' circle. Facebook, and such social environments, where personal information is freely shared can be the target of computer hackers. Obtaining personal accounts and data via software designed for this purpose can cause internet fraud and misuse (Bayzan & Küçükali 2009).

In such an unpredictable environment, our concern is how the users between the ages of 12-15 behave; perceive the effects of such social interactions on themselves or others, and

whether their perceptions guide their actions. Yet, education is the formal dimension of the socialization process and is oriented to realize socialization intentionally under controlled conditions. Change is ensured by making the individuals encounter with the information and values they should obtain. The information and values which are not desired are either left out of the system or are used as bad examples. The education system might become successful in the abovementioned way during the times when technology was not developed and people did not have the ability to see what was different and might be the background of the legitimate strategy depending on the information that the human being was born with tabula rasa.   However, today, education system need to consider even more dynamic ways of considering up-to-date information about individuals and informal socialization process. This requires that the individual and the informal processes that affect that individual are well recognized. However, educational institutions have the tendency to prohibit or hamper any communicative environment or tool (social networks, mobile phones etc.) which they cannot control, leaving the students to their own socialization devices outside the school. Three drawbacks can be detected at first sight out of this situation: The first drawback, as Attwell (2006) also emphasizes, makes students' daily life, communication methods, and means of sharing information disconnected from the school context (as cited by Mazman 2009). The second one is that students are less likely to see natural social interaction dynamics and transfer them to face-to-face social environments that are more preferable environments. The third one hampers guidance activities towards students to make them participate in online socialization processes and to be more conscious users.

Doubtlessly, the usage of social networks has side effects on the communication skills of children (Fodeman & Monroe 2009), thus, expose children to some risks (Bayzan & Küçükali 2009). However, an educational support system that guides individuals to conscious actions can minimize these problems. As Pasek, More and Hargittai (2009) also state internet and social network sites can have both good and bad intentions. The important thing is what people do in this environment.

Problem: Is there a relationship between the usage purposes of users in the age group of 12-15 and their perceptions on the effects of social networks?

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

In this study, a descriptive model was used. This survey was administered to 149 participants in the age groups of 12-13 and 14-15. Taking technological access possibilities as the reference point, the participants of this study were chosen from the 7th (12-13 years old) and 8th (14-15 years old) graders from two private schools. The distribution of participants is as follows: Out of 149 participants; 79 (53.0%) were male and 70 (47.0%) were female; 80 (53.7%) were 12-13 years of age, 69 (46.3%) were14-15 years of age; 97 (65.1%) were members of one social network site, 51 (34.2%) were members of "several" social network sites; 67 (45%) shared online information for 1-2 hours every day and 82(55%) shared online information for 2-3 hours a week.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

The data was collected via two scales which were developed by the researcher. These are 'social network usage purpose scale' and 'scale on users' perceptions regarding the effects of social networks'. These scales were conducted in printed form and the analyses were carried out on 149 fully completed data.

Social Network Usage Purpose Scale: The scale was developed to determine the users' social network usage purposes. This scale consisted of 8 items and prepared in the style of 5 point Likert scale. The arrangement of the points is as follows: 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Usually and 5= Always. After the scale was finalized, it was conducted via an interview with 2

students in the 7th grade and 2 students in 8th grade in terms of the appropriateness and comprehensibility of the scale. Accordingly, the necessary revision was made in the scale. After the administration of the scale, exploratory factor analysis was carried out. The results of the KMO and Bartlett tests which were executed to determine the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis and the results of factor analysis are given below:

KMO=.868   Bartlett statistically significant (p<.01)

Table 1. The results of basic components analysis of social network usage purposes scale

Factor	Items	Social Network Usage purposes	Factor Loads	
			1	**2**
Establishing new relationships	M1	I am using social networks to share about myself and news about me.	.657	
	M2	I am using social networks to create sharing groups in accordance with my interests.	.703	
	M4	I am using social networks to establish new friendships.	.828	
	M8	I am using social networks to join the groups with common interests with me.	.814	
Maintaining the existent relationships	M3	I am using social networks to find my old friends.		.510
	M5	I am using social networks to enrich my relationships with my friends.		.789
	M6	I am using social networks to follow the news about my friends.		.757
	M7	I am using social networks to share information and resources with my friends.		.814

Upon examination of the table above, the usage purposes in the first four items tap self-presentation, establishing new friendships or creating groups, whereas, the second four items refers to the individual's reviving the relationships in real life and maintaining the existing relationships. In this framework, the first factor was named, "establishing new relationships" and the second factor was named, "maintaining the existent relationships". The findings were in line with the results of the study conducted by Mazman and Usluel (2011).

The reliability analysis was conducted on the final scale and the Cronbach α reliability coefficient was found to be α = 0.88. The reliability coefficient for the sub-dimension of establishing new relationships was calculated as α = 0.83 and for the sub-dimension of maintaining existent relationships as α = 0.85.

Users' Perceptions on the Effects of Social Networks Scale: During the development process of the users' perceptions on the effects of social networks scale, the most common effects in the literature (Fodeman & Monroe 2009; Bayzan & Küçükali 2009; Hargittai & Hsieh 2010; Aksüt et al. 2012) were determined. This scale consists of 30 items. For each item, 5 choices were offered to the respondent. These are as follows: 1= No such effect, 2= There is such effect and it is positive, 3= There is such effect and it is negative, 4= There is such effect and it is risky, 5= I have no idea. This scale was administered to 2 7th grade and 2 8th grade via the interview method with regard to the suitability and comprehensibility of the scale. At the end of the interviews, it was observed that some statements were not meaningful for the students, they were excluded from the scale. The items that were unclear to the respondents were corrected, the scale was put into practice and comprised of 21 items. After the administration of the scale, exploratory factor analysis was conducted and it was found that 2 items react low load to the factors. These two items were excluded from the scale and the scale consists of 19 items. The results of the KMO and Barlett tests and the results of the factor analysis are given below.

KMO= .891   Bartlett statistically significant (p<.01)

Table 2. Users' perception on the effect of social network scale basic components analysis results

Factor	Items	Effects of Social Networks	Factor Loads 1	2	3
Academic Competencies	M1	Social network sites develop the learning performance of users by increasing the range and amount of accessible information.			.493
	M2	Social network sites provide a connection with many people for explorative aims.			.788
	M3	Social network sites give students' control of learning by providing an opportunity for the users to make their own decisions.			.495
	M4	Spending time on social network sites affects success in lessons.			.571
	M5	Social network sites change students' technological competence.			.487
Social Relationships	M7	Social network sites accelerate social improvement (friendship relationships, joining in new groups) of students.		.725	
	M8	Social network sites affect the social lives of users by providing the opportunity to meet new people.		.706	
	M9	Social network sites affect one's face-to-face communication with friends.		.594	
	M10	Social network sites affect one's face-to-face communication with family.		.702	
	M11	Social network sites ensure one's relationship to be continuous independent of time and environment.		.550	
	M12	The use of social network sites causes misunderstandings among people because of feedbacks (comments, likes etc.).		.626	
	M13	Social network sites facilitate the understanding of social values (the behaviors which the society accepts, approves or rejects…)		.612	
private sphere-self improvement	M14	Social network sites affect the lives of individuals and change their personality (assertiveness, shyness etc.).	.644		
	M16	Social network sites affect the creativity of the individuals.	.609		
	M17	Social networks sites affect the mental development of the individual due to its interactivity.	.562		
	M18	Social network sites affect the point of view of the users towards new opinions.	.689		
	M19	The users' writing regarding their status about what they are doing and where they are cause their private lives' to be followed.	.636		
	M20	The users' writing on their status about what they are doing and where they are in the social network sites make their lives open to external influences.	.677		
	M21	Social network sites cause occurrence of different opinions on the individuals via lying and gossiping.	.701		

When taking the contents of the items into consideration, the factors were categorized as academic competencies, social relationships and private sphere-self-improvement. The reliability analysis was conducted on the final scale and the Cronbach α coefficient was calculated as α = 0.90. The reliability coefficient was calculated as α=0.62 for the sub-dimension of academic self-efficacies, as α = 0.84 for the sub-dimension of social relationships and as α = 0.84 for the sub-dimension of private sphere-self-improvement.

2.3. Data Analysis

In this study, t-test was used for the independent groups in the analysis of the data on social networks usage purposes. Crosstabs and Pearson Chi-Square tests were used to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the usage purposes of social networks and perceptions on their effects. As stated above, the data collection scale gave quite

good values. To illustrate more clearly the responses to the questions, factor analysis results were used only to categorize the items and the Crosstabs and Pearson Chi-Square test were preferred for the analysis of the data.

3. FINDINGS

In this study, the users were primarily examined in terms of the usage purposes of social networks. The findings on the total picture according to the demographical variables are given in Table 3.

Table 3. The usage purpose of the social networks

	Purpose		N	$\overline{X}$	Sd	t	df	Sig.
Total	Establishing new relationships		149	10.175	4.607	-16.097	148	**.000***
	Maintaining existent relationships			14.812	3.775			
Sex	Establishing new relationships	Male	79	10.772	4.693	1.693	147	.093
		Female	70	9.5000	4.445			
	Maintaining existent relationships	Male	79	14.506	4.047	-1.051	147	.295
		Female	70	15.157	3.437			
Age	Establishing new relationships	12-13	80	9.4250	4.50253	-2.165	147	**.032***
		14-15	69	11.0435	4.60637			
	Maintaining existent relationships	12-13	80	14.4625	3.98397	-1.219	147	.225
		14-15	69	15.2174	3.50155			
Number of Used Sites	Establishing new relationships	One	97	8.9485	4.00357	-4.491	89.22	**.000***
		Several	52	12.4615	4.82014			
	Maintaining existent relationships	One	97	14.1443	3.62281	-3.030	147	**.003***
		Several	52	16.0577	3.76992			
Frequency of Use	Establishing new relationships	1-2 hours a day	67	12.0299	4.95119	4.621	119.51	**.000**
		2-3 hours a week	82	8.6585	3.69257			
	Maintaining existent relationships	1-2 hours a day	67	15.8657	3.47238	3.173	147	**.002**
		2-3 hours a week	82	13.9512	3.81324			

p<.05

When the data in the table is examined, it can be concluded that social networks are used to maintain existent relationships rather than establish new relationships. It was found that the usage purpose does not show a significant difference regarding gender while there were significant differences regarding age, number of used sites and frequency of usage. It was also concluded that the users at the ages of 14-15 have a higher tendency to establish new relationships compared with the ones who are at 12-13. It was found that there was no significant difference between the age groups in terms of maintaining existent relationships. The tendency to both establish new relationships and to maintain existent relationships is significantly higher for respondents who are members of "several" social network sites. The users who are active 1-2 hours a day on social network sites of which they are members tend to use the social networks with the purposes of establishing new relationships and maintaining the existent relationships more compared to the users who are active 2-3 hours a week.

Another question examines users' perceptions regarding the effects of social networks and the relationship of these perceptions with the usage purposes. Thus, analyses were administered on 3 effect groups and the results are given in the Table 4, 5 and 6.

Table 4. Users' perceptions on the effects of social networks

Effects		No Effect	Positive Effect	Negative Effect	Risky	No Idea
Effects on Academic Competencies	f	11	46	50	26	16
	%	7.4	30.9	33.6	17.4	10.7
Effects on Social Relationships	f	10	35	55	30	19
	%	6.7	23.5	36.9	20.1	12.8
Effects on Private Sphere and Self-Improvement	f	4	27	61	29	28
	%	2.7	18.1	40.9	19.5	18.8

When Table 4 is examined, it can be concluded that the choice of "negative effect" gave the highest value in the dimension of social networks' effects on academic competencies, and the choice of "positive effect" closely followed. The item within this group "Spending time on social network sites affects the academic success" has the highest risk value (12.1%). According to Table 4, 23.5% of the participants stated that social networks positively affect social relationships while 36.9% of the participants stated that social networks negatively affect social relationships. Also, 20.1% of participants thought that social networks are risky for social relationships. The item within this group "Social network sites affect the social lives of the users by providing the opportunity to meet new people" has the highest risk value (27.5%). The participant rate of participants who stated that social networks have positive effects on the private sphere and self-improvement is 18.1% while the rate of participants who stated that they have negative effects is 40.9%. Also, 19.5% of the participants thought that social networks are risky in terms of private sphere and self-improvement.

Table 5. Perceptions of users using social networks to establish new relationships

Effects	Estublishing new relationships		No Effect	Positive Effect	Negative Effect	Risky	No Idea	Pearson Chi-Square Asymp. Sig.
Effects on Academic Competencies	Never	%	8.0	**38.0**	28.0	20.0	6.0	
	Rarely	%	2.7	**32.4**	29.7	16.2	18.9	
	Sometimes	%	2.9	20.6	52.9	17.6	5.9	.115
	Usually	%	13.3	26.7	**40.0**	13.3	6.7	
	Always	%	23.1	30.8	7.7	15.4	**23.1**	
	Total	%	7.4	**30.9**	**33.6**	17.4	10.7	
Effects on Social Relationships	Never	%	6.0	20.0	42.0	28.0	4.0	
	Rarely	%	5.4	16.2	37.8	24.3	16.2	
	Sometimes	%	.0	32.4	41.2	14.7	11.8	.017*
	Usually	%	13.3	26.7	**33.3**	13.3	13.3	
	Always	%	23.1	30.8	7.7	.0	**38.5**	
	Total	%	6.7	**23.5**	**36.9**	20.1	12.8	
Effects on Private Sphere and Self-Improvement	Never	%	.0	18.0	50.0	22.0	10.0	
	Rarely	%	5.4	13.5	35.1	16.2	29.7	
	Sometimes	%	.0	11.8	50.0	23.5	14.7	.016*
	Usually	%	6.7	26.7	**33.3**	**26.7**	6.7	
	Always	%	7.7	38.5	7.7	.0	**46.2**	
	Total	%	2.7	18.1	40.9	19.5	18.8	

When the data in the table 5 is examined, it can be concluded that there are some relationships between the users' usage purpose of social networks to "establish new relationships" and their perceptions on the effects of social networks. However, the consistency of these relationships is open to question. The users who "never" uses or "rarely" uses social networks to establish new relationships perceive, at a higher rate, that social networks have "positive effects" on academic competencies; while users who "usually" use social networks to establish new relationships perceive, at a higher rate, that social networks have "negative effects" on academic competencies. There is no statistically significant relationship between the tendency of users to use social networks to establish new relationships and their perceptions on the effect of social networks on academic competencies.

A significant relationship between users' perceptions on the effects of social networks on social relationships and the tendency to use social networks to establish new relationships was determined. The users who "never" or "rarely" use social networks to establish new relationships are more likely to think that social networks adversely affect social relationships. Also, this group has a higher tendency to select "risky" for the use of social network. It has been observed that the users who "usually" use social networks to establish new relationships have a higher tendency to select "negative effect"; however, they selected "risky" for the use of social network at a lower rate. Furthermore, it was determined that a considerable rate (38.5%) of users who "always" use social networks to establish new relationships were more likely to select "no idea."

Similarly, there are significant relationships between the perceptions on the effects of social networks on private sphere and self-improvement and the tendency to use the social networks with purpose of establishing new relationships. The users who "never" or "rarely" use social networks to establish new relationships have a higher rate of reporting that social networks adversely affect the private sphere and self-improvement. Also, this group was more likely to choose "risky" for the use of social network. It was observed that the users who "usually" use social networks to establish new relationships have a higher tendency to respond that the behavior has "negative effect" and is "risky." Moreover, users who chose "always" to use social networks to establish new relationships were found not to choose "risky" while they were more likely to choose "no idea" at the rate of 46.2%.

Table 6 demonstrates that there are no significant relationships between users' tendency to employ social networks in order to maintain existing relationships and their perceptions regarding the effects of social networks. It is concluded that all users are far more likely to think that the effects of social networks are negative. The tendency in heading for the choices of "There is such effect and it is negative" or "There is such effect and it is risky" of the users who "never" or "rarely" use the social networks to maintain their existing relationships gives the impression that the perceptions regarding the effects of social networks affect the usage purposes or the style of usage. However, the fact that the users who selected "always" for the use of social networks to maintain their existing relationships tended to choose negative effect makes it necessary to pay more attention when interpreting the results. Furthermore, it is remarkable that the users who "usually" or "always" use social networks to maintain their existing relationships are more likely to choose "no idea."

Table 6. Perceptions of users using social networks to maintain existing relationships

Effects	Maintaining Existent Relationships		No Effect	Positive Effect	Negative Effect	Risky	No Idea	Pearson Chi-Square Asymp. Sig.
Effects on Academic Competencies	Never	%	.0	20.0	60.0	.0	20.0	.186
	Rarely	%	11.1	33.3	33.3	22.2	.0	
	Sometimes	%	5.3	22.8	33.3	28.1	10.5	
	Usually	%	9.4	43.8	34.4	6.3	6.3	
	Always	%	8.7	26.1	**34.8**	**15.2**	**15.2**	
	Total	%	7.4	**30.9**	**33.6**	17.4	10.7	
Effects on Social Relationships	Never	%	.0	20.0	60.0	.0	20.0	.076
	Rarely	%	5.4	16.2	37.8	24.3	16.2	
	Sometimes	%	5.3	17.5	40.4	29.8	7.0	
	Usually	%	9.4	18.8	**28.1**	**31.3**	**12.5**	
	Always	%	6.5	32.6	**37.0**	2.2	**21.7**	
	Total	%	6.7	23.5	**36.9**	20.1	12.8	
Effects on Private Sphere and Self-Improvement	Never	%	,0	20.0	40.0	20.0	20.0	.906
	Rarely	%	,0	33.3	44.4	11.1	11.1	
	Sometimes	%	,0	12.3	45.6	22.8	19.3	
	Usually	%	3.1	21.9	**34.4**	**21.9**	**18.8**	
	Always	%	6.5	19.6	**39.1**	**15.2**	**19.6**	
	Total	%	2.7	18.1	**40.9**	19.5	18.8	

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is to determine study group's perception on the effects of social networks and whether their perceptions affect their usage purposes. The study was conducted with a limited number of non-random study groups. Within this limitation, this study produced the results, questions, and suggestions as described below.

The users' tendency to employ social networks to pursue the "existing relationships" was found to be higher than the tendency to use social networks in order to "establish new relationships. This result is in parallel with the some of the studies (Ellison, Steinfeld & Lampe 2007; Şener 2009; Kujath 2011) in literature. The usage purpose of maintaining existing relationships includes old friends, sharing information and source with friends, enriching communication with friends and following news about friends. Therefore, users may think they use social networks safely or their perception of the risk may be low.

Another result of the study is that the usage purpose of social networks is not significantly different according to gender. Nevertheless, there are conflicting findings in the literature which find that male users have a higher tendency to establish new friendships (Mazman & Usluel 2011) or that female users mostly use social networks to establish new friendships (Newham 2012). The differences among these findings could be a result of such factors as the examined social network site, the quality of the study group, changing technology and new relationships.

In this study, it was found that there are some significant relationships between the usage purposes of social networks and variables such as the number of used site, age, and usage frequency. It was determined that users in the 14-15 year old age group are more likely to use social networks with the usage purpose of "establishing new relationships"; users who are members of "several" social network site are more likely than users who are members of "one"

social network site, and users who spend 1-2 hours a day are more likely than those who spend 2-3 hours a week on social network sites. In addition, there is no differentiation between users regarding the tendency towards "maintaining existing relationships". It was found that users who are members of "several" social network sites are more likely use social networks in order to "maintain existing relationships while those who are a member of "one" social network site, and the users who spend 1-2 hours a day on social network sites, are also more likely to intend this use compared with those who spend 2-3 hours a week in social network sites. The results point out that the likelihood that individual usage of (children, participants etc.) online network sites are affected by such variables as age, the number of the affiliated sites and usage frequency. Hargittai and Hsieh (2010) emphasize that the interaction between the number of affiliated sites and usage frequency can be the determinant of the difference in social network use.

Another sub-question of the study is whether the usage purposes of the users are affected by their perceptions on the effects of social networks. The effects of the social networks on the users were examined within three groups: Effects on the academic competencies, effects on social relations and effects on private sphere and self-improvement. The obtained results are as follows:

The choice of "negative effect" took the highest value in terms of perceptions regarding the effects of social networks on academic competencies; the choice of "positive effect" closely followed this choice. In this study, 17.4% of users stated that social networks' effects on the academic competencies are "risky". Also, 23.5% of users stated that social networks affect social relationships in a positive way while 36.9% of users stated that this effect is negative. And, 20.1 % of users think that social networks effects on social relationships are "risky". In this group, the item, "social network sites affect users' social lives by providing the opportunity to meet new people" has the highest risk rate (27.5%). In parallel with these results, Newham (2012) stated that the time spent on the social networks decreases the time spent with friends in face-to-face communication, social networks adversely affect activities with family, and also stated that 53.7% of users are not of the opinion that social networks enhance social relationships. The user rate that stated that the social networks have positive effects on private sphere and self-improvement is 18.1% and the rate of those who stated the effects are negative is 40.9%. In addition, 19.5% of users reported that social networks are risky in terms of private sphere and self-improvement. At first sight, the results indicate that users are becoming aware of the risks and negative effects of social networks. However, 19% of users' choice, "no idea," necessitates an alternative interpretation.

The relationships between the usage purposes of social networks and the perceptions of users regarding the effects of social networks were examined and the obtained results are as follows. There is no statistically significant relationship between the users' tendency to use social networks to "establish new relationships" and their perceptions on the effects of social networks on academic competencies. However, there are significant relationships between the users' tendency to select "establish new relationships" and their perception on the effects of social networks on social relationships and private sphere- self-improvement. No significant relationship was determined between the usage purpose of "maintaining existing relationships" and the perceptions on the effects of social networks for any effect group. Kabre and Brown (2011) also did not find a significant relationship regarding the effect of time spent on Facebook on academic performance and life quality. This result supports the findings in this study.

The users who "never" or "rarely" use social networks to "establish new relationships "are more likely to think that the social networks have "positive effects" on academic efficacies while the users who "usually" use social networks to "establish new relationships "are more likely to think that the effects of social networks on academic competencies are "negative". Also, 14.5% of users who always use social networks to establish new relationships think that social networks' effects on academic competencies are risky. This rate emphasizes that there is no relation. This

indicates that users are not interested in the effects of social networks on academic competencies. The literature that states that social networks are generally used for social communication (Toprak et al. 2009) supports this finding.

The users who "never" or "rarely" use social networks to "establish new relationships" are more likely to think that social networks adversely affect social relationships. This group also has more likelihood of selecting "risky". It was noted that users who "usually" use social networks to establish new relationships are more likely to select "negative effect" while they are less likely to choose "risky". Considerable portions (38.5%) of users who "always" use social networks to establish new relationships are more likely to select "no idea." The significant relationship observed users usage purposes and their perceptions on the effects of social networks, leads to the conclusion that social networks are used consciously. However, the rate of users who selected "no idea" requires a detailed examination of the issue.

Similar findings were obtained regarding social networks' effects on "private sphere and self-improvement". There are significant relationships between the perceptions of the effects of social networks on private sphere and self-improvement and the tendency of participants to use social networks to "establish new relationships". The users who "never" or "rarely" use social networks to establish new relationships are more likely to think that social networks adversely affect private sphere and self-improvement. At the same time, this group is more likely to select "risky "The results also suggest that users who "usually" visit (too many "uses" may want to look through entire text to have consistently in such verbs) social networks to "establish new relationships "are more likely to select "negative effect" and "risky". Nonetheless, the users who "always" use social networks for the same intention are unlikely to select "risky" and instead choose "no idea" at the rate of 46.2%. Again, the findings regarding the likelihood of selecting "no idea" are interesting.

The users who "usually" view(another verb choice would sound better) social networks to "establish new relationships" think that the effects of social networks on social relations and private sphere-self-improvement are "negative" or "risky" at a higher rate than those who "rarely" use social networks for the same purpose. Hence, the possibility of any negative or risky result does not prevent us from being a part of the social networks and sharing our profiles. At least, this finding is the case for the considerable rate of the study group in this study. What are the motivating factors to use social networks despite their negative effects and risks? EU Kids Online Research Project (2010)'s data on 30% of European children between the ages of 9-16 suggests that communication with people whom they never encounter face-to-face is risky but enjoyable activity, this finding strengthens our question. Çelik (2012) found that most of a 6th and 7thgrade class (77.6%) regard the Internet as an important exploration tool and learning environment and it can also answer this question.

Users' tendency to choose "no idea" for those who "always" use social networks to "establish new relationships" suggests that at least a considerable rate of the study group are not aware of the social network of which they are members and consequently are not aware of their actions, nor do they contemplate this question. The age of social network use is gradually decreasing and children, who have not completed their socialization process in real life, get the opportunity of creating his/her own online social network and thus behave more freely. That is why these results may not be surprising. On the other hand, these results high light the responsibility of educational institutions. Educational institutions should be on the students' side in the socialization process out of the school as well as in school rather than prohibiting any communication environment or tool (social networks, mobile phones etc.) that they cannot control. Accordingly, educational institutions can make students' daily lives, their methods of communication and sharing information, related to the context of school. By seeing the natural interaction dynamics and transporting these to face-to-face environments, much preferable

structures can be reached. Also, attribution to their socialization process enables students to be more conscious users.

When the literature and the results of this study are considered together, it is clear that it is hard to obtain generalizable results on social networks and their effects. This may be because most social network interaction stems from individual effort. Consequently, it is of utmost importance to raise children' and awareness about the negative and positive effects of social network communication. Using filters to regulate the internet and involvement with social networks is not a solution. The study of Çelik (2012) suggests that nearly half of children do not have a positive opinion on using filters to control internet accessibility. The conscious and effective way to deal with these difficulties should be gained from children. Education should give opportunity to transport the interactions in the social networks to the face-to-face environments and should support creating new social norms to qualify users' relationships in the social networks.

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Geniş Özet

Çevrimiçi sosyal ağlar, insanların çoktandır içinde yaşadıkları sanal dünyada yarattıkları yeni sosyal yapı olarak tanımlanabilir. Bu ortamlarda kullanıcılar ait olacakları sosyal ağı kendileri seçmekte ya da kendi ağlarını oluşturmaktadırlar. Buradaki temel soru şudur. Sosyal ağ kullanıcıları parçası oldukları sanal sosyal ortamlarda neler yapmakta, ortamın kendileri ya da diğerleri üzerindeki etkilerini nasıl algılamaktadırlar? Bu araştırma böyle bir sorudan hareketle gerçekleştirilmiştir. Özellikle sosyal ağ sitelerindeki geçmişi çok uzun olmayan 12-13 ve 14-15 yaş grubu kullanıcılar temel kaygı noktasını oluşturmaktadır. Buna göre sorumuzu hedef kitlemizi katarak tekrarlarsak, 12-15 yaş aralığında kendi sosyal ağını oluşturma fırsatı bulan kullanıcı neler yapmakta, ortamın etkilerini nasıl algılamaktadır? Algılarıyla kullanım amaçları arasında bir ilişki var mıdır?

Betimsel yöntemin kullanıldığı araştırma, 12-13 ve 14-15 yaş grubu 149 kullanıcı üzerinde yürütülmüştür. Veriler araştırmacı tarafından geliştirilen iki ölçekle toplanmıştır. Sosyal ağ kullanım amaçları ölçeği, 5'li likert tipinde, 2 alt boyuttan oluşan 8 maddelik bir ölçektir. Ölçeğin Cronbach α güvenirlik katsayısı $\alpha= 0,88$'dir. Yeni ilişkiler kurma alt boyutu için güvenirlik katsayısı $\alpha= 0,83$; mevcut ilişkileri sürdürme alt boyutu içinse $\alpha= 0,85$ olarak hesaplanmıştır. Sosyal ağların etkilerine ilişkin kullanıcı algıları ölçeği 19 maddelik, 3 alt boyuttan oluşan bir ölçektir. Ölçeğin Cronbach α güvenirlik katsayısı hesaplanmış ve $\alpha= ,90$ bulunmuştur. Güvenirlik katsayısı akademik yeterlikler alt boyutu için $\alpha= ,62$, sosyal ilişkiler alt boyutu için $\alpha= ,84$ ve özel alan-kişisel gelişim alt boyutu içinse $\alpha= ,84$ olarak hesaplanmıştır. Çalışmada sosyal ağ kullanım amaçları ile ilgili verilerin analizinde bağımsız gruplar için t testi, sosyal ağların kullanım amaçlarıyla etkilerine ilişkin algılar arasındaki ilişkiler içinse çapraz tablolar ve Pearson Ki-Kare kullanılmıştır.

Çalışmada 12-13 ve 14-15 yaş grubu kullanıcılar öncelikle sosyal ağları kullanım amaçları açısından incelenmiştir. Bulgular sosyal ağların yeni ilişkiler kurmaktan çok mevcut ilişkileri sürdürmek amacıyla kullanıldığı yönündedir. Kullanım amaçlarının cinsiyete bağlı olarak anlamlı bir değişim göstermediği; yaşa, kullanılan site sayısına ve kullanım yoğunluğuna bağlı olarak ise farklılaştığı saptanmıştır. 14-15 yaş grubundaki kullanıcıların 12-13 yaş grubundaki kullanıcılara göre yeni ilişkiler kurmaya daha yönelimli olduğu, mevcut ilişkilerini sürdürme açısındansa yaş grupları arasında anlamlı farklılığın olmadığı belirlenmiştir. Kullanılan site sayısı açısından hem yeni ilişkiler kurma hem de mevcut ilişkilerini sürdürme amaçlarına yönelim, "birkaç" sosyal ağ sitesine üye olan kullanıcılarda anlamlı derecede daha yüksektir. Benzer biçimde her gün 1-2 saat üyesi olduğu sosyal ağda aktif olan kullanıcılar her iki amaca haftada 2-3 saat sosyal ağ sitelerinde bulunan kullanıcılardan daha fazla yönelmiş görünmektedirler. Sonuçlar çevrimiçi

sosyal ağların kullanım amaçlarına ilişkin eğilimlerin yaş, üye olunan site sayısı ve kullanım sıklığı gibi özelliklerden etkilendiğine işaret etmektedir.

Çalışmanın bir diğer sorusu kapsamında sosyal ağların etkilerine ilişkin kullanıcı algılarıyla, bunların kullanım amaçlarıyla ilişkisi incelenmiştir. Kullanıcıların % 33,6'sı sosyal ağların akademik yeterlikleri olumsuz etkilediğini, % 30,9'u ise olumlu etkilediğini belirtmiş; %17,4'ü ise sosyal ağların akademik yeterlikler açısından risk içerdiğini ifade etmiştir. Kullanıcıların %23,5'i sosyal ağların sosyal ilişkileri olumlu yönde, % 36,9'u ise olumsuz yönde etkilediğini belirtmiştir. Kullanıcıların %20,1'i ise sosyal ağların sosyal ilişkiler açısından riskler içerdiğini düşünmektedir. Sosyal ağların özel alan ve kişisel gelişim açısından olumlu etkileri olduğunu belirten kullanıcı oranı % 18,1, olumsuz etkileri olduğunu belirtenlerin oranı % 40,9' dur. Kullanıcıların %19,5'i sosyal ağların özel alan ve kişisel gelişim açısından riskler içerdiğini düşünmektedir. Bu noktada kullanıcıların sosyal ağların etkilerine ilişkin algıları ile kullanım amaçları arasındaki ilişki incelenmiştir. Elde edilen sonuçlar şöyledir.

Kullanıcıların sosyal ağları "yeni ilişkiler kurmak" amacıyla kullanma eğilimleriyle sosyal ağların akademik yeterliklere dönük etkilerine ilişkin algıları arasında anlamlı ilişki gözlenmemiş; sosyal ilişkilere ve özel alan-kişisel gelişime dönük etkilerine ilişkin algıları arasında ise anlamlı ilişkiler bulunmuştur. Sosyal ağları "mevcut ilişkilerini sürdürmek" için kullanma amacıyla sosyal ağların etkilerine ilişkin algılar arasında, hiçbir boyutta anlamlı ilişkiler bulunmamıştır. Sosyal ağları yeni ilişkiler kurmak için "hiçbir zaman" kullanmayan ya da "nadiren" kullanan kullanıcılar daha yüksek bir oranla sosyal ağların akademik yeterliklere "olumlu etkileri" olduğunu düşünürken; sosyal ağları "çoğunlukla" yeni ilişkiler kurmak için kullananlar, daha yüksek bir oranla (% 40) sosyal ağların akademik yeterliklere "olumsuz etkisi" olduğunu düşünmektedirler. Sosyal ağları "yeni ilişkiler kurmak" için "hiçbir zaman kullanmayan" ya da "nadiren kullananlar" daha yüksek bir oranla sosyal ağların sosyal ilişkileri olumsuz etkilediğini düşünmektedir. Sosyal ağları "çoğunlukla" yeni ilişkiler kurmak için kullananların da daha yüksek bir oranla "olumsuz etki" seçeneğine yöneldiği, "riske" ise düşük oranlarda işaret ettikleri belirlenmiştir. Sosyal ağları yeni ilişkiler kurmak için "her zaman" kullananların ise önemli bir kısmının (%38.5) "fikrim yok" seçeneğine yöneldikleri saptanmıştır. Sosyal ağların "özel alan ve kişisel gelişime dönük etkileri" konusunda da benzer bulgulara erişilmiştir. Sosyal ağların özel alan ve kişisel gelişime dönük etkilerine ilişkin algılarla sosyal ağları "yeni ilişkiler kurmak" amacıyla kullanma eğilimi arasında anlamlı ilişkiler bulunmaktadır. Sosyal ağları yeni ilişkiler kurmak için "hiçbir zaman kullanmayan" ya da "nadiren kullananlar" daha yüksek bir oranla sosyal ağların özel alan ve kişisel gelişimi olumsuz etkilediğini düşünmektedir. Bu grup aynı zamanda "risk içerme" seçeneğine daha fazla yönelmiştir. Sosyal ağları "çoğunlukla" yeni ilişkiler kurmak için kullananlar "olumsuz etki" ve "risk içerme" seçeneklerine daha yüksek oranlarda yönelmişken; "her zaman" kullanan kullanıcılar "riskli yönleri var" seçeneğine hiç yönelmemiş, "fikrim yok" seçeneğine ise %46.2'lik bir oranla yönelmişlerdir.

Çalışma, 12-15 yaş grubu sosyal ağ kullanıcılarının en azından bir kısmının belli ölçülerde de olsa bilinçli olduklarının ipuçlarını vermiştir. Öte yandan, sosyal ağları "yeni ilişkiler kurmak" için kullanan grubun önemli bir kısmının sosyal ağların etkileri konusunda "fikrim yok" seçeneğine yönelmiş olması, bu çalışmanın en önemli sonucu olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Zira bu sonuç, üzerinde çalışılan grubun en azından önemli bir kısmının üyesi olduğu sosyal ağın etkilerini hiç düşünmediğini akla getirmektedir. Sosyal ağ kullanım yaşının giderek düştüğü ve gerçek yaşamdaki sosyalleşme süreçlerini tamamlamamış çocukların sosyal ağlarda özgürce davranma şansı elde ettiği düşünülürse bu sonuçların, eğitim sistemlerinin sorumluluğuna dikkat çektiği söylenebilir. Eğitim kurumları okul dışı sosyalleşme süreçlerinde de öğrencilerin yanında yer alarak; onların günlük yaşamlarını, iletişim ve bilgi paylaşım biçimlerini okul bağlamı ile ilişkili hale getirebilir. Öğrencilerin doğal etkileşim dinamiklerini görmek ve bunları yüz yüze ortamlara taşımak yoluyla daha tercih edilir yapılanmalar gerçekleştirebilir ve onların çevrimiçi sosyal ağlarda gerçekleştirdikleri sosyalleşme süreçlerine katılarak daha bilinçli kullanıcılar olmalarını sağlamaya dönük yönlendirmeler için olanaklarını artırabilir.