

Relationship Between Loneliness, Inadequacy, Social Anxiety and Online Social Support with Social Media Addiction

Yalnızlık, Yetersizlik, Sosyal Kaygı ve Sanal Sosyal Desteğin Sosyal Medya Bağımlılığıyla İlişkisi

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this study is to explore the correlations between feelings of loneliness, inadequacy, and social anxiety, alongside virtual social support levels, in relation to the extent of social media addiction. Additionally, the study aims to assess a predictive path analysis model, comprised of these explanatory variables, to enhance comprehension of social media addiction. Targeting young adults aged 18-35, acknowledged for their heightened engagement with internet and social media, the study recruited a total sample size of 250 participants. Data collection involved the use of a Participant Information Form, UCLA Loneliness Scale, Inferiority Feeling Scale, Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale, Online Social Support Scale, and Social Media Addiction Scale. Correlation analysis outcomes revealed a significant and positive association between loneliness, inadequacy, social anxiety, virtual social support scores, and the overall social media addiction score. Moreover, multiple regression analysis indicated that all independent variables accounted for 44% of the total variance in social media addiction scores. Lastly, employing a path analysis model demonstrated remarkably high fit indices (CMIN/DF=1.163; CFI=.998; GFI=.997; NFI=.993; AGFI = .949; RMSEA=.034), elucidating direct and indirect relationships between independent variables and social media addiction.

Keywords: Loneliness, social anxiety, social support, social media

ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, yalnızlık, yetersizlik ve sosyal kaygı duyguları ile sanal sosyal destek düzeyinin sosyal medya bağımlılığıyla ilişkilerinin sınanmasıdır. Çalışmanın ikinci amacı ise, sosyal medya bağımlılığının anlaşılması için yordayıcı değişkenlerden oluşturulan yol analizi modelinin test edilmesidir. Araştırmanın katılımcıları, alanyazındaki bulgulara dayanarak, internet ve sosyal medya kullanımının en yüksek seyrettiği yaş aralığı olan 18-35 yaş genç yetişkinlerden seçilmiştir. Çalışmanın örneklemini toplam 250 katılımcıdan oluşmaktadır. Veri toplama araçları olarak, Katılımcı Bilgi Formu, UCLA Yalnızlık Ölçeği, Yetersizlik Duygusu Ölçeği, Sanal Sosyal Destek Ölçeği, Liebowitz Sosyal Kaygı Ölçeği ve Sosyal Medya Bağımlılık Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Yapılan korelasyon analizi sonuçlarında yalnızlık, yetersizlik, sosyal kaygı ve sanal sosyal destek puanları ile sosyal medya bağımlılığı toplam puanının anlamlı ve pozitif yönde ilişki gösterdiği saptanmıştır. Ayrıca, çoklu regresyon analizi sonucunda tüm bağımsız değişkenlerin sosyal medya bağımlılığı toplam puan varyansını %44 oranında açıkladığı gözlenmiştir. Son olarak, bağımsız değişkenlerin sosyal medya bağımlılığı ile doğrudan ve dolaylı ilişkileri yol analizi modeliyle test edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, yol analizi sonucunda oldukça yüksek uyum indeksleri olan bir modele ulaşılmıştır (CMIN/DF=1.163; CFI=.998; GFI=.997; NFI=.993; AGFI = .949; RMSEA=.034).

Anahtar sözcükler: Yalnızlık, sosyal kaygı, sosyal destek, sosyal medya

Introduction

The internet has become an indispensable part of human life and internet usage has increased exponentially, especially in the last two decades. Approximately 5.25 billion people in the world became internet users between 2020 and 2022, with a growth of 1.355% (Internet World Stats 2022). According to the results of the 2020 "Use of Information Technologies" study of the Turkish Statistical Institute, the rate of households with home internet access rose from 88.3% in 2019 to 90.7% in 2020 (TUIK 2020). Social media applications are among the most popular platforms on the internet, with an estimated 52 million social media users in Turkey (We Are Social

2019). Youtube, Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram and Twitter are the most popular social media tools (We Are Social 2019).

In recent years, social media sites have become platforms people use to receive news, to establish social relationships, and to build the selves they want to be. On their social media accounts, individuals share photos reflecting the person they want to be, tag the places they have been to or the events they have attended, announce any problems they have and ask for support, follow people they know and receive news from them, and exchange messages (Hu et al., 2014). However, with excessive amounts of time spent on social media, this situation can reach the level of addiction, and eventually, professional, academic, and social functioning can be negatively affected (Kandell 1998, Beard and Wolf 2001, Young 2007). For this reason, it is crucial to identify and understand the nature of the variables that may trigger the negative use of the internet and social media in a way that disrupts functionality.

The concept of loneliness is defined as an individual feeling alienated from others or experiencing rejection by others, being pushed out of social interactions, and having difficulty in establishing emotional bonds (Rook 1984). According to Weiss (1987), the basic needs of an individual are a sense of attachment to significant others in close relationships and a sense of belonging, which is defined as being included in a group. If these two needs are not met, a deep sense of loneliness emerges. Loneliness may be related not only to the relationship with the immediate environment, but also to the quality of all forms of relationships with others (Duck 1986, Erözkan 2004). According to studies, the fact that individuals have begun to communicate by sharing information through social networks due developing technology has led to a decrease in the level of social isolation, and to individuals feeling less lonely (Cotten et al. 2012). Pelling and White (2009) listed the purposes of young people in using social networks as establishing social relationships and belonging to a group. Martin and Schumacher (2003) reported that 8% of a sample of university students in the United States were internet addicts and that these felt lonelier than non-internet addicted users. Al-Saggaf and Nielsen (2014) found that social media users have more pronounced feelings of loneliness and higher levels of social anxiety.

One of the variables that may be related to loneliness is the feeling of inadequacy. According to Alfred Adler, who placed the sense of inadequacy at the center of personality theory and examined the function of the sense of inadequacy in both healthy and pathological personality development, individuals who experience intense feelings of inadequacy do not believe that they can receive love or respect from those around them, and therefore compete with others. As a result, these individuals have problems interacting with others, and often avoid them (Adler 1982). Çimşir and Akdoğan (2019) showed the relationship between loneliness and feelings of inadequacy in their study. Since widely accepted theories state that the sense of inadequacy is related to low levels of social interest in the individual, studies emphasize the importance of raising the individual's levels of social interest in order to effectively cope with this feeling (Ansbacher 1992). According to Adler (2009), the sense of inadequacy is related to socialization; people who cannot establish satisfactory social relationships can face intense feelings of inadequacy. Therefore, feelings of inadequacy are also closely related to social anxiety.

Social anxiety is conceptualized as an anxiety disorder that causes individuals to have significant and constant fears of being judged by others in social life, of performing an action in front of others, or of communicating with strangers, and to avoid these social situations (APA 2013). Social media networks have become an important socialization tool for individuals with high levels of social anxiety since they require no face-to-face interaction with real people, which has led to an increase in their rate of internet and social media use (Prizant-Passal et al. 2016). Some studies show that individuals with high social anxiety resort to establishing social adaptation via social media as a reaction to the lack of social interaction (Lin et al. 2017). Studies also indicate that spending a lot of time on social media and problematic internet use show a significant relationship with social anxiety: individuals with high levels of social anxiety may spend more time on the internet, which negatively affects individuals' lives in the long run (Zorbaz 2013).

Social support systems are similarly considered to be related to the loneliness, inadequacy and social anxiety variables. Social support is defined as all the instrumental, social or emotional information and assistance that an individual receives from their environment to use when needed. Social support is also defined as the presence of people who guide the individual, support them emotionally, stand by them in difficulties and challenges, and strengthen the positive aspects of the individual by occasionally appreciating them (Esen 2009). Several studies have shown a predictive relationship between the level of social support and internet addiction (Thatcher and Goolam 2005, Chen and Choi 2011, Lu and Hampton 2017). If the social support that the individual seeks in their immediate environment is not sufficient, the individual may change their sources of support and turn to the internet (Taçyıldız 2010, Tanrıverdi 2012, Oktan 2015). Many people with insufficient social support see the internet as a safe space (Esen and Gündoğdu 2010, Durak and Durak 2013). Lack of social support is

associated with depression and increases susceptibility to internet addiction (Nalwa and Anand 2003, Yen et al. 2007). Information, friendship, advice or concrete help can now be obtained in cyberspace, even from complete strangers (Donath 2007). Social media platforms allow for the disclosure of needs to others, provide easy ways to receive feedback from others such as one-click commenting and reacting, and make it much easier to reach people or organizations that seek help (Hayes et al. 2016). This can be information or instrumental support, but also social support.

The internet has emerged as an indispensable necessity for numerous individuals. When utilized appropriately, its rapid evolution and technological advancements serve a pivotal role in shaping both the future and the lives of people. Particularly among young adults, social media stands out as one of the foremost areas accessed through digital platforms. Although these platforms offer immense utility when used moderately, excessive and disruptive use can transition into addiction. This study aims to explore the potential correlations between feelings of loneliness, inadequacy, and social anxiety with the levels of online social support, in relation to the extent of social media addiction. Additionally, the study seeks to construct a path analysis model to delve into the direct and mediating connections among these variables. While existing studies in national and international literature have examined individual relationships between the study's variables and social media addiction, none have comprehensively analyzed all variables and their predictive impacts on social media addiction simultaneously. Hence, this study holds the promise of contributing significantly to national and international literature, fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding social media addiction.

Method

Sample

The study's participants were chosen using convenience sampling, focusing on young adults aged 18-35—the age bracket identified in the literature and data from the Turkish Statistical Institute as having the highest internet and social media usage (İşlek 2012, TUIK 2019). To determine the sample size, GPower analysis results and recommended figures from structural equation modeling literature were examined. The GPower analysis (with an effect size of .05, power value of .80, and a margin of error of .05) suggested a requirement of 244 participants. Furthermore, literature recommended a minimum of 200 participants for structural equation modeling (Polat 2009, In'nami and Koizumi 2013). Consequently, the sample size was set at 250 young adults. Participants were required to fall within the specified age range and use at least one social media platform; no other exclusion criteria were applied. The study was carried out online, with voluntary participation. Among the 250 young adults involved, 142 were female (56.8%) and 108 were male (43.2%). Age distribution analysis revealed that 93 participants (37.2%) were aged 18-24, 92 (36.8%) were aged 25-29, and 65 (26%) were aged 30-35. Regarding educational status, the majority were high school graduates (48.4%) or university graduates (39.2%). Marital status analysis showed that 93 participants (37.2%) were married, 149 (59.6%) were single, and 8 (3.2%) were either divorced or widowed.

Procedure

Prior to commencing the study, approval was acquired from the Social Research Ethics Committee of Izmir Kâtip Çelebi University (approval number 2021/20-21 dated 30.11.2021). Subsequently, self-report scales and an information form intended for online distribution via Google Forms were developed. Young adults aged 18-35, who had read and agreed to the terms outlined in the Informed Consent Form, voluntarily participated in the study by completing the scales online.

Measures

In addition to the participant information form prepared by the researchers, the UCLA Loneliness Scale, the Sense of Inadequacy Scale, the Online Social Support Scale, the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale and the Social Media Addiction Scale were used as data collection tools.

UCLA Loneliness Scale

The scale was first developed by Russel et al. (1978), with the second version of the scale, which was revised in 1980, adapted into Turkish by Demir (1989). The scale consists of a total of 20 items, the answers to which provide the total loneliness score. In the Turkish validity and reliability study of the scale, the internal consistency coefficient was calculated as .96 and the test-retest reliability coefficient was reported to be .94 (Demir 1989). In this study, the internal consistency coefficient of the total score was .91.

Sense of Inadequacy Scale

Created by Akdoğan and Ceyhan (2014), this scale encompasses three subscales: "discouragement," "denial of self-worth," and "useless striving for superiority," contributing to a total sense of inadequacy score. Internal consistency coefficients for the total score were .86, with .80, .71, and .73 for the respective subscales (Akdoğan and Ceyhan 2014). In this study, the internal consistency coefficient for the total score was .83.

Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale

The scale was developed by Liebowitz (1987) to assess social relationship and performance situations in which individuals with social anxiety experience fear and/or show avoidant behavior. The scale consists of 24 items, 11 of which are related to social relationship situations and 13 to performance situations. The scale provides fear and avoidance scores, the sum of which is the scale total score. A higher total score indicates higher levels of social anxiety and avoidance. The Turkish version of the scale was adapted by Soykan et al. (2003). The internal consistency coefficient obtained for the total score was reported as .98 and the test-retest reliability was reported as .97. In the present study, the internal consistency coefficient calculated for the total score was .93.

Online Social Support Scale

The scale was developed by Nick et al. (2018). It has four subscales: esteem/emotional support, social companionship, informational support, and instrumental support. Designed to determine the presence of these four dimensions of social support in the online environment, the scale also provides a total score (Nick et al. 2018). The Turkish validity and reliability study of the scale was conducted by Bişkin and Kocaayan (2020). The internal consistency coefficient for the total score was found to be .96. In this study, the internal consistency coefficient for the total score was calculated as .91.

Social Media Addiction Scale

This scale was developed by Şahin and Yağcı (2017). The scale has two sub-dimensions, virtual tolerance and virtual communication, with 20 5-point Likert-type items, and also provides a total score. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was calculated as .94 for the total score, .92 for the virtual tolerance sub-dimension and .91 for the virtual communication sub-dimension (Şahin and Yağcı 2017). In the current study, the internal consistency coefficient for the total score was found to be .87.

Statistical Analysis

The study data underwent analysis using the SPSS 24 software package. Initially, Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine potential relationships between the variables. Subsequently, enter-method multiple regression analysis was utilized to assess the predictive impact of independent variables on the social media addiction score, encompassing an analysis of all variables within the regression model. Finally, a path analysis model was employed to scrutinize the direct and indirect relationships between the independent variables and social media addiction. This model integrated a path analysis where feelings of loneliness and inadequacy were directly linked to all variables. Additionally, these emotional states were interconnected through social anxiety to the overall online social support score, culminating in their impact on social media addiction. The visual representation of this tested model is presented in Figure 1.

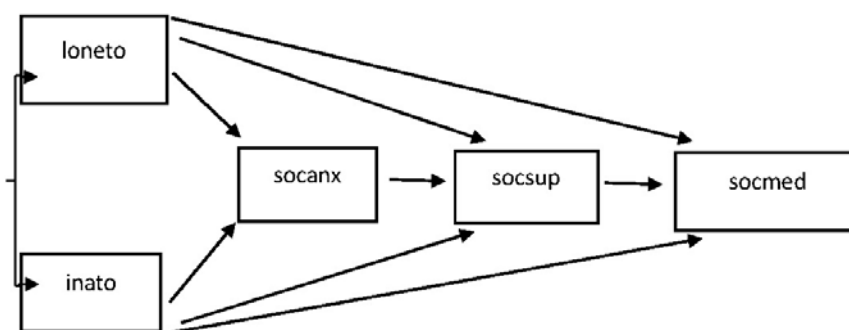


Figure 1. Path analysis model

loneto= The UCLA Loneliness Scale Total Score, inato= The Sense of Inadequacy Scale Total Score, socanx= The Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale Total Score, socsup= The Online Social Support Scale Total Score, socmed= The Social Media Addiction Scale Total Score

Results

Since the scale responses were collected online, there was no missing data. The normality analyses performed on the scale total scores before starting the analyses showed that kurtosis and skewness values were between -1 and +1, and the Kolmogorov and Shapiro analysis results were not significant ($p > .05$). As a result, the data set was determined as suitable for parametric tests.

In accordance with the purpose of the study, Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships between variables. The results of the correlation analysis and the mean and standard deviation values for the total scale scores are presented in Table 1.

	loneto	inato	socanx	socsup	socmed	X	SD
loneto	1					41.34	9.18
inato	.478**	1				57.44	15.78
socanx	.468**	.512**	1			51.13	29.66
socsup	-.159*	.143*	.130*	1		63.93	30.08
socmed	.293**	.406**	.345**	.496**	1	54.44	13.08

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; loneto= UCLA Loneliness Scale Total Score, inato= Sense of Inadequacy Scale Total Score, socanx= Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale Total Score, socsup= Online Social Support Scale Total Score, socmed= Social Media Addiction Scale Total Score, X=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation

The results of the correlation analysis showed a statistically significant relationship between the total score of loneliness and all other variables. In other words, as the level of loneliness rises, sense of inadequacy ($r = .478$, $p < .01$) and social anxiety ($r = .468$, $p < .01$) also rise, and a moderately strong correlation was found between the variables. A negative correlation of low significance was found between loneliness and online social support level ($r = -.159$, $p < .05$). Sense of inadequacy was found to have a positive correlation of high significance with the social anxiety total score at ($r = .512$, $p < .01$), a positive correlation of low significance with the online social support total score ($r = .143$, $p < .05$), and a positive correlation of moderate significance with the social media addiction total score ($r = .406$, $p < .01$).

In addition to the low level negative relationship with the loneliness total score mentioned above, the total score of online social support level was also found to have a positive correlation of low significance ($r = .130$, $p < .05$) with the social anxiety total score and a positive correlation of high significance ($r = .496$, $p < .01$) with the social media addiction total score. In conclusion, in line with the main purpose of the study, significant positive relationships were found between the social media addiction total score and all independent variables: as the social media addiction score increases, loneliness ($r = .293$, $p < .01$), inadequacy ($r = .406$, $p < .01$), social anxiety ($r = .345$, $p < .01$) and online social support level ($r = .496$, $p < .01$) scores also increase.

In order to investigate the predictive power of independent variables on the level of social media addiction, multiple regression analysis was applied with the enter method. The results are presented in Table 2. The results of the multiple regression analysis showed that feelings of loneliness, inadequacy and social anxiety, together with the level of online social support, predicted social media addiction at a statistically significant level [$F(4,250) = 25.223$, $p < .01$]. All these variables explained 44% of the variance of the total score of social media addiction. A detailed examination of the regression model showed that loneliness, inadequacy and online social support total scores contributed significantly to the regression model ($t(250) = 2.252$, $p < .05$ for loneliness; $t(250) = 3.012$, $p < .01$ for inadequacy; $t(250) = 7.826$, $p < .01$ for online social support), but social anxiety level did not contribute significantly to the regression model ($p > .05$).

Predicted Variable	Predictive Variable	B	t	R	R ²	F
socmed				.664	.443	25.223**
	loneto	.196*	2.252*			
	inato	.253**	3.012**			
	socanx	.102	1.324			
	socsup	.512**	7.826**			

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; loneto= UCLA Loneliness Scale Total Score, inato= Sense of Inadequacy Scale Total Score, socanx= Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale Total Score, socsup= Online Social Support Scale Total Score, socmed= Social Media Addiction Scale Total Score

Finally, path analysis was used to test how the independent variables predict social media addiction and the direct and indirect relationship networks between them. The results of the path analysis are presented in Figure 2. In the model, a path analysis was created in which loneliness and feelings of inadequacy were directly connected to all variables, and in addition, the two emotions were connected to the online social support total score through social anxiety and finally to social media addiction. The results showed that the tested path analysis model had high fit indices (CMIN/DF=1.163; CFI=.998; GFI=.997; NFI=.993; AGFI = .949; RMSEA=.034).

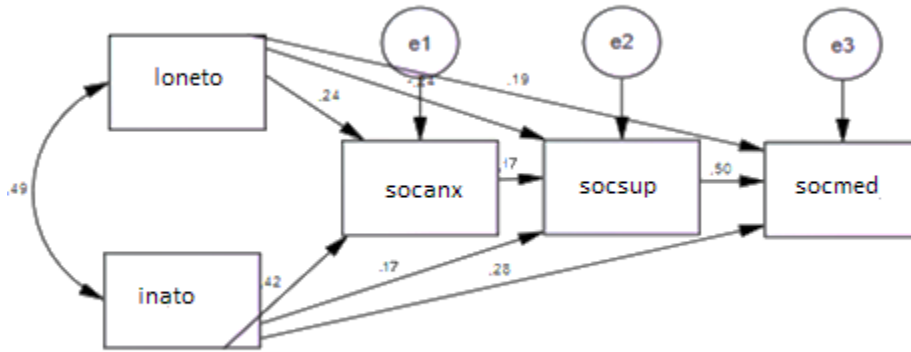


Figure 2. Path analysis results

loneto= UCLA Loneliness Scale Total Score, inato= Sense of Inadequacy Scale Total Score, socanx= Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale Total Score, socsup= Online Social Support Scale Total Score, socmed= Social Media Addiction Scale Total Score

	Estimates	S.E.	C.R.	p
socanx <-- loneto	.785	.258	3.049	.002
socanx <-- inato	.783	.150	5.223	.000
socsup <-- loneto	-.775	.325	-2.387	.017
socsup <-- inato	.218	.200	1.915	.037
socsup <-- socanx	.225	.104	1.968	.039
socmed <-- loneto	.272	.109	2.498	.012
socmed <-- inato	.235	.063	3.732	.000
socmed <-- socsup	.217	.029	7.503	.000

loneto= UCLA Loneliness Scale Total Score, inato= Sense of Inadequacy Scale Total Score, socanx= Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale Total Score, socsup= Online Social Support Scale Total Score, socmed= Social Media Addiction Scale Total Score

A detailed examination of the model showed that loneliness and inadequacy total scores significantly predicted the social anxiety total score ($\beta = .24$; $\beta = .42$, respectively). These two variables were also linked to the online social support total score through the social anxiety score, and the social anxiety total score significantly predicted online social support ($\beta = .17$). The loneliness variable was also directly linked to the online social support total score, in addition to the link through social anxiety, and a significant regression coefficient was reached ($\beta = .24$). The same direct effect was observed for the inadequacy score, and the arrow from inadequacy to online social support total score was significant ($\beta = .17$). Findings showed that loneliness and inadequacy can directly predict social media addiction, which is the dependent variable, significantly ($\beta = .19$; $\beta = .28$, respectively), and these two variables also have indirect predictive power over the online social support score, and a strong regression coefficient was found on the path from the online social support score to social media addiction ($\beta = .50$). Other numerical data related to the model are presented in Table 3.

Discussion

Internet use is becoming increasingly widespread throughout the world. With social media applications being the most popular feature of the internet, Turkey ranks among the top countries in the world when it comes to

social media use. Social media offers an alternative way of communication, allows individuals to access information and news quickly and to make friends and keep up to date with the existing social network, facilitates access to entertainment and shopping platforms, and plays a role in identity construction through posts. However, it is known that the use of social media for very long periods of time creates addiction and that this addiction negatively impacts long-term functioning (Cabral 2011, Kuss and Griffiths 2011, Küçükali 2016, Hawi and Samaha 2017). Examining the variables associated with the emergence of social media addiction can contribute to an understanding of the nature and foundations of this situation, which has become a major problem especially in the young population, and thus can help to determine the content of the interventions to be implemented. The aim of the current study is to examine the relationships between loneliness, inadequacy, social anxiety and the level of online social support with social media addiction in young adulthood.

To summarize and evaluate the findings of the study, all independent variables in the study were found to have a positive relationship with the level of social media addiction. As the level of loneliness rises, social media use increases, as people appear to create an alternative form of communication through social media and gradually move away from real relationships in the outside world. This finding was consistent with previous studies in the literature (Martin and Schumacher 2003, Özdemir 2014). This inference is supported by another finding of the study that the level of online social support rises with an increase in social media use. People may be resorting to online social support networks to get rid of the feeling of loneliness.

Participants with higher social media addiction scores also had higher scores of inadequacy and social anxiety. In the literature, there is almost no study examining the relationship between feelings of inadequacy and social media addiction. Therefore, this finding is expected to make a unique contribution to the field. Individuals who feel inadequate in their daily lives and interpersonal relationships can use social media to construct an ideal identity, create profiles that make them feel better, and reduce their social anxiety through these platforms. It has been established that individuals' feelings of loneliness and inadequacy increase with social media networks. Accordingly, it seems inevitable that the rate of using social media will also rise. These findings from the study thus support previous studies in the literature (Zorbaz 2013, Al-Saggaf and Nielsen 2014, Prizant-Passal 2016, Wakefield and Wakefield 2018).

A noteworthy and positive correlation emerged between the extent of online social support and the overall score indicating social media addiction. This correlation aligns with expectations; individuals often establish fresh social networks, fulfilling social, emotional, and instrumental needs through social media that might otherwise remain unmet in offline scenarios due to various reasons. This aspect could serve as a pivotal factor initiating or perpetuating social media addiction over time. Notably, the concept of online social support is relatively nascent within the field, leading to a scarcity of comprehensive studies on the topic. Historically, studies focusing on internet and social media addiction primarily explored the link between addiction and real-life social support, revealing a negative correlation in those analyses. Therefore, the current study's findings offer valuable insights, presenting a distinct perspective on the positive relationship between online social support and social media addiction. This contribution to the literature hopes to broaden the understanding of this nuanced relationship and its implications in the context of social media addiction.

The results of the multiple regression analysis showed that all variables together explained 44% of the social media addiction total score variance, which can be considered high in the field of social sciences. Based on the high predictive power, the path analysis model was finally tested in the study, focusing on some of the basic dynamics in the formation of social media addiction. The model had very high fit indices. In the model, a path analysis was created in which feelings of loneliness and inadequacy were directly connected to all variables and these two emotions were connected through social anxiety to the total score of online social support and finally to social media addiction. Especially indirect relationships are considered to be critical here. Individuals' feelings of loneliness and inadequacy lead to the need for online social support through social anxiety, which ultimately triggers social media addiction.

The study's clinical implications underscore the necessity for intervention programs tailored to young adults grappling with social media addiction. These programs should prioritize addressing individuals' feelings of loneliness and inadequacy, incorporating strategies and activities aimed at bolstering self-esteem and self-efficacy. Moreover, it's crucial to assess levels of social anxiety and tackle potential avoidance behaviors. Effective intervention methods may involve implementing techniques such as social skills training to enhance the functionality of individuals' existing real-life social support systems while aiding in the creation of new support networks. Cognitive restructuring techniques can also be utilized to stimulate motivation, coupled with practical assignments to elevate an individual's engagement and activity levels. By reestablishing connections and experiences within real-life social support networks, individuals can rediscover the reinforcing nature of online

social support. Consequently, this approach indirectly diminishes the frequency of social media use, emphasizing a shift towards more fulfilling interactions in offline settings.

Conclusion

Being the first of its kind in the literature to comprehensively explore the interplay among loneliness, inadequacy, social anxiety, and online social support within a single model, this study holds significant value for experts in the field. By delving into the triggers of excessive social media usage, it contributes to a more nuanced conceptualization of this behavioral addiction. Consequently, it illuminates potential pathways for the development of prevention and intervention programs. The escalating issue of social media addiction notably impacts individuals' functionality, particularly adolescents and young adults. Consequently, there is a pressing need for further research endeavors aimed at uncovering the fundamental elements of social media addiction. These future studies should encompass larger and more diverse sample groups, incorporating qualitative data collection methods alongside self-report scales. By broadening the focus to encompass various variables, these studies can offer a more holistic understanding of social media addiction, fostering the creation of more effective intervention strategies.

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