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Extended Abstract

The Relationship of Social Media Usage Areas and Addiction

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Abstract

There is a current need to focus on the relationship of social media areas and the addictiveness of social media practices. The fact is that social media, the effects of which can be found in every moment of daily life to the extent that it is easily accessible to almost every individual, has the potential to penetrate all macro- and micro-level relationships of the individual (political, social, economic, cultural, etc.) in the same way. Both an individual's needs and desires, as well as social media practices in terms of areas of use, make social media addiction possible. In this study, the relationship that social media usage has with addiction, over the headings of subject-freedom, an alternative media, democratic culture, and psychological satisfaction, which are the most important social media usage practices of individuals found in the existing literature, is theoretically discussed based on the literature using the technique of descriptive analysis. The importance of the relationship that addiction has with social media in terms of its structural features and usage areas has been emphasized in the results of the study at the same time as being separate from the existing studies in the literature. It has also been expressed in the literature that related to the use of social media, these usage areas, which correspond to the imposition of much more positive meaning in four basic stages, can at the same time open the road to social media addiction.

Keywords

Internet • New media • Social media • Addiction • Communication technologies

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What time existentially corresponds to for individual and community life, especially what the technologies of social media and the Internet correspond to as they have drastically changed and converted the perceptions and concepts of the areas and practices of daily life in this era, confronts people as an important issue that deserves to be focused on. The arrival of interest on many topics is seen in the literature with studies mostly on the possible familiarization of social media usage with interactive communication (Blanchard, 2011; Cho, 2014; Hampton, Goulet, Rainie, & Purcell, 2011; Lin & Lu, 2011), how sharing was found there, how and with whom sharing is done (Boyd, 2014; Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2014; Zúniga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012), how it can be used as an advertising and public-relations tool (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), its use in non-profit and volunteer organizations (Nah & Saxton, 2012), and so on. However, some studies in the literature have an approach that can be seen as a recipe for deliverance (Baron, 2008; Boyd, 2014; Brake, 2008) in many areas of the Internet, especially social media and political, social, economic, psychological, and other areas of the individual in the 21st century (Boyd, 2014; Puddephatt & Oesterlund, 2012; Rideout, 2012). Social media's more positive contributions have been processed under titles such as the subject-freedom, alternative media, democratic culture, and psychological satisfaction from among the examples in the literature that have been summarized and the countless ones that can be linked (Juris, 2012; Kim, Hsu, & Zúñiga, 2013; Lee, Choi, Kim, & Kim, 2014; Özgüven & Mucan, 2013).

Importance has been given to new communication technologies that have put a boundary between themselves and the bygone era of mass media at the same time that it has been characterized with adjectives such as *new*, *social*, and *smart*.

In summary of the literature, the formation of a positive perception in social-media users though the above -mentioned four key areas is a natural result because of its structural features and the emphasis on its difference from the tools of mass media (Hargittai, 2008; Papacharissi, 2002a, 2009b; Ross, 2009).

Some Basic Uses of Social Media Networks

These days, social media has an importance for individual and community life to an extent that is undoubted and undisputed. This is because social media, which occurred on the basis of the aforementioned characteristics, has been presented as an indispensable event through its more positive characteristics (Bazarova, 2012; Boyd, 2014; Chou & Chih, 2003).

This study purposes to read about social media addiction over subject-freedom, alternative media, democracy, and psychological satisfaction, which have been featured as the main characteristics and most important areas of social media in

the previously summarized literature (see Babacan, 2015; Blanchard, 2011; Burke, Marlow, & Lento, 2010; Duggan et al., 2014; Toprak et al., 2009). In this sense, how the relationship of social media in the context of individual and community life, how the dominant format of presentation, and how this presentation have found counterbalance in the context of addiction are dealt with from the perspective of communications sociology. Additionally, what the general meaning of technology addiction is, how its dimensions and symptoms are understood, what its treatment is, what phases it contains, and so on, being beyond the limits of this study and the subject of other studies, have not been included in this study.

Subject-Freedom

The individual and rationality, the backdrop upon which modern epistemology has been completely founded, continue while maturing though the ingenuity of the central importance of the Internet and social media these days. In this sense, the basic idea that has nurtured this character for a long time is the “just do it” approach (Funk, 2011, p. 67). Identity in a horizontal society is fluid and clear; people feel “the right to plan and shape their lives as free as possible” (Friedman, 1999, p. 69).

Individuals being free in the environment of social media and using it effectively in the process of forming their own social subjects carries within the self an important potential for delusion. This is because the formation of freedom in the social media environment, through the process of societal-subject formation and the role of this process, should be evaluated together through many factors. However, whereas while social media’s central emphasis on the context of freedom was formed through scientific legitimacy in particular, the legitimacy and accuracy of social media practices were manufactured right in front of the eyes of individuals as a basis for their own experiences and as an actual and real political provision (Binark & Fidaner, 2011; Boyd, 2014; Ögütle & Göker, 2014).

The Culture of Democracy

Today, the development of democratic culture, undoubtedly one of the most important forms of presentation related to social media networks in the literature, has stressed its direction (Loader & Mercea, 2012). It has provided the emphasis of social media on developing the culture of democracy as a new universe that provides the ability to reciprocate and negotiate in the social, political, economic, cultural, and other processes of individual and social life (Tüfekçi & Wilson, 2012).

The thing that draws attention in the examples of some of the demands that have been most loudly voiced on the Internet and social media in recent years are the social events based in North Africa and the Middle East (especially Arab Spring),

in Turkey, and in different regions of the world, and are in the area of the Internet and social media's spread of the culture of democracy (Khondker, 2011; Markham, 2014). Additionally, some recent studies (Boyd, 2014, p. 156; Rettberg, 2009, p. 453) have emphasized this factor to be important, especially in Barack Obama's American presidential campaign, which saw the election of an African-American president, and later, its later use of social media.

What is offered and produced in relation to democracy, together with how it provides the opportunity to produce participation and content directly from the Internet and social media, remains unclear. For instance, provisions that can be found in the involvement and content production directly from the individual serves as a tool that weakens the democratic culture through animosity and hate speech (Akin, 2010, pp. 11–54). Even though the principle of participation, a precursor of democracy, has increased quantitatively, discussions continue in terms of creating a genuine democratic culture. In this sense, the democratic attitudes and purchasing behaviors in social media show:

The reaction of the way many people “follow fashion” in this developmental process, as is known, is put forth with just one click, “like,” or message. So many Internet activists don't even know what they want or why; they have no idea what they are opposed to or why. The reactions of those who believe are tamed before it develops into action by changing one's profile photo only on certain days, in this way relieving an injured conscience (Karagöz, 2013, p. 145).

An Alternative Media

Many studies that have been performed in the area of different disciplines of the social sciences in the 20th century have approached a critical perspective related to the tools of mass media and their functions (see Baudrillard, 1997; Bauman, 1999; Fukuyama, 2000; Horkheimer & Adorno, 2010; Marcuse, 1997). The tools of mass communication have been examined by viewing the most important tool in the formation of *mass society*, both on a local and global scale.

Currently, social media technology, especially the Internet in the last quarter century, have caused a great change in the above-pictured perception related to the tools of communication. This new technology, which has enabled considerable individual-centered, focused use both as the subject and the object that it personally is, has greatly changed perceptions related to the tools of media. Anymore, whatever can exist and complete the intersection of individual and society is believed to be able to occur far from the shadow of capital and power.

Like many social scientists who stated that the tools of mass media, defined as the old media, have been under the control of a small minority, Nilüfer Timisi made the

following statement about this situation: “The desires and enjoyments of the majority are determined by the minority. While old technologies usually gave several minorities permission to communicate, new communication technologies allow information to spread to most of those who want it” (Timisi, 2003, p. 82). Furthermore, Fenton and Barassi (2011, pp. 179–196), who emphasized the importance of social media as an alternative media for enhancing the perception of individualization and political participation, stated that digital media has created a new and privileged area and framework of communication for many people.

Psychological Satisfaction

Among the most important reasons that the technology of the Internet and social media can find a central place in individual life is that no doubt it corresponds to individuals’ ability to find a counterbalance with their psychological needs. The use of social media provides possibilities to many moral and emotional needs, sometimes to an individual’s loneliness, sometimes to their joy or sorrow, sometimes to their social and political participation, and so on; on the other hand, it also feeds the addiction to the tools of social media. These days, the user rate of social media usage, especially young users of social media (Bolton et al., 2013; Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Seo, Houston, Taylor Knight, Kennedy, & English, 2013), has reached a level that will significantly reduce the relations of people in real life. Likewise, time devoted to the use of social media in everyday life is increasing with each passing day (Sert Karaaslan, 2015; Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, 2015). Social media, whose rate of use has increased in just about every topic, also forms a central role at the same time in its dependence that has been acquired in individual life. Because of the social media’s above-mentioned structural feature, as well as its offering the opportunity to be an interactive user, individuals may be both the manufacturer and consumer of the content that is produced in the social media environment.

Social media, which is thought to be able to meet the psychological and emotional needs of the individual, has become an indispensable phenomenon in many aspects of everyday life, such as socializing, eliminating loneliness, being a form of leisure activity, and establishing relations with the opposite sex. In summary, it is necessary nowadays to focus on some of the Internet and social media technologies’ basic features that provide psychological satisfaction and their relationship with addiction. From this perspective, this new medium that has positioned itself as a versatile, multi-dimensional process increases dependency through psychological and socio-psychological dimensions. Because of this, it functions as a possibility that can meet psychological and emotional needs and as a technology whose needed structural features can be found anywhere at any moment.

Results

Regarding the four above-mentioned basic stages of the social media network, it is also necessary to focus on its relationship with addiction. Internet and social-media usage is technically possible at any moment and place; approaching its counterbalance as a great, positive contributor in basic issues such as subject-freedom, as an alternative media, as a culture of democracy, and as a psychological satisfaction also requires focus on the aspects that lead to being addicted to it. In short, it is necessary to consider the possibility of reviewing the relationship of social media and the individual.

The use of social media has emerged as the most important form of addiction which needs to be included in every moment of an individual's life, a response to the claim of an ego-centric life that thinks to be rid of all addictions over the emphasis of subject-freedom. Social media, although it serves an important function with regard to democratic participation as an alternative media, also should be noted for its ability to become an important tool of anti-democracy and disinformation. The subject-centered social practices of individuals, their whole world, and their developments bring about its own understanding. Therefore, the possibility that ego-centric social media practices create a paradox should be noted in terms of developing tolerance for others and of developing democratic maturity. In addition, the Internet and social media, which are considered as an alternative media, should at the same time also be noted for their lies, slander, desecration of personality and dignity, resentment and anger, and hate, as well as their ability to transform into a tool of the ruling class for manipulation.

As a result, social media, as well as the above-mentioned intended uses, continues to play an important role in the center of individual and social life through many of its features and practices. Likewise, the common direction of all areas of use and practice, which have been mentioned in measure of both the individual and society, needs to constantly be used within the denominator of social media's addictiveness. In this sense, this addictiveness of social media is not any one time of day, night, week, or month; it has a feature that can be found and used anywhere at any time. This study has been identified as an exploratory study on social media addiction as a new form of addiction that draws attention to four key areas.

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