UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD FACEBOOK USE

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Abstract

Together the Internet and the Web have profoundly affected our life for the past decades. Today, we can use the Web for communication, education, business, entertainment and searching information. In recent years, the use of Facebook has become widespread worldwide, especially among young generations. The main aim of this paper is to investigate the attitudes of undergraduate students toward Facebook use. Research data were obtained by surveying the undergraduate students of the Department of Business Administration and the Department of Economics at a public university in Turkey. According to results of the study; the attitudes of those who don't use Facebook toward Facebook use are more negative than Facebook users. Some attitudes of female Facebook users toward Facebook use are more negative compared to male Facebook users.

Keywords: *Facebook, undergraduate students, attitudes.*

1. Introduction

Social networking sites (SNSs) play an important role in the communication and socialization of people in the Internet (Moore & McElroy, 2012). Web 1.0-based websites are the very first steps of the Internet with traditional features of the media allow its users to have unilateral communication. On the other hand, today's websites allow their users to share information and pictures, collaborate with each other, and create new services and applications, besides their static features (Laudon & Laudon, 2011: 272). According to Laudon and Laudon (2012: 272-273), Web 2.0 can be defined with four distinctive features as follows: Social participation, user-generated content, interaction with each other and real-time user control. Today, social media is one of the most popular applications of Web 2.0.

Today, there are many social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, which are used by millions of people to communicate with friends, family, and colleagues (Qi & Edgar-Nevill, 2011). Facebook is one of the most popular SNSs among all these sites with a user profile ranging from teenagers in their early ages to the elders (Taneja, Vitrano & Gengo, 2014). Facebook enables its users to create their own profiles, add some friends, post something either on their own profile pages or friends' pages, share pictures and files and expand their social circles in addition to giving them the opportunity of establishing virtual relationships in ways similar to the relationships established in the real world. These virtual relationships become part of virtual communities, which are created among Facebook users who share similar interests (Taneja, Vitrano & Gengo, 2014).

Facebook has become the most popular social networking site especially among college students (Cheung, Chiu & Lee, 2011). In the studies conducted, it has been determined that university students spend lots of time on Facebook (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007, Milosevic-Dordevic & Zezelj, 2014; Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009).

Facebook use and the effects of Facebook on its users have been investigated in the previous studies. In these studies; Facebook and loneliness (Jin, 2013; Kross et al, 2013; Skues et al, 2012), Facebook and privacy (Bechmann, 2014; Dinev, Xu & Smith, 2009; Raynes-Goldie, 2010; Saeri et al, 2014; Stieger et al, 2012), the use of Facebook and personal characteristics of the users (Ljepava et al. 2013; Mehdizadeh, 2010; Moore & McElroy, 2012), Facebook and self-disclosure (Chen & Marcus, 2012; Kisekka, Bagchi-Sen & Rao, 2013), Facebook and addiction (Stieger et al., 2012; Hong et al., 2014) have been investigated.

According to the results of study conducted by Moody (2001), high levels of Internet use are associated with high levels of emotional loneliness and low levels of social loneliness (Moody, 2001). A similar situation applies to the use of SNSs as well. In this regard, although the use of Facebook drops peer-related loneliness down by making new friends in the short run, it results in increased peer-related loneliness over time (Teppers et al., 2014).

According to Morahan-Martina and Schumacher (2003) loneliness has been associated with increased Internet use. Lonely people may be drawn online because of the changed social interaction patterns online, the increased potential for companionship and as a way to modulate negative moods associated with loneliness (Morahan-Martina & Schumacher, 2003).

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Social networking sites may lead their users to be addicted. One of the most important psychological characteristics that increase the addiction is low self-esteem (Milosevic-Dordevic & Zezelj, 2014). According to Tazgnihi and Siedlecki (2013), there is a negative relationship between self-esteem and engagement with negative activities along with getting connected with others through Facebook (Tazghini and Siedlecki, 2013).

Along with benefits of social networking sites for their users, there are also some privacy problems caused by these online social technologies. Social networking sites are targeted by many groups since they store private information of hundreds of millions of people using these sites, therefore, these social sites work to make their privacy settings more powerful and strengthen their security tools (Qi & Edgar-Nevill, 2011). In this regard, social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn etc. limit privacy as part of their default settings and the users of these websites are able to edit their privacy options by going into settings (Qi & Edgar-Nevill, 2011). Facebook allows its users to hide some private information such as email address, phone number, marriage status, employment and birthdate from others (Qi & Edgar-Nevill, 2011).

Although social networking sites are spending many efforts to strengthen their privacy settings, there are some concerns arising associated with privacy of the information given by their users. These concerns form the basis of this study, in which the attitudes of university students toward Facebook use were investigated.

2. Methodology

In this study, convenience sampling method, one of the non-random sampling methods, was used. A questionnaire was applied on the students attended courses in the Department of Business Administration and the Department of Economics in the spring term of 2013-2014 academic years at Bilecik Şeyh Edebali University. The participation was voluntary and confidentiality was ensured. 789 of the responses have been evaluated. In the questionnaire form, students were asked to answer 21 questions, prepared by Kokoç and Çiçek (2011), about their attitudes toward Facebook use.

2.1. Analysis of Data

2.1.1. Demographic Characteristics

Demographic characteristics of the participants in the study are presented in Table 1. 69.58% of the students participated in the study were females, while 30.42% of them were males. 75% of the participants were in the range of 20-23 years old. 52.6% of the participants were juniors and seniors.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants Included in the Study

	n	%
Gender		
Female	549	69.58
Male	240	30.42
Age		
18	18	2.28
19	72	9.13
20	122	15.46
21	170	21.55
22	178	22.56
23	122	15.46
24-30	55	6.97
N/A	52	6.59
Year in School		
1th year (Freshman)	170	21.55
2nd year (Sophomore)	203	25.73
3rd year (Junior)	198	25.10
4th year (Senior)	217	27.50
N/A	1	0.13

2.1.2. Facebook Use of the Participants

Facebook membership status of the participants was asked and responses are given in Table 2.

Table 2. FacebookMembership Status of the Participants

	n	%
Facebook membership status		
I have an account (Active User)	696	88.21
I freeze my membership	64	8.11
I have not been a member before	16	2.03
I have no idea about Facebook	1	0.13
N/A	12	1.52

According to the results, 88.21% of the students are still active users of Facebook, whereas 16 students stated that they never become a member. 12 participants didn't answer this question.

Table 3. Facebook Use Characteristics of Participants

	n	%
Duration of membership of Facebook		
Less than 1 year	29	4.17
1-3 year(s)	91	13.07
3-5 years	255	36.64
5 years or more	292	41.95
N/A	29	4.17
How often do you use Facebook?		
When I find the chance	266	38.22
4 times or more in a day	139	19.97
	99	14.22

3 times in a day	110	15.80
Once in a day	49	7.04
Few times in a week	22	3.16
Once in a week	4	0.57
Few times in a month	5	0.72
Once in a month	1	0.14
Few times in a year	1	0.14
N/A		
How much time do you spend on Facebook per day?	189	27.16
Less than 30 minutes	238	34.20
30 Minutes - 1 hour	122	17.53
1-2 hour(s)	63	9.05
2-3 hours	83	11.93
3 hours or more	1	0.14
N/A		
How many friends do you have on your Facebook profile?	27	3.88
Less than 50 people	45	6.47
50-99 people	152	21.84
100-199 people	197	28.30
200-299 people	242	34.77
300 or more	33	4.74
N/A		

Those who are still active users were asked some questions regarding the use of Facebook. Their responses to these questions are presented in Table 3. It has been determined that most of the Facebook users (547 people, 78.6% of Facebook users) are a member to Facebook for at least 3 years. 266 people (38.22% of Facebook users) stated that they login to Facebook whenever they find a chance, whereas 139 people (19.97% of Facebook users) stated that they login to Facebook at least 4 times in a day. The majority of Facebook users (427 people) spend up to one hour per day on Facebook, while 83 people stated that they spend at least 3 hours on Facebook. The majority of Facebook users (439 people, 63.07% of Facebook users), who are still active users, stated that they have at least 200 friends on Facebook.

The mean and standard deviations for each answer given by participants to a five point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, ..., 5 = strongly agree) with 21 items are presented in Table 4. When items were put in an order based on their mean values, the items with the top three highest mean score are as follows: "I do not want to deal people that I do not know", "I think Facebook causes addiction" and "Virus can be transmitted to my computer through applications on Facebook". The last three items with the lowest mean values are determined as follows: "I think I can be misguided on Facebook without my will", "I think my Facebook membership could negatively affect future business opportunities" and "I do not like technology-based communication".

Table 4. Attitude toward Facebook Use

	Mean	St. Dev.
1) I think Facebook is a waste of time.	3.313	1.168
2) I have concerns about the security of my personal information on Facebook.	3.400	1.144
3) I do not like technology-based communication.	2.418	1.106
4) I think Facebook causes addiction.	3.718	1.238
5) I think Facebook damages the social skills.	3.441	1.250
6) I think using Facebook is unnecessary.	2.862	1.186
7) Virus can be transmitted to my computer through applications on Facebook.	3.698	1.116
8) I think Facebook negatively affect the academic achievement.	3.056	1.166
9) I think Facebook eliminates the privacy (security) of personal information.	3.351	1.148
10) I am uncomfortable with my private life brought out.	3.175	1.225
11) I am influenced by the negative news about Facebook.	2.876	1.204
12) There is no reason for me to use Facebook.	2.804	1.230
13) I do not want to deal people that I do not know.	3.778	1.158
14) I think my Facebook membership could negatively affect future business opportunities.	2.540	1.150
15) I do not want other people to see my private information.	3.661	1.119
16) I believe that Facebook is not a good channel to make a new friend.	3.231	1.261
17) I think I can be misguided on Facebook against my will.	2.803	1.199
18) I think Facebook weakens the relationships that I have established with my friends in the real life.	3.017	1.285
19) I do not find relationships realistic on Facebook.	3.631	1.176
20) I do not find Facebook useful.	3.129	1.134
21) I do not want to interact with too many people.	3.090	1.192

T-test was performed in order to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between attitudes of Facebook users and Non Facebook users toward Facebook use. T-test results are presented in Table 5. Based on the results, Facebook users have more positive attitudes toward Facebook use compared to those who don't use Facebook, as expected.

Table 5. Attitudes of Facebook Users and Non Facebook Users toward Facebook Use

	Non Facebook User		Facebook User		
	Mean	St. Dev.	Mean	St. Dev.	p
1) I think Facebook is a waste of time.	4.41	0.74	3.17	1.14	0.000**
2) I have concerns about the security of my personal information on Facebook.	4.04	1.03	3.31	1.13	0.000**
3) I do not like technology-based communication.	2.97	1.30	2.35	1.06	0.000**
4) I think Facebook causes addiction.	4.29	0.93	3.64	1.25	0.000**
5) I think Facebook damages the social skills.	4.10	1.09	3.35	1.24	0.000**
6) I think using Facebook is unnecessary.	4.19	0.98	2.69	1.10	0.000**
7) Virus can be transmitted to my computer through applications on Facebook.	3.92	0.96	3.67	1.13	0.000**
8) I think Facebook negatively affect the academic achievement.	3.53	1.18	2.99	1.15	0.000**
9) I think Facebook eliminates the privacy (security) of personal information.	4.12	0.90	3.25	1.14	0.000**
10) I am uncomfortable with my private life brought out.	4.20	0.10	3.04	1.19	0.000**
11) I am influenced by the negative news about Facebook.	3.11	1.35	2.85	1.18	0.077*
12) There is no reason for me to use Facebook.	4.16	0.95	2.62	1.15	0.000**
13) I do not want to deal people that I do not know.	4.13	1.02	3.73	1.17	0.001**
14) I think my Facebook membership could negatively affect future business opportunities.	3.17	1.27	2.46	1.11	0.000**
15) I do not want other people to see my private information.	4.17	0.90	3.59	1.13	0.000**
16) I believe that Facebook is not a good channel to make a new friend.	3.97	1.11	3.13	1.25	0.000**
17) I think I can be misguided on Facebook against my will.	3.34	1.30	2.73	1.17	0.000**
18) I think Facebook weakens the relationships that I have established with my friends in the real life.	3.82	1.18	2.91	1.26	0.000**
19) I do not find relationships realistic on Facebook.	4.17	0.97	3.56	1.18	0.000**
20) I do not find Facebook useful.	4.19	0.99	2.99	1.08	0.000**
21) I do not want to interact with too many people.	3.60	1.24	3.02	1.17	0.000**

**: p<0.05, *: p<0.1

Table 6. Attitudes of Female and Male Participants toward Facebook Use

	Female		Male		
	Mean	St. Dev.	Mean	St. Dev.	p
1) I think Facebook is a waste of time.	3.29	1.15	3.38	1.22	0.320
2) I have concerns about the security of my personal information on Facebook.	3.38	1.12	3.45	1.20	0.430
3) I do not like technology-based communication.	2.42	1.06	2.42	1.21	0.937
4) I think Facebook causes addiction.	3.80	1.19	3.53	1.33	0.010**
5) I think Facebook damages the social skills.	3.42	1.23	3.50	1.29	0.403
6) I think using Facebook is unnecessary.	2.83	1.15	2.94	1.27	0.236
7) Virus can be transmitted to my computer through applications on Facebook.	3.67	1.09	3.77	1.18	0.259

8) I think Facebook negatively affect the academic achievement.	3.04	1.14	3.10	1.22	0.521
9) I think Facebook eliminates the privacy (security) of personal information.	3.33	1.14	3.39	1.18	0.524
10) I am uncomfortable with my private life brought out.	3.14	1.18	3.26	1.32	0.198
11) I am influenced by the negative news about Facebook.	2.99	1.17	2.62	1.24	0.000**
12) There is no reason for me to use Facebook.	2.78	1.19	2.85	1.33	0.478
13) I do not want to deal people that I do not know.	3.97	1.06	3.34	1.26	0.000**
14) I think my Facebook membership could negatively affect future business opportunities.	2.53	1.10	2.56	1.27	0.729
15) I do not want other people to see my private information.	3.74	1.07	3.48	1.20	0.004**
16) I believe that Facebook is not a good channel to make a new friend.	3.27	1.25	3.14	1.27	0.200
17) I think I can be misguided on Facebook against my will.	2.76	1.13	2.91	1.34	0.129
18) I think Facebook weakens the relationships that I have established with my friends in the real life.	2.99	1.26	3.07	1.34	0.468
19) I do not find relationships realistic on Facebook.	3.67	1.14	3.55	1.25	0.206
20) I do not find Facebook useful.	3.14	1.12	3.11	1.17	0.690
21) I do not want to interact with too many people.	3.13	1.16	3.01	1.26	0.210

**: $p < 0.05$

T-test was performed in order to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between attitudes of male and female students toward Facebook use. T-test results are presented in Table 6. Although there is no significant difference found between male and female students' attitudes in general, we have determined statistically significant differences in four items ("I think Facebook causes addiction", "I am influenced by the negative news about Facebook", "I do not want to deal people that I do not know" and "I do not want other people to see my private information"). For these four items, the attitudes of female students toward Facebook use are more negative than the attitudes of male students toward Facebook use.

3. Conclusions

This study was conducted with students in the Department of Business Administration and the Department of Economics at Bilecik Şeyh Edebali University. It has been determined that the majority of the students who participated in the study were active Facebook users, using Facebook intensively.

A statistically significant difference was found between attitudes of Facebook users and nonusers toward Facebook use. The students using Facebook have more positive attitudes toward Facebook use compared to those who don't use Facebook. There were four items, in which statistically significant difference was determined between male and female student, as follows: "I think Facebook causes addiction", "I am influenced by the negative news about Facebook", "I do not want to deal people that I do not know" and "I do not want other people to see my private information". Female students agree more on these items compared to male students.

Facebook is a social networking site, which becomes increasingly prevalent and widely used among young people, offering many advantages. However, the use of Facebook also brings some risks. This has been noticed by some young people and they have taken various precautions. Some of these precautions are reducing the time spent on Facebook or sometimes even deleting the account. Young people should be aware of the situations that may lead to ethical, social or legal consequences in the Internet, especially in the social networking sites. For this purpose, it would be quite useful to inform university students about using Facebook, consciously.

There are some limitations of our study. In this study, using the convenience sampling method is one of our limitations. Another limitation is conducting the study with students in the Department of Business Administration and the Department of Economics at Bilecik Şeyh Edebali University only. Therefore, the results obtained from this study cannot be generalized. In this study, the attitudes of university students toward Facebook use have been investigated. The future studies can be conducted with students of different universities and they can also investigate the effects of attitudes of students on their behaviors in addition to investigating the attitudes of Facebook users toward the use of Facebook.

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