

The Relationship between Self-Esteem and Social Network Loneliness: A Study of Trainee School Counsellors

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the relationship was investigated between self-esteem and loneliness in social networks among students in a guidance and psychological counselling teaching department. The study was conducted during the 2017-2018 academic year with 312 trainee school counsellors from Turkey. In terms of data collection, the Social Network Loneliness Scale, and the Self-esteem Scale were employed, and a statistical analysis of the data was conducted. We found a negative relationship between self-esteem and loneliness as experienced in social networks, although neither differs according to sex, age and class level. It was also found that those who use the Internet for communication purposes have high levels of loneliness and self-esteem in social networks. While self-esteem levels among users of the Internet are high, those who use it to read about or watch the news have high levels of loneliness. No relationship was found between self-esteem and social network loneliness levels and among those who use the Internet for playing games. Regular sporting habits were found to have a positive effect on self-esteem, but no effect on the level of loneliness in social networks.

Keywords: *Social Network Loneliness, Self-esteem, Trainee School Counsellors*

INTRODUCTION

In schools one of the primary groups of staff members who contribute to the psychological development of students are the school counsellors. It is expected that school counsellors have a high level of self-esteem, and teachers are a model in the eyes of many of their students. For this reason, the school counsellors should have acquired self-esteem skills before they can make positive contributions to the students' self-esteem and other personal development (Bayrak, 2015). Otherwise, their anxiety and stress levels will be high in these tasks, they will not show a patient and determined attitude, they will decrease their motivation, and their fatigue level will increase. Teachers with a high level of self-esteem can also easily socialize in real life, share their thoughts and ideas, and have a low level of loneliness. Thus, they have the communication skills necessary to be able to live a happy and peaceful life (İbili, E., 2017), and they can cope with the top of many problems in their professional life (Kurç 1990).

In this context, one of the modern trends that help with socialisation is the emergence of online social networks, such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and others. Individuals who face obstacles in their real life relationships are often connected to virtual social networks to maintain

social relationships (Kubey, Lavin and Barrows, 2001). Researchers have studied how social media can help with socialisation (Morahan-Martin and Schumacher, 2003; Kozaklı, 2006), and how they could cause loneliness (Körler, 2011; Özdemir, Akçakant and İzgüden, 2017; Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, and Smallwood, 2006). However, the relationship between self-esteem and loneliness in social networks has not been well studied.

In this paper the relationship between the perceived self-esteem of trainee school counsellors and loneliness levels in social networks was investigated. In addition, the effects of different variables, which are likely to affect self-esteem and loneliness levels are examined. Some suggestions are offered that could improve the self-esteem, educational process and communication skills among trainee school counsellors. The results of the research show that school counsellors have a negative relationship between social network loneliness levels and self-esteem levels. In addition regular sporting habits were found to have a positive effect on self-esteem, but no effect on the level of loneliness in social networks. We also found that internet usage was an effective way to improve an individuals' social network loneliness levels and self-esteem levels.

The main contribution of this research is that it is one of the first times that the relationship between self-esteem and loneliness in social networks has been studied. It also that first time that these topics have been studied with trainee school counsellors, a group that should be learning how to have good self-esteem. Finally, the suggestions for methods that could improve self-esteem are also novel.

Self and Self-Esteem

'Self' refers to the way in which people think about their own personality, self-evaluation and recognition. Rosenberg (1965) interpreted self-respect as the way an individual behaves. Individuals' thoughts and evaluations about themselves evolve into positive or negative behaviour over time. The general positive or negative evaluation of the self-determines whether self-esteem is high or low (Çankaya, 2007). Whether people's self-esteem is high or low affects their attitudes and feelings towards events (Kararmak and Cetinkaya, 2016). Self-esteem is necessary to gain personality, to be satisfied with life, to act with purpose, to have healthy and continuous communication with other people, to be harmonious with the environment, to be successful in the targeted works, and to plan for the future (Erşan, Doğan and Doğan, 2009). Studies confirm that many aspects of life are directly related to self-esteem, such as external appearance, examination success, family relationships, friendship, mental well-being, suicidal tendencies and beliefs (Kararmak and Çetinkaya, 2016; Özcan et al., 2013).

Individuals with a positive self-perception can cope with the conditions they encounter in a healthy manner (Kararmak and Cetinkaya, 2016). Low self-esteem makes it difficult for the individual to explain his/her feelings, while low self-perception leads to a sense of emptiness in the inner world, resulting in limited adaptability in society and negative psychological affects (Gazda, 1982). The individual's self-perception and perception style, or self-esteem, influences Internet addiction (Mehdizadeh, 2010; Gazda, 1982).

Young adults studying at university, like other young adults, need to effectively socialize with others, develop close relationships and demonstrate self-sacrifice in relationships. Students who cannot develop close relationships may become lonely (Öztürk, 1994). Kutlu (2004) found that university students are faced with different problems while their physical and emotional development processes continue, such as persistent fatigue from the intensive work process, difficulties in social relationships, difficulties of staying away from the family, parental dependence etc. Due to these stress factors, students in search of solutions can display problematic internet

behaviours, especially where they can easily access the internet (Hall and Parsons, 2001).

Previous research has studied the relationship between self-esteem and gender. Certel and Bahadır (2012), Özşaker, Canpolat and Yıldız (2011) and Bayraktar, Sayıl and Kumru (2009) also found no significant difference in self-esteem between the sexes. Conversely, Türedi (2015), Arıcak (2005) and Leung (2004) found that male self-esteem levels were lower than female self-esteem levels. In many studies (Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge and Scott, 2009; Bourland et al., 2000; Cook, Black, Rabins and German, 2000) self-esteem, self-confidence and satisfaction with life were positively associated with each other.

Loneliness

Social networks are online virtual communities where users can interact with each other, share content or thoughts via Internet access regardless of time and place, and so communication and interaction are intensely experienced (Gündüz, U., 2017). The feeling of loneliness that emerges as the result of the conflict between the relationships that the individual possesses and the relationships that he or she desires can emerge both in real life and in social networks (Rubin, 1982). It is known that self-esteem is one of the variables that is effective in reaching the relationship that the individual desires.

Loneliness in real life can be defined as the self-separation state from others and the meaning of life. Usually this problem emerges after individuals experience failure to communicate in a social environment. (Sharabi and Margalit, 2011). Social network loneliness refers to the state in which the behavioural development of an individual, who believes that he/she cannot find a place for him/herself in society, takes place in social networks (Özdemir, Akçakant and İzgüden 2017). Kim, LaRose and Peng (2009) found that individuals with inadequate social communication skills whose behaviour was informed by Internet use felt more at ease, accepted responsibilities in real life, and resisted boundaries and limitations.

Özdemir, Akçakant and İzgüden (2017) stated that the sense of loneliness is more pronounced in men, who have “no one to talk or to be with”, “spend time [online] when bored”, “share problems in social network chat environments” and have “feelings of being alone”. However the study group of Özen and Korukcu-Sarıcı (2010) was randomly selected from among undergraduates and graduate students, students younger than 17 years were included, as well as a greater proportion of males. Researchers found that, as the level of education increased, the level of becoming dependent on chat rooms in terms of sharing loneliness decreased.

Technology can cause human beings to become isolated (Körler, 2011). Virtual socialization provides opportunities for individuals to participate in social environments, and enables them to communicate and interact with others in real time on social networks (Chan and Dicianno, 2011). Kraut et al. (1998) found that the Internet has taken the place of social relations and interpersonal ties in real life, and has led individuals towards virtual socialization. According to Byun et al. (2009), the ability to establish connections over the Internet can lead to individual isolation and deterioration in the functioning of everyday activities.

Social Networks

Using the Internet for social functioning plays a fundamental role in the behaviour of online addiction (Li and Chung, 2006). A number of studies (Batigun and Hasta, 2010; Ceyhan and Ceyhan, 2007) have reported that people who suffer from online-related problems especially use the Internet for interpersonal interaction, and Bonetti, Campbell and Gilmore (2010) claim that some

individuals feel more comfortable with online relationships. Morahan-Martin and Schumacher (2003) reported that students, in the main, use the Internet to meet new people, seek emotional support and play socially interactive games. When research related to Internet usage is examined, it is generally found that the main purposes are social escapism, accessing information, leisure time evaluation, social interaction and entertainment (Tahiroğlu et al., 2008; Balci and Ayhan, 2007). However, if individuals only carry out their social interactions online, this leads to failed social skills and the loss of social relations (Odabaşoğlu, Öztürk, Genç, and Pektaş., 2007). Weiss (2013) found that self-esteem was one of the variables predicting the use of social networking sites in a study on self-esteem and Internet use, while Joinson (2004) discovered that people with low self-esteem prefer to communicate via email, and Ehrenberg, Juckes, White, and Walsh (2008) found that they used instant messaging more than others. Conversely, some studies, such those of Ong et al. (2011) and Kraut et al. (2002), argue that the use of the Internet makes outward-looking individuals more introverted. That said, while most studies suggest that the Internet undermines self-esteem, Shaw and Gant (2002) argue that Internet use can reduce loneliness and depression and have a positive effect on self-esteem.

Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, and Smallwood (2006) found that young people use the Internet to communicate with their friends and family and to enrich their social relationships beyond daily face-to-face communications. Byun et al. (2009) argue that virtual abstraction could lead to communication via the Internet. According to the literature and the results of the current research, individuals with normal or high self-esteem levels are able to communicate with each other via the Internet; but, at the same time, this pushes face-to-face communication further into the distance. Meanwhile, students who use the Internet for research purposes have high self-esteem levels. The social network loneliness levels of those who use the Internet for shopping purposes are high, as well as for those going online to read or watch the news. Similarly, the self-esteem levels of students using the Internet for research are high, while those who use it to read or watch the news have higher levels of social network loneliness.

Morahan-Martin (1999) argues that the use of the Internet can lead to loneliness, although it is not clear whether “loneliness is a symptom of Internet addiction, or Internet dependency or indications of loneliness”. The fact that the individuals who use the Internet for shopping purposes have high social network loneliness and self-esteem scores may provide clarification in this respect. Çelik and Odacı (2012) found that self-perception, self-esteem and gender are predictors of problematic Internet use, which explains why there is a significant negative relationship between such use and self-perception. Ko et al. (2007) found that self-esteem levels of individuals with problematic Internet use were low in their study, conducted among 517 university students. Similarly, Lee and Stapinski (2012) and Kim et al. (2006) found that there was a high correlation between problematic Internet use and depressive affect in their respective studies.

In real life, socialization seems to be an important concept because of its ability to help people communicate well and its relationship to many psychological variables (Kozaklı, 2006). Akşit and Akşit (2017), conducted a study where different high school students were invited to explore their views about sociocultural changes, and found that the use of the Internet for socializing increased significantly. According to Arcan and Yüce (2016), supporting the development of social skills in individuals who need it could improve their relationships with peers, as well as reduce the attractiveness of the social network at the level of dependency. Özdemir, Akçakant and İzgüden (2017) found that the levels of socialization and loneliness in the social network were at a high level, while students' propensity to share while online was at a lower level. In research conducted by Akçay (2011), the need for socialization was the main reason why people were directed towards social media.

Previous research has explored if the extent of self-esteem and social network loneliness differs significantly in terms of age or class level. In the findings of Özdemir, Akçakant and İzgüden (2017), and Batıgün and Hasta's (2010), there was no statistically significant difference between groups when the scores obtained in terms of social network sharing, social network socialization and social network loneliness were compared according to age range. Güleç and Ayaz (2017), Latifoğlu (2012), and Özkan (1994) did not find any difference between self-esteem level and age, whereas Abbasoğlu and Öncü (2013) and Otacioğlu (2009) found that class level had no effect on self-esteem.

One of the positive external factors in reducing levels of social network loneliness and improving self-respect and self-efficacy is engaging in sports. Playing sports is beneficial in terms of mental and physical health, but nowadays sports activities are often overlooked. Indeed, sport can positively contribute to self-esteem and socialization. Most studies argue that high self-esteem is directly related to sports and physical activities (Karakaya, Coşkun and Ağaoğlu, 2006; Çam, Khorshid and Özsoy, 2000), which allow individuals to work together, fostering self-discipline, courage, determination, self-confidence, sharing behaviours, mutual assistance, respect for other people's opinions, and social responsibility (Şahan, 2008). Many studies (Alpaslan, 2015; Gacar and Yanlıç, 2012; Gün, 2006) argue that sport is an important contributor to the development of a high level of positive self-esteem and makes the individual more emotionally resilient. However, Özçelik and colleagues (2015) studied the relationship between sport and loneliness among university students, and found no significant difference.

There are also gender effects on social network usage. While Özdemir, Akçakant and İzgüden (2017) found that the levels of social network loneliness did not differ according to sex, this was not the case for social network sharing and social network socialization. The findings of Özen and Korukcu-Sarıcı (2010) also differ from ours in terms of the relationship between social network sharing and sex. Both these aforementioned studies showed that boys tend to share more and make more friends than girls in the social network.

Paper Focus

The main focus of this paper is on the relationship between self-esteem, loneliness and participation in online social networks among trainee school counsellors. Sırakaya and Seferoğlu (2013) reported that, even though trainee school counsellors, need high-level communication skills, they may experience problematic Internet use in their professional lives. In addition, trainee teachers faced with problems of low self-esteem will try to avoid a social life, such that their development will be negatively affected.

From the related research about it can be seen that internet addiction has an effect on both loneliness and self-perception. Self-esteem, Internet addiction and loneliness are frequently regarded as the main causes of a lack of social skills (Arcan and Yüce, 2016). However, the relationship between the level of loneliness in the social networks and self-esteem has not been adequately discussed in the literature.. It is also seen that school counsellors, who are expected to have a high level of awareness about the negative effects of self-perception and social network, have also not been well studied in the literature. So in this research, trainee school counsellors' self-esteem and social network loneliness levels were examined, in order to offer suggestions that could improve the educational process and communication skills among trainee school counsellors. The effect of gender, age, class level, internet usage and sporting habits were also examined. Underlying this research, the following hypotheses were tested:

- H1. Self-esteem and social network loneliness levels among trainee teachers differ according to sex.
- H2. There is a significant relationship between the self-esteem levels of trainee teachers and the levels of loneliness in the social network.
- H3. The levels of self-esteem among trainee teachers differ according to the level of regular sports activities.
- H4. Trainee teachers' level of social network loneliness differs according to the level of Internet use.
- H5. The extent of trainee teachers' self-esteem and social network loneliness differ according to the age range and class levels.

RESEARCH METHOD

The sample for this research consisted of 312 trainee school counsellors. They were selected by a random sampling method on a voluntary basis, with a focus on ensuring accessibility. There were 120 (38%) female participants and 193 (62%) male students, in the age range of 17 to 25 years. Meanwhile, 78 (25%) participants were in the first-level class, 103 (33%) in the second level, 71 (23%) in the third level and 60 (19%) in the fourth level. The data were collected in person or online outside class hours by volunteer observers.

Data Collection Tool

The research data were collected via a Personal Information Form prepared by researchers, the Self-esteem Scale developed by Arıcak, (1999) and the Social Network Loneliness Scales developed by Korkmaz, Usta and Kurt (2014). The Personal Information Form was used to identify participants' age, gender, class levels and regular sports activities. Next we describe these tools in more detail.

Self-Esteem Scale

The self-esteem scale developed by Arıcak (1999) was used in the research. The scale was organized with a 5-point Likert scale. Students participating in the survey were asked to read every item and to mark one of the "completely agree", "agree", "undecided", "disagree" and "never agree" options. These items are intended to measure both the positive and negative feelings about the individuals themselves. A sample item is "My occupation is important for me". This scale consists of self-esteem, self-confidence, depressive affect, self-sufficiency, achievement and productivity, which are the subscales of self-esteem (Arıcak, 1999). For the reliability of the scale, the reliability coefficient was calculated with the Cronbach Alpha formula, which is the preferred internal consistency measure for Likert scales (Arıcak, 1999).

The scale test consisted of 32 items, and 152 students participated in the application. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was calculated in the SPSS package program and the reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be 90. The correlation coefficients according to subscales were, Self-value; 74, Self-confidence; 68, Depressive affection; 75, Self-sufficiency; Achievement and

Productivity; 70 (Arıcak, 1999). The Pearson product-moment correlation was calculated in the SPSS package program after a two week interval with new students. The test-retest reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be 70 (Arıcak, 1999). In this study, the Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficients of the subscales ranged from 0.66 to 0.80, while the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the whole scale was 0.94. These results show that the scale was acceptable (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001).

Social Network Loneliness Scale

In this research, the Social Network Loneliness Scale developed by Korkmaz, Usta and Kurt (2014) was used. The scale was obtained by using data from 354 students in the first study and 141 university students in the second study. For the validity of the scale; exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, item-factor total correlations, corrected correlations and item discriminants were calculated. In order to investigate the reliability of the scale, internal consistency coefficient and stability levels were calculated. The Scale is a 5-point Likert type scale with 20 items and these items are intended to measure loneliness levels of the individuals in the social network. A sample item is "In the social network there is nobody I can apply for help from". This scale consists of sub-factors as socialization, sharing, and loneliness. The total score of scale was two half-correlations of 0.506; the Spearman Brown reliability coefficient was 0.662; and the Guttman Split-Half value was 0,662; The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was 0.816. The Cronbach Alpha values of scale subscales were socialization = 0.842; sharing = 0,809, loneliness = 0,614. In this study, the Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficients of the subscales ranged from 0.60 to 0.76, while the Cronbach alpha coefficient was 0.70 for the whole scale. These results show that the scale was acceptable (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001).

Data Analysis

The IBM SPSS 20 software program was used for the analyses, and arithmetic means, standard deviations, the independent t-test, one-way analysis of variance, the Bonferroni test and Pearson correlation coefficients were used in the analysis of the data. Before analysing the data and interpreting the findings, we determined whether normality, linearity and homogeneity assumptions were met (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001). In order to test the appropriateness of the data distribution of the measured variables for the statistical analyses to be performed, we examined the coefficients of skewness and the distortion of the data of the targeted variables (West, Finch and Curran, 1995). While the assumption about the homogeneity of variance was tested by the Levene method, the dependent variable of the study was assumed to be normal in each combination of the independent variables ($p > .05$). Moreover, by means of scatter graphs for the objective variables in order to control the assumption of linearity, we confirmed that the relations between variables were linear with regard to each other.

FINDINGS

Overall, we found the following results:

- We found a negative relationship between self-esteem and loneliness as experienced in the social network, although neither differs according to sex, age and class level.
- We also found that those who use the Internet for communication purposes have high levels of loneliness and self-esteem in social networks.
- While self-esteem levels among users of the Internet are high, those who use it to read about or watch the news have high levels of social network loneliness.
- No relationship was found between using the internet with the aim of playing games and an individuals' self-esteem and social network loneliness levels.
- Regular sporting habits were found to have a positive effect on self-esteem, but no effect on the level of loneliness in the social network was observed.

Arithmetic means and the independent samples t-test were used to examine whether gender played a role in the self-esteem levels of the participants. No statistically significant difference between the mean of the students' self-esteem scores was found in the results [$t_{(310)} = -.064$, $\bar{X}_{Female:119} = 128.35$, $\bar{X}_{Male:191} = 128.23$, $p > 0.05$]. When the score averages for the self-esteem and loneliness levels in the social network were examined, no statistically significant difference was found among the female students [$t_{(310)} = -.75$, $\bar{X}_{Female:119} = 59.68$, $\bar{X}_{Male:191} = 58.90$, $p > 0.05$]. The mean of the subscales according to sex is presented in Figure 1.

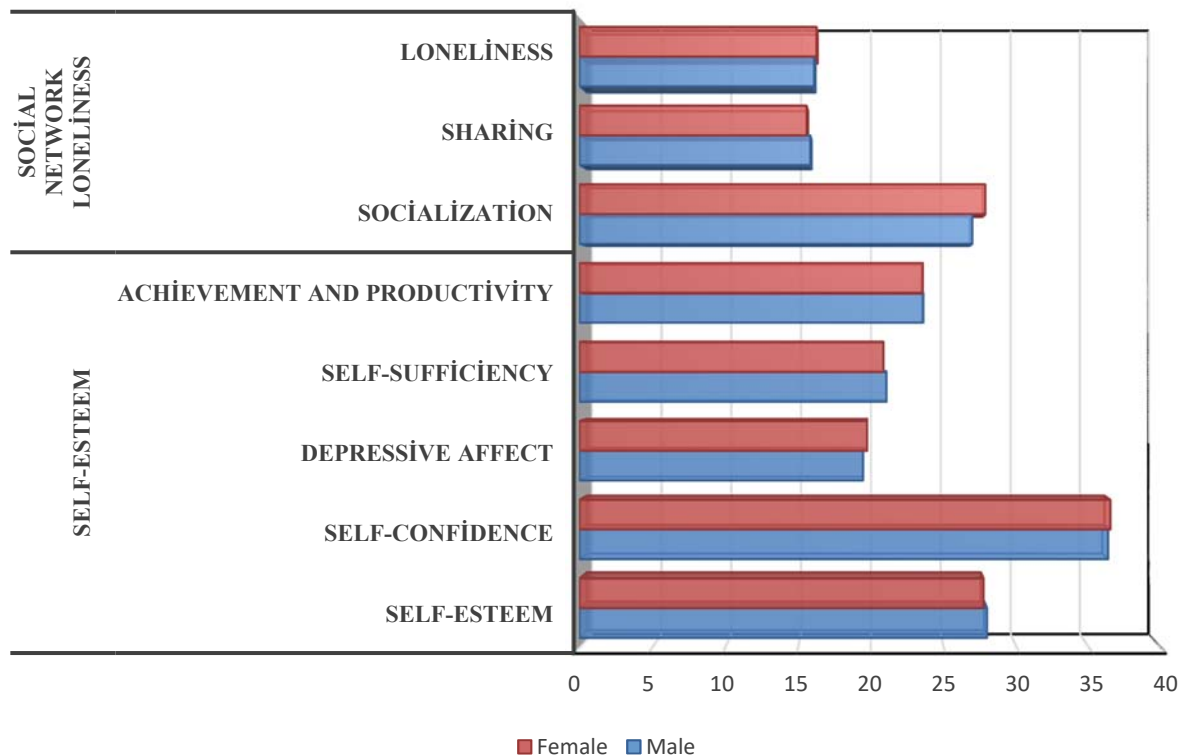


Figure1. The mean of the subscales according to sex

When Figure1 is examined, it is seen that the average scores obtained from subscales are close to one another according to sex. Also statistically, it was found that sex has no effect on self-esteems' and social network loneliness 'subscales ($p > .05$). In addition, the relationship between the self-esteem scores for all subscales is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Relationship between the Self-esteem subscales (Pearson r)

	Self-Esteem	Self-Confidence	Depressive Affect	Self-Sufficiency	Achievement-Productivity
Self-esteem	1	.763**	-.675**	.724**	.727**
Self-confidence		1	-.627**	.751**	.692**
Depressive affect			1	-.595**	-.623**
Self-sufficiency				1	.599**
Achievement-productivity					1

** : 0.01 significance level.

When the binary correlations of the variables in Table 1 are examined, it can be seen that the coefficients change between -0.59 and 0.77, and that the whole is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). The highest correlation is found to be positive between self-esteem and self-confidence (0.76), and the lowest is negative between depressive affect and self-esteem. The relationship between the Social Network Loneliness subscales is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Relationship between the Social Network Loneliness subscales (Pearson r)

	Socialization	Sharing	Loneliness
Socialization	1	.229**	-.135**
Sharing		1	-.025
Loneliness			1

** : 0.01 significance level.

When we look at the binary correlations between the Social Network Loneliness subscales in Table 2, it can be seen that there is a small but significant relationship between socialization, sharing and loneliness ($p < 0.01$). However, there is no relationship between sharing and loneliness. There is a negative correlation between the self-esteem scores and loneliness levels in the social network ($r = -.144$, $p < 0.05$). The relationship between both sets of subscales is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Relationship between the Self-esteem and Social Network Loneliness subscales (Pearson r)

	Socialization	Sharing	Loneliness
Self-esteem	.106	-.375**	-.030
Self-confidence	.165**	-.356**	-.041
Depressive affect	-.070	.334**	.143*
Self-sufficiency	.147**	-.319**	-.066
Achievement-productivity	.073	-.386**	-.005

** : 0.01 significance level, * : 0.05 significance level.

According to the results in Table 3, the most significance between the loneliness and self-esteem subscales is between self-esteem and sharing ($r = .374, p < 0.01$). It can also be seen that sharing is positively correlated with depressive affect and negatively correlated with all other variables. There is a positive correlation between the level of loneliness experienced in the social network and depressive affect ($r = .143, p < 0.05$).

Table 4 shows the effect of regular sports activities on the levels of loneliness and self-esteem among trainee teachers as felt in the social network.

Table 4. Summary of t-test results of the effect of regular sports activities on loneliness and self-esteem levels

	Regular sports activities		t	p
	Yes (N = 91)	No (N = 209)		
Self-esteem	.106	-.375**	2.27	.024
Social network loneliness	.165**	-.356**	-.25	.800

** : 0.01 significance level.

As shown in Table 4, the average of the self-esteem scores among the students who regularly engage in sports is high [$t_{(310)} = -2.27, \bar{X}_{Sporting:91} = 131.97, \bar{X}_{Non-sporting:209} = 127.14, p < 0.05$] and statistically significant. However, there is no effect of regular sports activities on social network loneliness [$t_{(310)} = -.25, \bar{X}_{Sporting:91} = 59.17, \bar{X}_{Non-sporting:219} = 59.45, p > 0.05$]. The class levels ($F_{classroom} = 1.55, F_{age} = 1.63, p > 0.05$) and age ranges ($F_{classroom} = .65, F_{age} = 1.35, p > 0.05$) of the students were found to have no effect on levels of social network loneliness and self-esteem in online situations.

The relationship between the reasons for Internet usage, and social network loneliness and self-esteem levels among the students was examined by the independent samples t-test. According to these findings, social network loneliness levels [$t_{(312)} = -3.21, \bar{X}_{No:40} = 55.06, \bar{X}_{Yes:272} = 59.80, p < 0.05$] of students who use the Internet for communication purposes were high. Similarly, students' self-esteem levels who use the Internet for communication purposes were high [$t_{(312)} = -4.47, \bar{X}_{No:40} = 117.40, \bar{X}_{Yes:272} = 130.00, p < 0.05$]. We also find that the students who use the Internet for research purposes have high self-esteem on average [$t_{(312)} = -1.90, \bar{X}_{No:126} = 126.09, \bar{X}_{Yes:186} = 129.94, p < 0.05$] and that those who use the Internet for shopping purposes have a high loneliness levels [$t_{(312)} = -2.35, \bar{X}_{No:196} = 58.29, \bar{X}_{Yes:116} = 60.71, p < 0.05$]. In addition, the use of the Internet for playing games has no significant effect on the levels of loneliness felt in the social network [$t_{(205)} = -.71, p > 0.05$] and self-esteem [$t_{(107)} = -.41, p > 0.05$]. When we examine the subscales with regard to using the Internet to read about or watch the news, a meaningful difference can be observed between the average of the self-esteem scores for social network loneliness [$t_{(312)} = -2.12, \bar{X}_{No:159} = 13.39, \bar{X}_{Yes:153} = 14.26, p < 0.05$].

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research was limited to students from the Guidance and Psychological Counselling Teaching Department, and self-esteem and social network loneliness were only examined in relation to regular sporting habits. Later studies may be conducted to study the effects of different external factors with different teaching departments and more students.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the relationship between loneliness in the social network and self-esteem levels among school counsellor students was examined according to various variables, including gender, age, class level, Internet usage purposes, and regular sporting habits.

From section 2.4, hypothesis H1 was that self-esteem and social network loneliness levels among trainee teachers would differ according to sex. However, we found that self-esteem levels did not differ according to sex, agreeing with earlier work of Certel and Bahadır (2012), and others (see section 2.1). We also found that social network loneliness, social network sharing and social network socialization levels did not differ according to sex. This could be because most of the school counsellor candidates tend to prefer real life relationships for socialising and prefer to cope with loneliness by sharing with these people (Arcan and Yüce, 2016).

Hypothesis H2 was that there would be a significant relationship between the self-esteem levels of trainee teachers and the levels of loneliness in the social network. From the survey data we did indeed find that there was a meaningful relationship between social network socialization and social network sharing, in harmony with lithology, and between social network socialization and loneliness in the online world. We found that, there was a significant negative correlation between Self-esteem and Social Network Loneliness levels. It was also found that the most significant relationship between the Achievement-productivity, and Social Network Sharing in Self-esteem and Social Network Loneliness subscales. It was also found that the most significant relationship is between the Achievement-productivity and Social Network Sharing subscales. It seems that people who have low achievement and productivity, cannot develop self-sufficiency or face-to-face relationships in real social environments. They have difficulty coping with loneliness and trying to socialize by sharing online in order to avoid negative feelings. This could be because confident, successful and productive people are more involved in real life activities, and through these activities they can find more people and time to do their personal sharing (Joinson, 2004; Shaw and Gant, 2002) .

Hypothesis 3 explored the relationship to sporting activities, and if one of the effective ways of overcoming these negativities was to regularly participate in sports. Self-esteem levels among the trainee teachers who participated in sports was indeed found to be high, which corresponds to findings reported in the literature (see section 2.3). This could be because sport and exercise can help control excessive internet using Park et al. (2016), and regular exercise is useful for the individual in terms of self-control (İbili, E., 2017; Jonker et al., 2010; Mehroof & Griffiths, 2010).

Hypothesis H4 was that trainee teachers' level of social network loneliness would differ according to their level of Internet use. We found that social network loneliness levels and self-esteem, levels were indeed found to be high among students who use the Internet for communication (email, Skype etc.). In other words the use of Internet for learning purposes with existing friends or other students has positive effect, rather than using for socializing with new people. This could be because problematic internet usage occurs more often when the individual uses the internet as a time-wasting tool or with activities other than what they should be doing. For this reason, the use of internet for research is usually a conscious and planned action, which does not affect the real life activities of the person. It also has a positive effect on the individual's self-esteem because it increases the success and productivity of the person (Bonetti, Campbell and Gilmore, 2010).. We also found that playing games online had no effect on the level of loneliness felt in the social network. In different studies, uncontrolled game playing was found to be related to Internet addiction (Şahin, Aydın and Balay, 2016). However, given that our sample group consisted of trainee school counsellors, it may be the case that the number of participants involved in uncontrolled game playing online was low, resulting in no effect on the social network loneliness

level.

Finally, hypothesis H5, was that the extent of trainee teachers' self-esteem and social network loneliness would differ according to age range and class levels. However, we found that the extent of self-esteem and social network loneliness did not differ significantly in terms of age or class level. Our findings are compatible with those in the literature mentioned in section 2.2. This could be because self-esteem develops at younger ages and slows as the age increases. It is also thought that the age effect is not seen because the school counsellor candidates in this age group prefer face-to-face communication and mostly use the internet for research purposes (İbili, E., 2017).

In summary we have found that hypotheses H2, H3, and H4 were supported, while H1 and H5 were not supported. That is, gender, age, and class level has no effect on self-esteem and virtual loneliness. So the H1 and H5 hypotheses have been rejected. However, the H2 hypothesis, which expresses the relationship between virtual loneliness and self-esteem, the H3 hypothesis, which expresses the effect of regular sports habits on self-esteem, and the H4 hypothesis, which expresses the effect of internet usage purpose on social network loneliness has been accepted. Based on these results, in the next section we provide suggestions for improving teaching training, so that trainee counsellors could have higher self-esteem and less loneliness.

Suggestions

Based on our results, there are a number of ways that teaching training could be improved.

- The social environment is attractive to any individual as it helps him/her to address feelings of incompleteness. Although the individual thinks that loneliness can be overcome in a social network, his/her sense of isolation and depression may remain when moving closer to real life. In this study, a high negative correlation was found between self-esteem and social network sharing. This suggests that trainee teachers' self-esteem should be promoted.
- Parents and universities should come together to reduce Internet use for gaming and entertainment purposes, as this may lead to dependency, while increasing such use for research purposes.
- When the Internet is used effectively, it enriches the education training process and offers rich experiences to teachers and students alike. In order to enable the Internet to be effective in this regard, teachers' information literacy and Internet skills should be developed through in-service and pre-service training.
- Students' ability to communicate is a much more important issue. Social skills training programmes could be included in order to develop social relations. This will enable students to better communicate their learning needs, helping them to cope more productively and avoid situations that prevent them from being close to other people, leading to low self-esteem, social anxiety and loneliness.
- It is recommended that a diverse range of sporting activities are organized in universities on a more regular and wider basis. In this research, the positive effect of regular participation in sports on self-esteem was observed. Ensuring that sports facilities are well planned by university administrators and promoted across all departments (not just in physical

education and sports departments) will benefit the quality of education and training. In the context of this study, expanding and promoting sports activities in the university environment will enable trainee teachers to experience a physically and emotionally healthier educational journey.

CONCLUSIONS

In this research, trainee school counsellors' self-esteem and social network loneliness levels were examined, and the effects of gender, grade level, age, internet use status and regular sports habits on social network loneliness and self-esteem were examined. We found that these variables are effective on individuals' social network loneliness levels and self-esteem levels. We also found that there is a negative relationship between self-esteem and loneliness felt in the social network.

Based on these results we offered some suggestions that could improve the educational process and communication skills among trainee school counsellors. These include that school counsellors should participate more regularly in sporting activities to increase self-esteem levels and reduce levels of virtual loneliness, and support their students in this regard. In addition, they should use social networks for research purposes rather than as socializing and entertainment tools. The use of social networks for research purposes contributes to their success and productivity but should not allow users to neglect social life activities and face to face communication.

Communication skills and psychological development are very important for school counsellors. For this reason, it is important to understand how Internet usage by counselling students enrolled in social networks, which are highly accessible and widely used today, affects their self-development, as well as enable them to acquire healthy communication skills and to transfer these skills to the teaching process. Given that there are many external and material factors affecting the educational process of prospective teachers, further study is needed in this field. Future research should investigate the impact variables such as internet use on the social network loneliness and self-esteem.

In addition, the findings of this research, and the use of the Self-esteem and Social Network Loneliness Scales, should be considered in the training programmes for prospective school counsellors. At the same time, greater awareness is needed in terms of what constitutes healthy Internet use in educational settings, alongside the development of curricula that address psychological and social aspects in this regard. Also regular social or sporting activities are known to support positive self-development and reduce social network loneliness.

This research is limited to the effect of sporting activities. For in the future, the effects of music, pictures and other activities on these two variables should be investigated. Furthermore, it would be good to retest the relationship between self-esteem and virtual loneliness in different sample groups and compare these results to those found in this paper.

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