



INSTANT MESSAGING GROUPS: IS IT CONVENIENCE OR TORTURE? ANLIK MESAJLAŞMA GRUPLARI: KOLAYLIK MI EZİYET Mİ?

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Makale Türü Article Type
Araştırma Makalesi Research Article

Başvuru Tarihi Application Date
03.04.2022 04.03.2022

Yayına Kabul Tarihi Admission Date
31.07.2023 07.31.2023

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.30798/makuiibf.1097712>

Abstract

The study aims to examine the disturbing situations, and the emotions and thoughts of the participants while using instant messaging. Disturbing situations of the users in the group are violations of privacy, harassment, hurtful words and behaviors, and gender discrimination. The main reasons why users accept these situations are primarily various fears; another is the cultural structure they are in and the personal characteristics of the users. To take precautions against these actions, it has been revealed that training on the use of instant messaging applications and social media should be disseminated, awareness-raising activities should be organized and reactions should be taken to establish the right communication.

Keywords: *Instant Messages, Social Identity Theory, Social Norms, Normative Community Pressure.*

Öz

Çalışma, anlık mesajlaşma gruplarındaki katılımcıların yaşadıkları rahatsız edici durumlara karşı duygu ve düşüncelerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Gruptaki kullanıcıları rahatsız eden durumların, gizlilik ihlalleri, taciz, incitici söz ve davranışlar ve cinsiyet ayrımcılığı olduğu görülmüştür. Kullanıcıların bu durumları kabul etmelerinin temel nedenleri öncelikle çeşitli korkulardır; diğeri ise içinde buldukları kültürel yapı ve kullanıcıların kişisel özellikleridir. Bu eylemlere karşı önlem almak için anlık mesajlaşma uygulamalarının ve sosyal medyanın kullanımına yönelik eğitimlerin yaygınlaştırılması, farkındalık artırıcı faaliyetler düzenlenmesi, doğru iletişimin kurulması ve gereken tepkinin gösterilmesi gerektiği ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Anlık Mesajlaşma, Sosyal Kimlik Teorisi, Sosyal Normlar, Normatif Topluluk Baskısı.*

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Çalışmanın Amacı

Anlık mesajlaşma gruplarındaki dinamikler ve gruba uyma davranışı çalışmanın amacını oluşturmuştur. Bu çalışma, kişilerin gönüllü olarak katıldıkları anlık mesajlaşma uygulamalarında (Whatsapp, Instagram, Facebook, Telegram, Twitter vb.) yaşanan durumların gruba uyma davranışına etkisi ve üyelerin buna yönelik duygu ve düşüncelerinin incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Gruba uyma davranışı gösteren bireylerin “kurban” konumuna düşüp düşmediği, kurban olması durumunda ise duygu, düşünce ve tepkileri belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır.

Araştırma Soruları

Çalışma, lisans, yüksek lisans ve doktora öğrencilerinin anlık mesajlaşma gruplarında karşılaştıkları rahatsız edici durumlar ve buna maruz kalanların duygu ve düşüncelerini ortaya çıkararak alınabilecek önlemler hakkında öneriler sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda aşağıdaki araştırma sorularına yanıt aranmıştır. (1) Anlık mesajlaşma gruplarında karşılaşılan rahatsız edici eylemler nelerdir? (2) Anlık mesajlaşma gruplarında rahatsız edici eylemlerde bulunan ve bunlara maruz kalanların özellikleri nelerdir?(3) Rahatsız edici eylemlere karşı alınabilecek önlemler nelerdir?

Literatür Araştırması

İnternet günümüzde iş, eğitim, sosyal ilişkiler, eğlence, alışveriş, iletişim gibi temel deneyimler için vazgeçilmez hale gelmiştir. COVID-19 salgını ile birlikte internetin ve sosyal medyanın hayatımızdaki yeri daha da önemli hale geldi. Birçok internet uygulaması gibi anlık mesajlaşma uygulamaları da hem iş hem de sosyal hayatımızda temel bir rol oynamaya başlamıştır. Artık iş, eğitim, yakın arkadaşlar ve aile gibi gruplar arasındaki paylaşımların temel aracı haline gelmiştir (Chung ve Nam, 2007; Pimmer ve diğerleri, 2018). Bununla birlikte, anlık mesajlaşma uygulamalarının sunduğu hayati faydaların karanlık tarafları da vardır. Genellikle iş, arkadaş, aile ya da okul gruplarından oluşan bu grupların sayısı sayısına bağlı olarak ciddi bilgi kirliliğine neden olmaktadır. Aynı zamanda haftanın her günü ve günün her saati mesaj gruplarından yanıt beklemek ve cevap vermek zorunda olmak kişilerin özgürlüğünü kısıtlamaktadır (Chung ve Nam, 2007). İçinde bulunduğu kültürün özelliklerinin de bu konuda etkili olduğunu belirtmek gerekir. Bireylerin sosyal bir gruba ait olma isteği, özellikle arkadaşları, aileleri, akrabaları veya diğer bağlantıları olan gruplar söz konusu olduğunda, öznel normlara daha fazla uyma eğilimleri kişilerin bu gurplar içindeki davranışlarını yönlendirmede etkili olmaktadır. Kişinin bir gruba uyumunu etkileyen bir diğer faktör de grup içinde saygı duyulan kişilerin kanaat önderleri, ünlüler ya da otoritesi yüksek kişiler olmasıdır. Bu kişilerin sahip olduğu güç, otorite ya da savunuculuğun etkisiyle normatif toplum baskısı kendini hissettirir ve insanların gruba uyma davranışları artar (Martin vd., 2008). Bu gruplardaki dinamikler ve gruba uyma davranışı çalışmanın amacını oluşturmuştur.

Yöntem

Veri toplama aracı olan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılmıştır. Görüşme formu, 3'ü demografik veri ve 16'sı araştırma sorularına ilişkin katılımcı görüşlerini toplamaya yönelik 19 sorudan oluşmaktadır. 14 lisans, yüksek lisans ve doktora öğrencisi ile Zoom programı kullanılarak görüşmeler yapılmış ve 30 ile 45 dakika arasında sürmüştür. Katılımcıların onayı ile yapılan görüşmeler daha sonra analiz edilmek üzere kayıt altına alınmıştır. Görüşmelerden elde edilen veriler bilgisayara aktarılmış, ham veriler tümevarımsal içerik analizi yöntemiyle araştırmacılar tarafından analiz edilmiştir. Bunun için öncelikle ham veriler araştırmacılar tarafından dikkatlice okunmuştur. Daha sonra içerik analizi ile açık kodlama yapılmıştır. Açık kodlamanın ardından örüntüler bulunmuş, ardından temalara ve alt temalara ulaşılmıştır.

Sonuç ve Değerlendirme

Araştırmadan elde edilen veriler bir bütün olarak değerlendirildiğinde, anlık mesajlaşma gruplarının hayatımızın bir parçası haline geldiği ve yasal olmasa da artık kullanılmasının bir zorunluluk olduğu gerçeğiyle karşı karşıyayız. Öte yandan bu uygulamaların sağladıkları kolaylıkların yanı sıra zorluklara da neden olduğu ve zaman zaman özel hayata saygı gösterilmemesi, taciz, rahatsız edici şakalar ve cinsiyet ayrımcılığı gibi birçok rahatsız edici duruma neden olduğu ortaya çıkıyor. Bu rahatsız edici durumların azaltılması için çok gerekli olmadıkça anlık mesajlaşma grupları oluşturulmamalı, bu grupların kullanımına ilişkin kurallar oluşturulmalı, kullanıcılar küçük yaşlardan itibaren grup kullanımı hakkında bilgilendirilmeli, insanlar grup içi doğru iletişim konusunda bilinçlenmeli ve iletişim kurarken nezaket kurallarına dikkat edilmelidir. Sonuç olarak hayatımızı kolaylaştırma potansiyeline sahip teknolojinin bir toplumsal işkence aracına dönüşmemesi gerektiği söylenebilir.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet has become essential today, serving fundamental purposes such as work, education, social relations, entertainment, shopping, and communication. With the COVID-19 outbreak, the Internet and social media have become even more important in our lives. Among the many internet applications, instant messaging applications have started to play a crucial role in both our business and social lives, becoming the primary medium for sharing among groups such as work, education, close friends, and family (Chung and Nam, 2007; Pimmer et al., 2018).

However, the benefits of instant messaging apps also come with some negative aspects. The number of messaging groups, which are generally formed for work, friends, family, or school, increases depending on the number of connections and can lead to serious information pollution. Additionally, people can feel constrained by the expectation to be available and responsive to messages from these groups every day and every hour, limiting their freedom (Chung and Nam, 2007).

It's worth mentioning that cultural factors also play a significant role in this regard. Compliance with group norms is crucial in collective cultures like Turkey. Social identity theory focuses on the perceptual and cognitive foundations of group membership. Reference groups provide useful information to people, and individuals participate because they believe that belonging to a social group has symbolic meanings. All social groups offer their members a common identity with various symbols. Especially if the behaviour is essential within the scope of subjective norms, the group's sanction on the person becomes stronger. Subjective norms refer to important beliefs and attitudes for the group, and group dynamics have a directive effect on individuals' behaviour (Ajzen, 2005). Individuals tend to conform more to subjective norms, especially when it comes to groups of friends, family, relatives, or other connections (Sardana et al., 2020).

Another factor that influences a person's adaptation to a group is the people who are respected in the group, such as opinion leaders, celebrities, or people with high authority. With the effect of power, authority, or advocacy that these people have, normative community pressure makes itself felt, and people's behaviour to conform to the group increases (Martin et al., 2008).

This study aims to examine the effect of groups in instant messaging applications (WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Telegram, Twitter, etc.) where people voluntarily participate in group conformity behaviour and the members' feelings and thoughts towards this situation. The study aims to determine whether individuals who show conformity behaviour to the group fall into the "victim" position and, if so, their feelings, thoughts, and reactions towards it.

2. LITERATUR REVIEW

The human being is described as “a social animal” (Aronson, 1980). Therefore, it has always been important for humans to join groups and use the “we” instead of “I.” Groups have a great contribution to make our lives easier. In general, groups help us gain knowledge, acquire various values, and acquire an identity (Solomon, 2017; Tomasello, 2014). Social identity theory explains the behaviour of people joining the group as follows: The individual wants to join the group because he thinks belonging to a certain social group has an emotional and symbolic meaning. All social groups, large or small, provide their members with a shared identity that determines and evaluates who they are, what they should believe, and how they should behave (McKeown et al., 2016). Because it is stated that groups give individuals a sense of belonging to a symbolic world (McLeod, 2021; Glass and Li, 2010). It is stated that individuals try to achieve and maintain a positive social identity in their groups, thereby increasing their self-esteem. It is argued that this positive identity is largely due to positive comparisons that can be made within and outside the group. If individuals have an unsatisfactory identity because of their comparisons, it is seen that individuals may try to leave their groups or seek ways to obtain a more positive distinctiveness for the group (Brown, 2000). An individual shares common characteristics and beliefs with other members of the group. Therefore, when individuals identify with a group, they see themselves as part of the group and try harder to achieve the group’s goals (Lin et al., 2017).

Norms play an active role in joining and adapting to the group. Norms determine the boundaries of the social identities of groups and individuals (McKeown et al., 2016). In this direction, an individual with subjective norms is expected to exhibit behaviours by within-group norms. It is stated that individuals try to make themselves look like an in-group prototype by acting according to group norms in this direction. Subjective norms are based on individuals’ perceptions of what other people want them to do. It is largely based on the need for approval and reflects the influence of other people on the behaviour of individuals (Bagozzi et al., 2007). It is seen that subjective norms are more effective in their behaviours when individuals want to identify too much with the groups they belong to and when they feel obliged to fulfill group norms (Sardana et al., 2020). Regarding this process, social psychologists state that the need for approval by the people in the group is the primary reason for regulating the behaviour of individuals (Algesheimer et al., 2005). This normative pressure to conform to the populist view of the society or group directs the behavior of individuals, especially when supported by the ideas of members such as the leaders of the group and opinion leaders. In addition, the behavior of someone with subjective norms to comply with group norms does not only depend on the fact that someone has more power than the individual but also on the family, friends, school, etc., that individuals want to be in. It is seen that the thoughts of the individuals in the groups are also important (Shen et al., 2010; Sardana et al., 2020).

Normative community pressure affects community members in the way they behave. Community norms are expressed in two ways. These are social norms/norms of conformity and personal acceptance of norms. Group norms become oppressive when the first condition is fulfilled and the second condition is insufficient. Norms turn into oppression when individuals do not want to accept the norms personally. However, it is stated that some members feel that they are a part of the groups they belong to and that they see group norms as necessary to have a good social identity. In this case, it is seen that individuals do not perceive group norms as pressure (Lindiawati et al., 2019). In this study, the emotions felt by people when the second situation is not valid and group norms are perceived as pressure was tried to be examined in the dimension of in-group text messaging, which is today's most important communication tool.

Although there are a limited number of studies concerning the topic the study by Marta-Lazo and Merello-García (2020) found that the most common disruptive behaviors in WhatsApp groups were off-topic messages, spam, and cyberbullying. They also found that those who engaged in disruptive behaviors tended to be younger, male, and have lower levels of education and income. The study suggests that establishing clear rules and guidelines for group communication, as well as actively moderating the group, can help prevent and manage disruptive behaviors.

Atrek and Kaya (2020) found that excessive instant messaging use in the workplace can lead to distraction, overload, and decreased productivity. The article suggests that creating clear guidelines for instant messaging use, such as setting expectations for response times and encouraging in-person communication for important discussions, can help mitigate the negative effects of instant messaging in the workplace.

Adekunle and Tella (2017) found that excessive use of instant messaging among undergraduate students was negatively correlated with academic performance. The study suggests that setting boundaries for instant messaging use, such as turning off notifications during study time and limiting use during class, can help students manage their instant messaging use and improve academic performance.

Gawer and Geroski (2014) found that the use of instant messaging and social media in healthcare communication can lead to unintended consequences, such as breaching patient privacy and causing miscommunication between healthcare professionals. The article suggests that healthcare organizations establish clear policies and guidelines for instant messaging and social media use, as well as provide training and education for healthcare professionals on the proper use of these tools.

Leone and De Marco (2021) found that while instant messaging can improve communication and collaboration in the workplace, it can also lead to distraction and overload. The study suggests that organizations establish guidelines for instant messaging use, such as setting expectations for response times and encouraging in-person communication for important discussions.

Yi-Yin Ko and Jun-Der Leu (2017) reviewed the literature on the use of instant messaging in educational settings and found that it can improve communication and collaboration among students and teachers, but can also lead to distraction and negative effects on learning outcomes. The review suggests that using instant messaging in education should be carefully planned and managed.

Tagg and Seargeant (2014) reviewed the use of instant messaging in professional communication and found that it can improve communication and collaboration among colleagues, but can also lead to distraction and negative effects on productivity. The review suggests that organizations establish guidelines for instant messaging use, such as setting expectations for response times and encouraging in-person communication for important discussions.

Kolek and Saunders (2008) found that undergraduate students on Facebook disclose a significant amount of personal information on their profiles, including their sexual orientation, relationship status, and political views. They also found gender differences in the types of information that men and women disclose.

Kircaburun and Griffiths (2018) found that individuals with higher levels of Instagram addiction tend to have lower levels of self-esteem, lower levels of conscientiousness, and higher levels of neuroticism. They also found that self-liking partially mediated the relationship between Instagram addiction and these personality traits.

Manca and Ranieri (2016) conducted a literature review of research on the use of Facebook as a technology-enhanced learning environment (TELE) from 2012 to 2015. They found that while there are some benefits to using Facebook as a TELE, there are also significant challenges related to privacy concerns, distraction, and maintaining a professional online identity.

The research questions, research design, and findings of the research are given below.

3. RESEARCH MODEL

This qualitative research employed a phenomenological research design. Phenomenological researches are conducted to find out how a concept or phenomenon is experienced and understood by individuals (Creswell, 2007). The study aims to present suggestions about the disturbing situations that undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students encounter in instant messaging groups and the precautions that can be taken by revealing the feelings and thoughts of those who are exposed to it. For this purpose, answers to the research questions presented below are sought.

(1) What are the disruptive actions encountered in instant messaging groups?

(2) What are the characteristics of those who create and are exposed to offensive actions in instant messaging groups?

(3) What are the precautions that can be taken against offensive actions in instant messaging groups?

3.1. Participants

The participants of this research were 14 university students from different universities and different education levels. The university students were chosen with criterion sampling from purposive sampling methods. This technique is more of a research purpose than a methodological requirement and allows the researchers to select appropriate participants for the purpose of the research (Creswell, 2007). The participant group consists of 5 undergraduates, 4 graduate, and 5 doctoral students at 6 different universities. The ages of participants ranged from 20 to 44. 11 female and 3 male students were included in the study. Demographic data of the students are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics of Participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Education Status	University
P1	20	Female	Undergraduate	Anadolu University
P2	43	Male	Doctoral	Katip Çelebi University
P3	32	Female	Doctoral	Katip Çelebi University
P4	24	Female	Undergraduate	Süleyman Demirel University
P5	44	Female	Doctoral	Katip Çelebi University
P6	25	Female	Graduate	Katip Çelebi University
P7	29	Female	Doctoral	Katip Çelebi University
P8	23	Female	Undergraduate	Katip Çelebi University
P9	26	Male	Graduate	Katip Çelebi University
P10	20	Female	Undergraduate	Ege University
P11	24	Male	Undergraduate	Dokuz Eylül University
P12	32	Female	Doctoral	Katip Çelebi University
P13	24	Female	Graduate	Adnan Menderes University
P14	25	Female	Graduate	Süleyman Demirel University

3.2. Data Collection Tool

In this research, open-ended data were collected with the qualitative interview method. This method is usually known as a semi-structured interview (Balyer & Bakay, 2022). By using this method, the participants explain their ideas freely on a specific topic. The semi-structured questionnaire, which

is a data collection tool, was developed by the researchers and was finalized by taking the opinions of two different faculty members who are experts in the field. The interview form consists of 19 questions, 3 of which are demographic data and 16 of which are to collect participant views on the research questions. The interview form was applied to 3 people, and it was evaluated by the researchers according to the feedback obtained and given its final form. There is also a “Volunteer Participation Form” in the introductory part of the data collection tool.

3.3. Data Collection Process

Interviews were conducted with 14 undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students, using the Zoom program and the interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. Interviews with the consent of the participants were recorded for later analysis. Participants were given the scope of the study and necessary information by the researchers about the process and data protection before the study. The participants were informed that they could leave at any stage of the interview and that they were not obliged to answer questions that bothered them.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the interviews were transferred to the computer, and the raw data were analyzed by the researchers with the inductive content analysis method (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). For this, first, the raw data were carefully read by the researchers. Then, open coding was done with content analysis. After open coding, patterns were found, and then themes and sub-themes were reached. While determining the themes, it was checked whether the expressions under each theme were consistent with themselves and with the theme title. Opinions of the participants P1, P2 It has been transferred in a coded format.

3.5. Limitations

This research has limitations regarding the transferability of the results to the population. Firstly, the sample of participants was volunteer students. For this reason, they are not necessarily representatives of other students. Therefore, the results obtained here are limited to this study group of students. Secondly, the analysis are the interpretations of researchers and limited with their conclusions. Different researchers may find different results or can make different comments.

3.6. Validity and Reliability

To increase the reliability of the research and to prevent data loss, the interviews were recorded. The coding was re-coded by two faculty members who are experts in the field. To check the consistency between the two codes, the Miles and Huberman model is used (Baltacı, 2017). The coders got together and reviewed the coded data. There was a 75% similarity between the themes created by the two experts according to Miles and Huberman's formula. A consensus was reached on the different themes.

3.7. Ethics Committee Permission

Ethical permission for the study was obtained from the Social Research Ethics Committee of İzmir Katip Çelebi University (Permission Date (14.12.2021), 2021/22-14).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

First, participants were asked about their social media tool preferences. The findings show that undergraduate students tend to use social media and instant messaging applications more frequently than graduate students, which could be due to age differences. Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage distributions of the instant messaging applications most commonly used by the participants.

Table 2. Frequencies of Instant Messaging Applications Most Used by Participants

App.	WhatsApp	Instagram	Youtube	Twitter	Facebook	Linkedin	Pinterest	Telegram
f	14	14	13	13	8	5	4	2
%	100	100	92	92	57	38	21	14

When examining the data, it is evident that all participants mostly use WhatsApp and Instagram, with YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook following these apps. The least used applications are LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Telegram. Participants state that instant messaging applications facilitate communication, serve as an important socialization tool, and follow the agenda, using these applications is a necessity in today's world. Additionally, it is easier to access visual materials through these applications, and they have become the primary source of news. Therefore, classical news sources like television, radio, and newspapers are being replaced by social media and instant messaging applications and are becoming increasingly popular day by day. One of the participants expressed this situation as follows: “At the beginning, though, the purpose of Instagram was to share photos, many people today use it to follow the update. Similarly, I think Twitter is a news channel (P3).”

It can be seen that instant messaging applications are very important in terms of fulfilling almost all the communication needs of their users in social environments, businesses, and schools. As a result of the interviews, it is stated that WhatsApp is of vital importance, as it facilitates and accelerates communication for the participants. One of the participants expresses this situation as follows:

“WhatsApp has become essential now. Because everyone communicates there. You have to communicate from there because no more messages like it used to be. WhatsApp became a part of life (P8).”

Some of the participants who stated that WhatsApp is the easiest way to reach communication channels in school, business, and daily life express that WhatsApp groups have become a necessity with the following:

“There is a side of me that I like to talk about a little more privately. But there are also obligations. Some things, even everything, are on social media. When our professor sends us any information, he writes from the group because he wants to reach more than one person with a single message. Not being in that group also causes me to fall behind in knowledge or not learn when a plan is made. That’s why I have to be in those groups (P1).”

Instant messaging apps are a socialization tool for users as well as facilitating communication with business or school groups. Connecting this, the participants stated that besides WhatsApp, they use Instagram and Twitter as socialization tools. Stating that it facilitates communication with family and friends and provides the opportunity to be included in the lives of people around them, the participants express that they do not feel alone thanks to social media groups. At the same time, the participants who stated that they had the opportunity to meet different people in social media groups stated that these groups strengthened their social networks. At this point, the participants stated that while they see WhatsApp mostly as a means of socializing with their close friends, they use Instagram and Twitter to have information about the country and world agenda and to follow the latest updates. One of the participants expresses this situation in the following:

“Everything would be very difficult, especially during this period. I am working with different people from different parts of the world on several projects. I guess if there were no WhatsApp groups, I would have much more difficulty in communicating with people around the world (P12).”

Another question of the research is, “What are the disruptive actions encountered in instant messaging groups?” After analyzing the data, the following themes and sub-themes were reached.

Table 3. The Themes and Sub-Themes of Disturbing Actions Encountered In Instant Messaging Groups

Main Theme	Sub Themes
Violation of privacy	Added to the group without your approval Violation of privacy Sharing posts about eating, drinking, and traveling Being in the same group with people you don't know
Abuse	Imposing ideas (religious or political) Biased posts Being forced to express or support an opinion Excessive messages Psychological pressure

Offensive Actions	Cursing, insults, rude speech Contempt/Ridicule Humiliation of others Using status Incoherent speech and inappropriate addressing Gossip Pranks Aggression and irritability Provocation
Gender Discrimination	Male-dominated speeches Obscenity

It can be said that the disturbing events encountered in instant messaging groups are the violation of privacy, harassment, hurtful actions, and gender discrimination, respectively. It is stated that the most disturbing situation for the participants is being included in any group without being asked. Participants added that they frequently encounter this situation, especially in family and work groups. Most of the participants state that they do not want to be included in these groups, but they cannot leave these groups for some compelling reasons. One of the participants stated this situation as follows: "So if the plan is made without your opinions being asked and I am taken into it without being asked or not, it affects me very badly. That sounds like bullying to me too" (P1). Another participant expresses this situation as follows:

"For example, someone, I think, is an officer from work. If I remember correctly, it was very funny to celebrate Holy Friday. Actually, he included people in a group to celebrate Holy Friday. Oh, it was so funny. So I thought, why am I in this group? Why was this group formed? And why am I here? I love that friend too, I don't want to offend, I even wrote, so why did you add me to the group this Friday? Can I get out, so there are people from this group and people I don't know, we're together. (P5)"

Other participants stated that they find it disturbing that their posts related to their private life is shared by her friends in social groups, intentionally or unintentionally;

"My friend doesn't think I have a private life. So everyone's perception is different. I shared something with him, but he couldn't understand that it was private or whether I wanted to share it. He is sharing at the time and I feel the need to write to him privately. Or, some people can comment on me just because of their annoyance, or share a secret of mine. (P1)"

"They add your phone number to different WhatsApp groups, you can leave, but it stays there clearly until you leave, you know, it's visible. Then, for example, I found myself in conversations that I should not have been included in groups that I should never have been (P4).

Participants state that posts about eating, drinking, and traveling are disturbing and that they have to meet people they do not know by being included in the same groups, even though they do not want to. One participant expresses this situation as follows:

“For example, there are close friend lists on Instagram, in stories. I don't know them, I wouldn't greet them if I saw them on the street or remembered their faces, but I am among their close friend list. I can see their ridiculous car stories, a photo of him with his girlfriend or whatever, and it comes across (P8).

Another main theme expressed by the participants is disturbing actions that can be described as harassment in groups. Among these, they state that they are uncomfortable with trying to impose religious or political ideas, being forced to express opinions, a constant bombardment of messages at the late times, and the psychological pressure created by these messages. Some of the participants express these situations as follows:

“The way of thinking of the members of the group is very different from each other, so there are a lot of things that bother me while talking. People trying to impose their own opinion. I usually get very uncomfortable with such people. (P4)”

“A group that is texted a lot and that I never wanted to be in also makes me feel stuck, frankly. I feel stuck between quitting and not leaving that group. (P12)”

“I don't want to miss any information shared in groups with a lot of messages, but I don't want to read 30-40 messages to catch that information, for example, he writes a lot. It really bothers me. (P12)”

“In Whatsapp groups, we sometimes have to stay in the same groups with people we don't know, so this can be a university project team, it can be in a different working group. Then, there is a discussion or a dialogue between two people and I am not a member of it, but I get a constant message throughout the day and it actually makes me tired even if I am not in that discussion (P12)”

“For example, one of the things that bother me is like this; I think it's bullying to think that if there is an event or breaking news everyone has to express an opinion on the subject, and everyone should show sensitivity to the issue. (P3)”

“There are people who believe everything they see and try to comment directly on everything they read. So it bothers me. (P8)”

One of the factors that have an important role in establishing the right communication is to select the correct words. It is also imperative in social groups, which has become one of the foundations of daily communication. The inability to convey emotions in online media requires careful selection of the words used in the text. In the interviews, the participants stated that the swearing, insults, or rude

speeches in the group communications were very disturbing. For some group members, these words, which are in the colloquial language, are considered normal, but it was seen that the majority of the participants were uncomfortable with it. Some participants said the following about this;

“...it bothers me a lot when people insult each other on social media, crosses the border, and don't know the lines. (P5)”

“.....especially hate speech, polarization on Twitter and Instagram, defamation of each other, this can be both political and cultural, and people's beliefs and preferences. The hate speech towards each other on these various things is the first thing that strikes me, that bothers me. (P3)”

“Once, they started to say insulting words to each other, then they closed that group, so that's what I just said, they also ended that group later on. That's a sad situation. (P7)”

“As a person who does not use profanity in my daily life, I am disturbed by other people's abusive speech. However, I see it used frequently nowadays. For some people, it has even become used to say hello. Apart from that, it bothers me that Foreign words are embedded in people's daily conversations. For example, they always say “ok” instead of native words.(P8)”

“I also get angry when someone says something insulting when bullying is done. Because at this point, since I am a character who would say, "Wait, you can't talk to that person that way" if we were in a social environment, it bothers me not to say that in that group, even if I say it, it will be misunderstood, and not to say it at all. (P12)”

It is stated that the words used do not always have to be insulting or profanity in order to disturb them. It is seen that it is a very disturbing situation for members to make fun of each other's behaviors, preferences, and ideas in the group. A participant who states that he is sometimes ridiculed with his speaking style and sometimes with his behavior states that not only himself but also other members are exposed to this situation in the following way:

“In the groups we play in, for example, my inability to play the game, my behavior, my way of speaking, etc., come back to me as criticism. I don't know if it's defined as bullying, but there was someone who described serving something to eat while playing online games as henpecked. (P11)”

One participant stated that platforms that provide access to different ideas, especially users who have conflicts of opinion, express their opinions by inoculating each other and that they are uncomfortable with the use of social media applications in this way;

“Sometimes, even though I don't have the same opinion, I read different opinions on social media on Twitter to see what they have in mind. I see the conversations of both sides mixed with insulting each other and I am very sad. (P9)”

Another problem experienced in social groups is that group members use their status to suppress other users. It has been stated that situations are also encountered in social media applications. The participants stated that they were uncomfortable and sometimes directly exposed to the use of status to dominate and influence others in this way. Some users said the following about it;

“We have a WhatsApp group of elementary school parents. There is also a district governor among the parents. A parent wrote something, the district governor’s wife warned very harshly she has no right to such a thing, but she warned. Then the teacher got involved in this, the teacher apologized to the wife of the district governor. I couldn't understand this situation, so why did the teacher apologize now? She was the one who had the authority to do the bullying. (P5)”

“Just like in daily life, I feel very much that the status difference is tried to be felt in social media and social groups. I feel too much. Even being the manager of the group, for example, seems to me as if it creates the idea that only he can be an authority in that group. (P1)”

On the other hand, the members do not pay attention to the way they address each other in the group is described as levity for some participants. The participants stated that the members who made lowly speeches thought it was an indication of sincerity, but that it was disturbing and attention should be paid to the way of speaking. Regarding this, a participant expresses it as follows;

“Commune is so uncomfortable. As you say, the young generation, you know much better, they can act very easily and they can talk about everything, they think that they can criticize everything. (P5)”

In addition, especially female participants express that they are uncomfortable with the perception of girl groups only as a gossip group and the use of groups in that way by their fellows. Finally, it is seen that the participants think that the jokes based on sincerity in the group sometimes exceed the limit and reach disturbing dimensions. The inability to adjust the dose of jokes made in the group is not considered correct by the participants, as it causes humiliation of the person being joked about.

Some of the participants state that these behaviors can be exhibited just to show themselves and belong to a group. Since there is no obligation to confirm the accuracy of what is shared on social media, users have stated that they can pretend to be someone they are not, and thus seem to have the characteristics of the group they feel belong to. The opinions of the participants about this are as follows;

“Because everybody wants to show off. See me "This is who I am". Everyone wants to belong to a group. It doesn't matter which group it belongs to. But everyone has a desire to belong to a group. That's why he wants to create a world of his own. The easiest way for this is social media because no one will tell you this is a lie, this is the truth if you share it. (P8)”

The interview results also state that some people in the group exert psychological pressure and aggression is observed in these people. The interview results also state that some people in the group

exert psychological pressure and aggression is observed in these people. Some people who try to influence others by displaying vicious attitudes achieve their goals, but it would not be wrong to say that they are described as disturbing by other group members. Regarding this, the opinions of the participants;

“So these people like to pressure and influence them to get what they want. These are the types who say whatever I want or whatever (P7)”

“Especially people who are very aggressive when expressing their own opinions can be disturbing. (P4)”

Another disturbing activity in instant messaging is the male-dominated perspective and messages with obscene content. Participants state that these behaviours are done by many people, including their close friends, sometimes unknowingly and sometimes specifically to hurt them. It was observed that the obscene speeches that included gender discrimination in the groups disturbed the participants. Women participants expressed their views on this issue as follows:

“I don't like the fact that there is a difference between men and women in the group and men try to establish dominance. While we have considerate boyfriends who react to people who do this, derogatory remarks that directly target women are quite upsetting (P4).

“Obscene words can be used, people can taunt each other, I think people don't communicate properly anymore (P10).”

Participants were asked to define their roles in instant messaging groups, and their answers were analyzed. The participants identified themselves as passive, spectator, listener, neutral, conciliatory, and cowardly. Participants who are more active in friend and family groups stated that they remain spectators in school and workgroups and only participate in conversations when necessary. Some participants stated that they join business and parent groups only to receive information and follow school/work-related issues, and messaging should be limited to the purpose of the group.

On the other hand, some participants stated that they preferred to remain passive because they thought that their opinions would not be considered and respected. For instance, one participant said, "I feel like my opinions don't matter in group chats with my coworkers, so I usually just read the messages and don't say anything." Another participant said, "I'm afraid of getting into arguments or saying something wrong, so I just stay silent and observe."

These findings are consistent with a study conducted by Albury and Crawford (2012), which found that people often adopt passive or neutral roles in online group communication due to various social factors. In another study, Hampton et al. (2011) found that people participate in online groups for different reasons, such as seeking information or social support. Therefore, it is important to recognize

the different roles that people play in online groups and promote inclusive communication to ensure everyone's voices are heard

“I don't usually take a very active role in in-group posts. My attitude is generally not to interfere with conversations unless it reaches the final point. I just state my opinion, withdraw and continue watching. I prefer to watch, I have a spectator role. I prefer to be active if necessary, but I am never the one who uses very harsh language (P5).”

“I prefer to stay calm and stay behind at this point. I prefer not to participate too much, especially in situations that bother me, but I follow from a distance (P7).”

“I try not to be a side to anything, especially on social media. Because the country we live in is not a place with such democratic and contemporary people. In other words, they are not people who respect each other and their ideas and discuss them in a respectful manner. (P3).”

“Actually, I'm the one who listens to the conversations in the background. If it is not a topic that is very relevant to me or something I would like to be involved in, I am not the person who texts and actively uses it at every point. I read, maybe I approve or not, but if I don't want to write, I don't write (P4).”

According to the results, it is seen that only two participants take an active role and these participants also take a leadership role in the group and share content more frequently. Some of the participants, who generally choose to remain silent, show that they do not have free time to be active, while others do not like to be constantly chatting in the group and they are aware that the discussions will not be concluded as the reason.

The answers given to the research question “What are the reasons for accepting offensive actions in instant messaging groups?” were analyzed and the themes and sub-themes presented below were reached.

Table 4. Themes and Sub-Themes of Reasons For Accepting Offensive Actions In Instant Messaging Groups

Main Theme	Subtheme
Fear	Fear of flagrancy Fear of having problems at work Fear of authority Fear of being misunderstood Fear of being alone Fear of being guilty Abstain from conflict

Cultural structure	Respect Kindness Upbringing Traditions and customs
Personality Traits	Silence Insensibility Not to take seriously Habit

When we examine the reasons for accepting disturbing actions in instant messaging groups, three themes emerge: fear, cultural structure, and personality traits. Fear is one of the most common disturbing actions encountered in instant messaging groups. This theme appears in different forms, such as fear of losing one's job, fear of being reprimanded, fear of authority, fear of being isolated, and fear of conflict. It is fair to say that most participants remain unresponsive and endure uncomfortable situations because they cannot risk being harmed.

It has been observed that the presence of high-status members in social groups affects the reactions of other members. Participants reported being unresponsive because they feared that reacting in groups with authorities, such as their boss or manager, would make them stand out and lead to problems in their work life. Here are some statements from participants on this issue:

“A parent in my child’s school group constantly puts pressure on and humiliates the teacher in the group because of his wife's position. The teacher, on the other hand, has to submit to pressure because he knows that he has to get on well with the parents because of the fear of the school administration and the fear of being unemployed (P5).”

“Reacting to disturbing behavior in business instant messaging groups, especially in groups with managers, makes us stand out. Glaring negatively affects comfort in the working environment. That's why I prefer to remain unresponsive to such events (P7).”

In non-work-related groups, it was observed that the majority of participants refrained from reacting due to the fear of being misunderstood. Even if they express themselves clearly, they believe that group members are prone to misinterpretation. In such cases, they express that they would feel responsible for the issue not improving, and even worsening, with the following statements:

“The reason I can't react is that I'm afraid of being misunderstood if it's not a group with which I have an intimate relationship. Frankly, if I tell a person in the group that he or she has acted inappropriately, I am afraid and hesitant that that person may perceive it as an insult to his beliefs, maybe to his character, or even to his personality, not to his behavior. (P12)”

“Because, especially in high school students, they may have fear of things like; they may kick me out of the group, they may not take me into their friend groups. That was the case with me for a while too. They might not let me hang out with them again, so I was afraid of who I would hang out with. Here I will be alone, the fear of loneliness. (P1)”

Instant message applications sharing your actions and reactions publicly can sometimes be a reason for not responding. For example, one participant explained the situation as follows:

“When you leave the WhatsApp group, the application sends information messages to all members. In this case, other members start to question why you left and you stand out. I think it is a problem that the application gives such a warning. It limits your freedom”. (P3)”

It can be said that another important reason for the unresponsiveness is the social environment we live in and the cultural structure we have. The participants stated that the reasons why they did not react to the disturbing situations in the groups were traditions and customs, respect for older or high-status individuals, courtesy, and the way they were brought up. Participants expressed their views on this issue as follows

“Because I don't know how to explain it any other way, so I'll give an example from myself. There is a certain respect we have for family members, something we are taught in particular, respect for elders. In other words, we are taught that if there is someone above you, they may be old, they may have status, they may be in any strong position, you should respect them. (P10)”

“As I said, I think the reaction we will give to everything we encounter or not encounter is related to our past. It's about where we live, about our parents, about our siblings, about our neighborhood, about where we were born and grew up. (P4)”

Another participant states that he is reluctant to leave the group, especially regarding the groups he was included in without permission, because of the fear that leaving the family group will be considered shameful. The participants who stated that the cultural structure had an effect in such cases stated that the unwritten rules about family ties affected their behavior. Regarding this, a participant said the following;

“Cultural structure. If I were a European individual, I would say it's my personal choice and leave. But I can't do this because there is a judgment in the culture I live in that it would be something shameful and contrary to courtesy. I can set my limit, but I exist in that group. (P3)”

The results can be explained by social influence and adaptive behaviour. Social influence directs individuals, who are social beings, to comply with the norms of society (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2014; McLeod, 2021; Glass and Li, 2010). The results support studies stating that compliance with group norms is the basis of social life. It is seen that the participants exhibit behaviours towards adaptation not only in their

real-life groups but also in their virtual world groups. In other words, it can be said that the norms in our real-life affect our behaviour in instant messaging groups.

Some participants refer to the phenomenon of “learned helplessness” by expressing the reason for their unresponsiveness to disturbing situations as “whatever I do, the behavior of these people will not change”. It argues that when events are uncontrollable, the organism learns that its behavior and outcomes are independent and that this learning produces the motivational, cognitive, and emotional effects of uncontrollability (Maier and Seligman, 1976).

Some of the participants state that they are unresponsive because they do not take these people seriously. The participants, who stated that they are aware of the aims of such disturbing people, state that being unresponsive can be an effective method as well as reacting. On the other hand, some of the participants state that unresponsive people are people who have a quiet nature and lack self-confidence.

The last question of the research is “What are the precautions that can be taken against disturbing actions in instant messaging groups?”. The answers given to the question were analyzed and the following themes and sub-themes were reached.

Table 5. The themes and sub-themes of precautions that can be taken against disturbing actions in instant messaging groups

Themes	Sub-themes
Education	Awareness about bullying Awareness of appropriate communication
Reacting	Expressing discomfort One-to-one communication Leave the group Ignore Exclude from group

Considering the opinions of the participants on what measures can be taken against disturbing behaviors that occur in instant messaging groups, two main themes come to the fore: "education" and "reaction". However, the view that this education should be at both individual and social levels is prominent. It is thought that these problems can be prevented to a large extent by informing the people around them, both through media channels and conscious users. Participants who stated that it is necessary to raise awareness about both social media and correct communication believe that education starting from the family should be supported by continuing education at school, media, and legal sanctions. Participants' opinions about the necessity of raising awareness about the use of social media are as follows:

“Users who know the use of social media should also make the people around them (neighbors, friends, parents) aware of the use of social media. Especially since children are unconscious about this issue, they should be made conscious first. In this way, I think we can protect especially children from harmful content without their realizing it. (P4)”

“I think the most important thing is education, it should start with education. Then it must be supported by law. Because I think it is absurd to pass a law without creating infrastructure. (P9)”

“First of all, we as humans need to educate ourselves and learn how to use social media and messaging applications. For this, educational programs can be made, perhaps from television or even from social media. (P2)”

Some participants, on the other hand, express their views by emphasizing the importance of establishing correct communication as well as raising awareness about the use of social media;

“It's about knowing how to communicate. Therefore, it is necessary to know what these are in order not to do anything that amounts to an insult or threat, or pressure. This is something before a group is formed, something we must do before a social group is formed. Maybe there can be training about this in society and the family. (P12)”

“If we can teach this to children when they are very young, even if there are different training points, I don't know, there are institutions that give certificates, and if the importance of this can be explained to people and taught, that is, if the importance of communication can be taught, I think it can be solved at least to some extent. (P10)”

Participants think that warning users who create disturbing situations in an appropriate language, and if necessary, they can be warned by establishing one-to-one communication. If the problem cannot be solved in this way, it is stated that removing or blocking these people from the group may be another solution.

“We need to exclude those people. In my opinion, a lot of time should not be spent correcting people who are such indiscretions. (P11)”

“Especially if he insists on not understanding, he is a rude and unsympathetic person. There is no such person around us, so we do not host them. But if there is such a person, they should warn that person with the consensus of the other people in the group, and if they do not understand it, they should remove them from their midst. (P9)”

Some participants stated that they should leave the group in order to get rid of disturbing behaviors as follows;

“I prefer to leave the social groups in which uncomfortable situations reach their peak. In such situations, I think leaving the group is an effective reaction. (P3)”

“The solution is leaving the group we don't want. (P2)”

Another participant stated that the rules established by taking the opinion of the group members in social groups can prevent disturbing behaviors. He stated that group rules both prevent the group from deviating from its purpose and prevent group members from exhibiting behaviors that disturb each other. Regarding this, the participant said the following;

“I like to bring all the elements together and create protocols. As such, it seems that there are fewer communication misunderstandings. So I can recommend it. I think this can be an effective method especially in business groups, that is, those groups opened for business reasons, I can recommend it. (P12)”

1. 5. CONCLUSION

The use of instant messaging apps has become ubiquitous in modern society, with research indicating that they have become a necessary part of our lives (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Krasnova et al., 2018). However, despite their convenience, these apps can also cause difficulties and uncomfortable situations (Wang et al., 2021). For example, research has found that people can feel pressure to respond to messages quickly, leading to stress and anxiety (Wang et al., 2021). Furthermore, miscommunication and misunderstandings can occur due to the lack of nonverbal cues, leading to conflict and negative feelings (Krasnova et al., 2018).

To address these issues, it is recommended that instant messaging groups should only be created when necessary, and rules should be established for their use (Krasnova et al., 2018). Young people should also be taught how to use these tools properly, and in-group communication, tolerance, and courtesy should be promoted (Livingstone et al., 2019). Training programs should also be implemented to help people use these apps effectively (Wang et al., 2021).

In addition, instant messaging apps can be adjusted to allow users to keep their actions and reactions private without restricting their freedom (Krasnova et al., 2018). This could include features such as message deletion or the ability to hide online status (Wang et al., 2021). Ultimately, technology should not become a tool of social torture, and steps should be taken to ensure that the use of instant messaging apps enhances our lives rather than detracts from them (Livingstone et al., 2019).

In conclusion, the use of instant messaging and social media platforms can have both positive and negative effects on various aspects of our lives, including communication, collaboration, productivity, learning, and personal well-being. It is essential to establish clear rules and guidelines for the use of these tools and to actively moderate them to prevent and manage disruptive behaviors, breaches of privacy, and other unintended consequences. Additionally, setting boundaries for instant messaging use and carefully planning and managing its use in education and professional settings can help mitigate the negative effects and maximize the benefits of these platforms.

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