BOTH SIDES OF THE COIN: SMARTPHONES IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS OF YOUTH[1]

MADALYONUN İKİ YÜZÜ: GENÇLERİN DUYGUSAL İLİŞKİLERİNDE AKILLI TELEFONLARIN YERİ

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Abstract

Smartphones have invaded the daily lives of all people around the world in such a way that they have the power of shaping interpersonal relationships. Although this is valid for people from all ages, college-aged youth use smartphones more than other age groups, therefore their relationships are affected more from these devices. Through fifteen in-depth interviews, this study demonstrates how use of smartphones shape romantic relationships of the college-aged youth in Turkey. Findings reveal that smartphones are an essential part of the relationships of today's youth because of internet-based text-messaging applications, video call applications and social media platforms. Beside helping romantic relationships to start and proceed, interview results suggest that smartphones raise trust issues and create fragile relationships with symptoms similar to the behavior that are associated with attachment anxiety. These findings are significant in terms of foreseeing the future marriage and families that today's youth will create, as well as being the first qualitative study ran in Turkey about the use of smartphones in romantic relationships.

Keywords: Smartphones, mobile phones, romantic relationships, youth, attachment anxiety.

Öz

Akıllı telefonlar dünyanın her yerindeki insanların gündelik yaşamlarını öylesine işgal etti ki, kişilerarası ilişkileri bile biçimlendirecek hale geldiler. Bu durum tüm yaş gruplarındaki bireyler için geçerli hale gelse de üniversite çağındaki gençler akıllı telefonları daha fazla kullanmakta ve bu sebeple bu yaş grubunun ilişkileri akıllı telefonlardan daha fazla etkilenmektedir. Bu çalışma, 15 derinlemesine görüşme aracılığıyla akıllı telefonların Türkiye'deki gençlerin duygusal ilişkilerini nasıl biçimlendirdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bulgulara göre internete dayalı mesajlaşma uygulamaları, görüntülü arama özelliği ve sosyal medya platformlarını barındırması sebebiyle akıllı telefonlar günümüz gençliğinin ilişkilerinin elzem bir parçasıdır. Görüşme sonuçlarına göre; akıllı telefonlar gençlerin duygusal ilişkilerinin başlaması ve ilerlemesine yardımcı olmanın yanında, aynı zamanda güven sorunları oluşturarak, bağlanma kaygısıyla ilişkilendirilen davranışlara benzer davranışlar ortaya çıkararak, ilişkileri sonlanmaya götürecek derecede kırılganlaştırmaktadır. Bu da gelecekte gençlerin yapacağı evliliklerin ve kuracakları ailelerin sağlamlığı ile ilgili önemle dikkate alınması gereken bir durumdur ve bu çalışma, konu ile ilgili Türkiye'de yapılan ilk nitel çalışmadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Akıllı telefon, cep telefonu, duygusal ilişkiler, gençlik, bağlanma kaygısı.

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Introduction

Material objects are not only shaped by society, but they also shape the society. This technological deterministic perspective is known by Marshall McLuhan, who initially claimed that typography technology was a resource that told people how to use other resources. It had such a power in itself that it created modern nationalism, standardization, it helped increase the individualistic culture, and it created the estranged modern individual (2014: 231-330). Similarly, mobile new media devices like smartphones shape their users, their daily lives and interpersonal relationships.

It is a well proven fact that today, most of the people's world is surrounded by smartphones. Other than being able to deal with some daily routines like paying bills, reading the news, checking the traffic, or etc., smartphones also serve as a moderator of people's close interpersonal relationships. For this reason, an increasingly popular topic is how use of mobile technologies in romantic relationships affect and shape these relationships.

To be able to maintain a romantic relationship, partners need to be positive and open to each other, provide assurances about their relationship, and express their love (Canary & Stafford, 1994). Also, accessibility, responsiveness and engagement are considered as behavioral manifestations of attachment (Sandberg, Busby, Johnson, & Yoshida, 2012). With the spread of cell phones, couples found the chance of fulfilling these requirements of maintaining a romantic relationship through the basic features of 'texting' and 'calling'. There are many researches implemented to understand how cell phones (Coyne, Stockdale, Busby, Iverson, & Grant, 2011; Duran, Kelly & Rotaru, 2011; Miller-Ott, Kelly & Duran, 2012; Wei & Lo, 2006) and mobile phones (Hall, Baym, & Miltner, 2014; Horstmanshof & Power, 2005; Jin & Pena, 2010; Vincent, 2006) affect their users' romantic relationships.

Miller-Ott, Kelly, & Duran (2012: 29) claimed that cell phones are so significant in romantic relationships that satisfaction with cell phone usage is directly related to relational satisfaction. Coyne et al. (2011: 158-160) found that cell phones are frequently used by especially young romantic couples, mostly to express affection. Duran, Kelly, & Rotaru (2011: 32) looked at the issue from another perspective, and claimed that cell phone use in romantic relationships brings rules like higher availability expectations, and conflicts like feelings of restricted freedom and controlling the partner. On the other hand, by talking about 'mobile phones' instead of 'cell phones', Jin & Pena (2010: 47-49) focused on only voice calls, and found that there is more love and commitment in those romantic relationships where partners make frequent voice calls to each other. All these researches on cell phones and mobile phones reveal a technological deterministic perspective that the arrival of this technology started to change relationship dynamics. Smartphones affect relationships even more because of their features, however, research on how smartphones specifically impact romantic relationships is quite rare.

Smartphones are different than basic cell phones. Via Internet connection, they provide all forms of communication available to their users, and therefore are more embedded in their users' daily lives and relationships. Thus, different than previous studies, this study focuses on "smartphone" use and its features of *Whatsapp* texting, which is more popular than *SMS* now, and which gives couples the chance of sending countless texts to each other; besides photo sharing and video calling features, which let them to see each other even if they do not meet; and finally social media, which is the most used application on smartphones by youth.

Many studies both from Turkey and from all over the world (Bal, 2013; Dağtaş & Yıldırım, 2015; Hampton et al., 2011; Lenhart et al., Lin & Baron, 2007) demonstrate that college-aged youth who are partially more independent than other stages of youth are the most devoted

users of smartphones. They have such an addictive relationship with these devices that they check their smartphones more than a hundred times in a day (Woollaston, 2013). Especially users of generation Y compulsively check their smartphones many times during the day, and feel anxious if they do not have their smartphones beside ("Cisco", 2012). Therefore, it is highly possible for an age group who cannot think of a life without their smartphones to let these devices shape their romantic relationships as well.

According to a report published by *Teenage Research Unlimited* (Picard, 2007), young couples call and text each other at every possible moment in their relationship. Furthermore, Jin & Pena (2010) found that young people in a romantic relationship use their mobile phones more than young people who do not have a romantic partner. Moreover, Morey, Gentzler, Creasy, Oberhauser, & Westerman (2013) found that, college-aged couples who are in a happy/satisfying romantic relationship tend to use their mobile phones more frequently. Obviously today, smartphones are used intensely in youth's romantic relationships and they shape how young couples communicate with each other both when they are far from each other in physical proximity, and when they are next to each other.

Some studies (Jin & Pena, 2010; Drouin & Landgraff, 2012; Weisskirch & Delevi, 2011; Morey et al., 2013) relate excessive use of mobile phones in romantic relationships with *Attachment Theory* of psychology. According to this theory, feelings of anxiety and avoidance have high significance in relationships. Bowlby's *Attachment Theory* (1969, 1973, 1980) originally focuses on the relationship between the infants and their primary caregivers. More specifically, this theory assumes that infants are so attached to their caregivers that they get emotionally distressed when they are separated from them. He talked about three attachment styles: *secure, avoidant, and anxious-ambivalent*. Hazan and Shaver (1987) later adapted this theory and its three styles into the romantic love relationships of adults. As much as an infant expects their mother's accesibility and responsiveness, couples in romantic relationships expect the same from their partners. When a person experiences their relationship suffocatingly intense (*anxiour/ambivalent*), and/or when there are trust issues beside the fear of getting close (*avoidant*), then there is a problem of attachment in that relationship (Hammond & Fletcher, 1991). According to Luo (2014, pp. 145) these are why young couples text each other very much in their romantic relationships.

From a broader perspective this study suggests that, let alone maintaining an ongoing relationship, smartphones can be the beginning and end of romantic relationships of youth even by themselves today, because they have a significant role in moderating the relationship dynamics. Namely, other than helping or damaging the romantic relationships of youth, they create a new way of experiencing relationships, which can be risky for future marriages. The argument in *Attachment Theory* is that, attachment styles develop at infancy, and as the person grows up, their attachment style reflects on their love relationships. So, according to this theory, how a person will behave in their romantic relationship comes from their childhood experiences of attachment. This study, on the other hand, argues in a technological deterministic perspective that, features of smartphones may have the power to create and/or increase feelings and behavior similar to the symptoms of attachment anxiety for youth in their romantic relationships, and therefore make their relationships more fragile.

Method

Many studies have been applied on the usage of mobile phones in romantic relationships, however this study focuses on especially smartphone usage, and it is one of the rare qualitative studies which gives detailed information about the subject.

This study has been conducted through 15 in-depth interviews with college-aged (19-22) people from Istanbul, the most cosmopolitan city of Turkey. Seven participants were male, whereas eight of them were female. Female participants were more expressive about the experiences from their relationships. Ten participants were in an ongoing relationship (from one month to seven-years), and five have ended (one month to 6-years) their relationships. The reason why the participants are chosen from non-married people in romantic relationships is that they need their smartphones more to maintain the relationship, especially for the times that they cannot meet.

The reason to choose a qualitative method while researching this subject is the opportunity of observing the participant closely while they are talking, and being able to ask deeper questions to obtain detailed answers. Interview questions mainly focused on the impact of the smartphone in starting and ending the relationship, in maintaining the relationship, and in trying to save the relationship at times of conflict. The interviews included questions like "What was the meaning/place of your smartphones in your relationship?", "How did you use your smartphones before and during the relationship?", "What do you think were the advantages and disadvantages of communicating through your smartphones with your partner?" "Does your smartphone mean freedom or a chain on the neck in your relationship?" and "What if you did not have smartphones? Would that change anything in your relationship?"

All interviews are listened to carefully and scripted verbatim. Transcripts are read many times to be able to determine common themes and find correlations. In analysing the data obtained, direct quotations from the participants' answers are given to be descriptive. Moreover, common themes are underlined from similar answers. And finally, results of both descriptive and thematic analyses are interpreted by the researcher (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008: 221).

Results

Two main themes arose from the interviews, by providing opposing findings. Namely, each theme revealed both constructive and destructive ways of using smartphones in young people's romantic relationships. Therefore, it can be said that there are the two general themes of "*Building and maintaining romantic relationships through smartphones*", and "*Damaging and ending relationships through smartphones*". Under these two main themes, there are a few sub-themes that serve to the function of these two.

First of all, as a sub-theme of building and maintaining romantic relationships of youth, it is found that smartphones make it easier to start a romantic relationship by facilitating *getting to know each other* for youth without feeling shy. Secondly, smartphones give young couples the opportunity of *being always "there"* for each other with the technical features that they provide. And finally, social media applications in smartphones serve as *a proof mechanism* for young couples.

On the other hand, interviews provided more negative materials that could serve to the main theme of *damaging and ending relationships through smartphones*. Using smartphones for *partner phubbing*[3] is one negative impact on the romantic relationships of youth. Furthermore, it is seen that after a point, use of smartphones in relationships turns into a habit, also an addiction, and *consumes relationships* very fast. Finally, social media applications in smartphones damage relationships by creating *trust issues* that create types of behavior similar to the symptoms of attachment anxiety among partners.

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[3] Focusing on one's smartphone at the physical presence of their partner (McDaniel, 2016; Roberts and David, 2016).

1. **Building and Maintaining Relationships:**

   1.1. Getting to know each other

As an overall result of the study, it is seen that relationships may start and end because of smartphones.

For the beginnings, smartphones give couples the opportunity of learning about each other without feeling shy. Still, text-messaging is at the front, not through *SMS* texting which charges users by character limits, but through *Whatsapp* and social media texting like *Facebook Chat*, that let users send countless characters of texts:

(Female, 19, in a relationship):

"We graduated from the same school, in different years, we never saw each other in college. He found me from social media, first followed me on Instagram, then texted me from Facebook. We communicated on Facebook for a month, and then we got each other's numbers and went on texting through Whatsapp. In total, we texted each other through social media platforms on our smartphones for four months."

(Male, 20, ended relationship):

"For a whole year, we communicated via Facebook chat on our smartphones. We had each other's numbers, but we used Facebook Chat like Whatsapp. We never called each other during that one year."

(Female, 19, in a relationship):

"We were classmates and one day I asked him about something about the class. We were already following each other on Instagram. He was recording the class on his smartphone, so he asked me through Instagram to give him my number so that he can send me the record. That way we started texting from Whatsapp, it was fun, and our relationship started."

Communication packages of the operators limit the communication of young couples (by charging per minute and *SMS*). Smartphones on the other hand, save couples through limitless communication from the Internet:

(Male, 20, in a relationship):

"After we had our smartphones and internet, everything got better, because you can Whatsapp, make calls and video calls, send photos anytime and as much as you want. It is cheaper."

Some participants define smartphones as the reason that they have their relationships today:

(Female, 19, in a relationship):

"Maybe our relationship would start without the smartphones, but we would not be able to have what we have today. Because, we have fun through emojis and other facilites it provides us. Or, our relationship started with the record he took by his smartphone, and if he just answered my question there, we would not have the courage to talk to each other again."

1.2. Being always "there":

When not married, but in an intimate relationship, couples who use smartphones run their relationships almost like married couples. They can always be "there" and feel their partner beside thanks to features of smartphones like texting, sharing photos, making video calls and etc., and mostly female participants seem to be happy about this opportunity given by smartphones to them:

(Female, 20, ended relationship):

"Every morning he texted me "good morning" from Whatsapp, and sent a photo of himself from that moment, as if we woke up next to each other."

(Female, 20, in a relationship):

"Thanks to smartphones, we can easily see each other via video calls, we can send our photos, we share each moment and feel as if we are side by side all the time. It gives me freedom in terms of being able to access him anytime I want."

Smartphones give partners the opportunity of sharing their lives and the feeling of being side by side, even if they cannot physically meet for a long time. Video call applications like *Skype* provide the closest feeling to being physically next to each other:

(Female, 22, in a relationship):

"Not texting, not calling… Skype is the best application on my phone that gives me the feeling of beside him, because I can see his face."

1.3. One side of trust issues:

Finally, smartphones make young people feel secure in their relationships, because youth use these devices as a proof mechanism for building trust. Some highly jealous people are happy from their relationship because of smartphones. Applications that show location via GPS, the "last seen" feature of social media (like *Whatsapp* or *Facebook*), sending spontaneous photos, or making video calls are ways of controlling the other partner's actions, which sometimes avoid conflicts. Again, female participants seem to use smartphones more and expect the same from their partner in this issue:

(Male, 20, ended relationship):

"We used our smartphones to prove things. When we were not side by side, I was not telling her that I have %10 charge left, but I was taking a screenshot and sending her."

(Female, 20, in a relationship):

"Smartphone makes me feel secure in my relationship, because I can know where he is. When he goes to somewhere outside, I tell him to pose in some certain way and take a photo right then. Each time I ask for a different, spontaneous photo, so that he cannot send me an old photo."

(Female, 20, in a relationship):

"I am following my boyfriend from the application of "Find My Iphone", but he does not know about it. I am aware of his every step now. Thanks to our smartphones, I feel secure. Otherwise, I would ask him where he is and what he is doing all the time."

2. Damaging and Ending Relationships:

2.1. Partner phubbing:

Communication through smartphones is so excessive in romantic relationships that, some couples experience difficulty in finding a topic to talk about when they meet. In those situations caused by smartphones, again, smartphones provide the material:

(Male, 20, in a relationship):

"When we meet and have nothing to talk about, we play games together on our smartphones."

(Male, 22, ended relationship):

"Sometimes we showed videos to each other and talked about those videos."

Smartphones undoubtedly provide a significant advantage on building and maintaining romantic relationships of youth. But in time, their use turn into an addictive habit, and preclude the communication among partners, leading to conflicts. Especially male participants seem to enact partner phubbing more:

(Male, 20, in a relationship):

"When we meet, why would I look at my smartphone instead of looking at her face or talking to her? I do not know. We both do it."

(Male, 22, ended relationship):

"When we met, after 10 minutes of conversation I usually got bored and took my smartphone on my hand, and she got upset wit me."

(Female, 20, in a relationship):

"Sometimes when we meet he plays games on his smartphone and I get angry.

(Female, 20, in a relationship):

"I hate it when he looks at his smartphone while we are at dinner. Many times I fought with him because of this, or I took his phone and end the conversation."

2.2. Consuming relationships:

Accessibility becomes obligatory in young people's romantic relationships. Partners are placed at the center of relationships, and youth feel an addictive need of accessing and controlling each other's daily lives. Especially female participants expect their partners to communicate more and more, and also creatively, with them through their smartphones:

(Male, 22, in a relationship):

"An advantage of smartphones is that you can always communicate. A disadvantage of smartphones is that you can always communicate… For example, I have to lie that I am studying when I want to watch a football match, because she wants all my free times to herself."

(Female, 20, in a relationship):

"He should be dead to turn his phone off."

The chance of accessing each other limitlessly consumes and turns relationships into being boring for couples, and this affects their satisfaction seriously:

(Female, 19, in a relationship):

"I get bored of texting all the time like "How are you? What are you doing?". I prefer him to send me long and emotional text messages from time to time."

(Male, 22, ended relationship):

"Showing your feelings happens through your smartphone today, and she was never satisfied with short messages. I had to find something to text all the time, and text long."

The time has changed in terms of relationship dynamics. In the past, couples missed each other more, because they did not have the opportunity of communicating all the time. However, in today's relationships, getting instant information from the partner and

accessibility (like keeping the phone always on, or responding to calls and texts as quickly as possible) is a basic:

(Female, 20, in a relationship):

"*Smartphones are absolutely like handcuffs, because I have to carry it everywhere and everytime with me, it is like my arm, and it needs to be always on, I need to answer it immediately… It limits me very much in the relationship.*"

(Female, 21, ended relationship):

"*My phone had to be on all the time. I had to be online for only him on Whatsapp, on Facebook…*"

Besides facilitating accessibility for young couples, too much/excessive communication that smartphones provide consume relationships, leave nothing much to talk when they physically meet, and cause partners to get bored of each other easily. Mostly participants whose relationships ended complain about this issue:

(Female, 20, ended relationship):

"*We texted so much that we felt that something was lacking when we did not. We were even talking about the colour of the sofa that we sat. We communicated too much and too unnecessary.*"

(Female, 21, ended relationship):

"*We communicated so much that I think we spent a relationship of 20 years in just one year. We consumed the relationship very fast.*"

(Male, 22, ended relationship):

"*We already communicated a lot, knew everything about each other's lives, so there was no value left for meeting. We could also make video calls on our smartphones, so it was okay for me if we never met.*"

Excessive use of smartphones in relationships also annoys family and friends of the young person. Smartphone use pushes the limits of the lines between the times left for friends, for family, and for alone times. Young people have to put their romantic partner at the center of their lives, because they invade almost every moment of each other:

(Female, 20, in a relationship):

"*We are happy about our way of using the smartphones, but our friends and family are annoyed by that. They think that we are exaggerating.*"

(Male, 22, ended relationship):

"*I was getting tired of her calls and messages sometimes. For example, I was playing football and she did not let me freely do that. She was making each extra minute that I did not communicate to her a problem. So, I was turning my phone off when I started the match and was not turning it on until I was all done.*"

Even young people themselves feel disturbed of this excessive use of smartphones in their romantic relationships that most of the participants wish that there were no smartphones in their relationships:

(Female, 20, ended relationship):

"*What if there were no smartphones? I wish! I can never say that smartphone made me feel satisfied about my relationship, on the contrary, it was the problem in our relationship. I*

know all the features of my smartphone now, but if I met him more than I did, we could have a very good relationship going on now. We did not use our sharing material economically. Smartphones did not have a place in our relationship, we lived the relationship of smartphones."

(Male, 20, in a relationship):

"It would be better if there were no smartphones, we would think about each other more, we would have things to talk about when we meet and we would not play with social media when we are next to each other. Meetings would be more valuable, and we would live the moment. But now, when we meet even our topics come from our smartphones. Smartphones provide limitless communication because of internet and social media. Old style phones are better."

2.3. The other side of trust issues:

Smartphones raise trust issues in today's relationships, especially because of notifications that come from social media platforms. People are more suspicious about their partners today, because social media applications on smartphones provide many opportunities of cheating anywhere anytime. Therefore, young couples control each other's smartphones when they meet, and only that way they can trust their partner's loyalty:

(Female, 20, in a relationship):

"Most of our arguments stem from social media and smartphones. He gets angry about those who want to follow me, who send me messages, and etc."

(Male, 22, ended relationship):

"We took each other's smartphones when we met and checked if there was any sign of disloyalty. She was using Samsung, and it has a part that not many people know about, a part that saves all the photos you send and get. I was checking it and trusting her that way."

(Male, 22, ended relationship):

"When we met, we were checking each other's smartphones to look if we could find anything from other people. We did not trust each other, and eventually I saw that I was right. After we had to move to different cities for education, she cheated on me via Whatsapp and Facebook. I found the messages."

Also, being online on *Whatsapp*, but not communicating with the partner is a cause of jealousy, suspicion, and conflict:

(Male, 20, in a relationship):

"If one of us is still online on social media after we say "good night", then we have a problem."

(Male, 22, ended relationship):

"I texted her on Whatsapp, she saw my message but did not reply directly, yet she was online. That made me think "who is she texting?". Made me jealous. She had to leave that 'last seen' feature on."

Another disadvantage of social media for romantic relationships is that, some girls compare their relationship with other romantic couples with regards to the pictures they post on social media, and pressure their boyfriend to be like them. People who always share their "happy pictures" on social media may affect couples in a negative way:

(Male, 20, in a relationship):

"When we meet, it is like "I already told you about this…". Since we have nothing to talk, we turn to our smartphones, and there comes the problem. She looks at other girls' profiles on social media and starts: "she did this, why don't we do that? They went there, why don't we go there? He bought this to her in Valentine's Day, why don't you? They went to a holiday on their anniversary, why don't we do that?"

Finally, it is seen that young couples in Turkey create common social media accounts with their partners, writing both of their names on the profile, posting only photos of them as a couple, and therefore using the account like an engagement ring. For this reason, destroying those accounts with anger in case of temporary break-ups gives couples a deep sorrow, and gives a deep damage to the relationship:

(Female, 19, in a relationship):

"I regret opening a common Instagram account with my boyfriend, because we were posting our photos when we met, one day we broke up and he deleted all our photos together. I felt devastated, because they were all our memories."

Discussion

Since the spread of mobile phone technologies in our daily lives, almost all types of relations are being shaped by the ways we use these technologies. Young people are known to be innately the most loyal users of these technologies and more open to changes. Their relationships are not as serious as a marriage, but very important to them. Smartphones, with their features of providing a virtual reality, give young people the opportunity of living their intimate relationships anytime, anywhere. Thanks to smartphones, thehy can see their partner, text them limitlessly, share their leisure time even if they are physically apart, and many more.

Old-style mobile phones were undoubtedly helping relationships to run. However, this study demonstrates that smartphones 'own' the relationships of the Turkish youth today. They have the power of starting, building, and maintaining a relationship for youth. But, they also have the power of damaging and ending their relationships, and this other side of the coin seems to be more dominant in this study.

In this context, the results of this study replicates and extends findings of the previous studies. According to the findings, first of all it is obvious that having the Internet helps smartphones change everything. Eliminating limits on text characters and minutes through the Internet, smartphones cause a radical increase in accessibility (there are limits to the Internet, too, but texting spends the least amount of the Internet, therefore it is not wrong to claim that there is limitless texting now). According to a research conducted by *Pew Research Center* (Lenhart, 2012), smartphone users text a lot more, compared to those who have a regular mobile phone. In comparison with limited right of SMS texting that mobile operator packages give, Internet use on smartphones let users send countless texts. Researches reveal that, for young people between the ages of 21-26, constant communication is cruical in a romantic relationship (*Amplitude Research*, 2013). Also, romantic couples expect quick replies to their calls and especially text messages (Laursen, 2005); and they expect their partners to be always accessible through their phones (Baron, 2008).

Having social media on smartphones also makes it easier for youth to socialize, access to whomever they like, and express their feelings without feeling shy. Research certifies that smartphones help people to know each other and start their relationships more easily (*Amplitude Research*, 2013; McCormack, 2015). Moreover, smartphones provide fun materials for couples to get warmer easily in the process of getting to know each other at the

beginning of relationships. For romantic couples, especially through texting, mobile technologies provide the feeling of presence, of being *always there*. Instead of sharp differences of absence and presence when there is distance between the partners, these technologies give couples a continuing feeling of presence. In line with this, Pettigrew (2009) found that texting strengthens bonding, and it is favored by young couples more in their romantic relationships, because it is a continuing action, and for some it is more intimate and makes the relationship more fun. Adding more to that, with their high definition screens, smartphones provide young couples opportunities of making video calls, sharing photos, voice records, or links of fun from social media, and so facilitate their relationships by making them feel the sense of a shared life. Neustaedter and Greenberg (2012) also found that video calls give couples a 'shared living experience', a chance of feeling like a part of their partner's life. Furthermore, being able to access to the partner through many applications and features serves as a proof mechanism, and help jealous and suspicious partners to feel secure and satisfied with their relationships. In summary, smartphones can work for relationship maintenance in many ways for young couples (McCormack, 2015).

However, there is also the other side of the coin. First of all, when there is an excessive communication among partners, then there is little left to talk about when they meet and actually need to share things and improve their intimacy. Excessive communication through mobile technologies decreases meaningful communication between partners. Studies demonstrate that this is seen mostly in romantic relationships of young people (Coyne, vd., 2011). Also, youth are already at the center of studies about the Internet and smartphone addiction (Chiu, 2014; Choi, Lee, Ha, 2012; Demirci, Orhan, Demirdas, Akpınar, Sert, 2014; Kim, Lee, Lee, Nam, Chung, 2014; Kwon, Kim, Cho, Yang, 2013). Therefore, either because of boredom or addiction, young couples seem to enact partner phubbing through their smartphones when they meet, and studies (McCormack, 2015; McDaniel, 2016; Roberts & David, 2016) found that this act damages romantic relationships in terms of causing conflicts, decreasing relationship satisfaction, and individual well-being. By setting rules related to the use of smartphones which lead to higher availability expectations, young couples experience a dialectical tension of autonomy versus connection, and ultimately conflicts in their romantic relationships (Duran, Kelly, & Rotaru, 2011)

In line with that, a more dangerous impact of using smartphones in romantic relationships of youth is consuming the relationship through excessive communication. Sharing every detail of one's life through smartphone decreases the meaning and excitement of actually meeting for young couples. More importantly, excessive communication creates fast-paced and fast-consumed relationships. *Being always there* thanks to what smartphones provide seems as an advantage that saves the relationships, but in fact, it is not. Because, the line between "being virtually there" when the partner is really missed, and turning this opportunity into an obligation like "being there" with the partner at all free times leads to a kind of addiction that damages the relationship. This is directly related to the damage of consuming the relationship through excessive communication that most of the participants complain about.

Also, in time, the chance of always accessing the partner turns into an addiction, an obsession for controlling the other partner's actions and life. Jealousy and trust issues seem to be the underlying cause for this addiction. According to the results of this study, trusting the partner depends on smartphones for Turkish youth today. They need to "prove" that they are honest and loyal. This is because of what smartphones provide users by their features. Studies (Clayton, Nagurney, & Smith, 2013; Darvell, Walsh, & White, 2011; Drouin, M., Miller, D.A., & Dibble, J.L., 2014; Elphinston & Noller, 2011; McCormack, 2015; Muise, Christofides, & Desmarais, 2009; Utz & Beukeboom, 2011) prove that the use of networking websites (which work on smartphones) like *Facebook* are highly related to jealousy, cheating,

and relationship satisfaction. Old-style mobile phones were only about texting and calling, so, words were enough to maintain trust. However, smartphones create more obsessive relationships in which trust issues are at the front. This difference of behavior between old-style mobile phones and smartphones reveals a technological deterministic result that smartphones shape and change the way that romantic relationships are experienced. For this reason, using smartphones as a proof mechanism to protect the relationship serves a negative outcome as well, even though participants describe this as the reason to their satisfaction about the relationship.

Finally, young people seem to be very suspicious about their partners, because social media on smartphones provide opportunities of cheating anytime, anywhere. This fact adds more to the obsession of controlling the partner and increasing trust issues. Smartphones are known to be increasingly related to the usage of social networking sites (Perez, 2015; Smith, 2015). They raise the feeling of jealousy, because they have functions of threatening social interaction with other people, and thus, partner phubbing is also claimed to be important not because the other partner feels ignored, but because they feel threatened (Krasnova, Abramova, Notter, Baumann, 2016). According to the research of Utz and Beukeboom (2011), social network site use causes jealousy in romantic relationships, especially for individuals with low self-esteem. Muise, Christofides, and Desmarais (2009) also found that using a social networking site can create feelings of jealousy in romantic partners because individuals can view their partners' virtual conversations with others and can find out that their partners are communicating with former romantic partners.

Interview results demonstrate that the fun of using one's smartphone, the chance of carrying one's romantic partner everywhere in one's smartphone may turn into a habit, and then into addiction. Seemingly, young couples in Turkey do not give each other the chance of having their private free times or acting on their own free will. These all lead to excessive communication among young couples and cause the relationship materials to be consumed faster than usual.

In reference to the results, it will not be wrong to claim that what smartphones provide and the ways young people use them, may make relationships more fragile and create behavior similar to the symptoms of attachment anxiety. Smartphones provide young couples the opportunity of a continuous and multi-faceted communication. Not using this opportunity makes the youth in Turkey feel uncomfortable, as if something is wrong about their relationship. Expecting the partner to prove their honesty and loyalty, trying to control their each move, being jealous about their phubbing behavior and social media activities on smartphone are all related to the feelings of not being loved enough, or the fear of being left. Both of these negative feelings are related to what *Attachment Theory* suggests in the concepts of attachment *anxiety* and *avoidance*. The significant point here is that, smartphones have the power of creating these feelings that *Attachment Theory* relates to childhood experiences with parents. As Hammond Fletcher (1991) also claimed in their article many years ago, it is not necessarily only infancy experiences with parents which can create attachment anxiety, but romantic relationships in youth and adulthood can also cause this problem to appear. Beside addressing needs and solving problems, technology can also give birth to unprecedented problems and create needs and certain behavior that might not have existed otherwise (Baym et al., 2012). Accordingly, as Murray and Campbell (2015) also argue, technology can both help and hinder communication in relationships. The current study demonstrates that smartphones seem to have more hindering negative impacts on the romantic relationships of the youth in Turkey.

Smartphones' power of creating such fragile relationships should be taken seriously, because young people will form families of the future through their marriages, and if they do not have a healthy understanding of intimate relationships, the institution of marriage will deteriorate.

CONCLUSION

This study is significant for the literature in terms of filling a gap about qualitative and explanotary studies on intimate interpersonal relationships. Also, studies about the impact of specifically smartphone use in intimate relationships are very rare.

One suggestion for further studies is to make a wider comparative research analysis between Turkey and a Western country, to be able to see if there is a cultural difference in how college-aged youth use smartphones in their romantic relationships.

Also, a wider research should be done to be able to see the differences in gender-specific uses of smartphones in romantic relationships of youth, because participants in this study give the sense that it is mostly young girls who prefer and ask for excessive communication with their partners through smartphones.

Moreover, long-term observatory studies comparing non-married and married couples in terms of their smartphone use in relationships could be run and see if there are any differences in terms of creating behavior similar to attachment anxiety.

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