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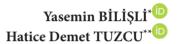
The Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Social Media Usage in the Context of Uses and Gratification Approach

Kullanımlar ve Doyumlar Yaklaşımı Bağlamında COVID-19 Pandemisinin Sosyal Medya Kullanımına Etkisi

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the whole world, threatened individuals physically, mentally and socially, and considerably transformed their lifestyles in varying ways. Considering the spread of the disease and affected age groups, the struggle with COVID-19 should not be limited to the medical aspect but should also be addressed socially. The present study attempted to reveal how the usage of social media has been modified during the pandemic by drawing attention to the aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic that affected social life. The general aim of the study is to examine the purposes and motivations of the individuals' social media usage during the pandemic with reference to Uses and Gratification approach. The research was carried out with 12 university graduate female participants over the age of 50, who were determined by snowball sampling method. The findings obtained in this study showed that the participants increased their usage of social media during the pandemic compared to their previous engagements with social media. Moreover, some of the participants increased their usage of social media to reach news about COVID-19 faster, which pointed out their motivation to use social media for obtaining accurate information. Finally, the most important change in the participants' usage of social media was about their Twitter engagements. The results show that covid-19 has changed social media usage and also points to the power of social media.

Keywords: COVID-19, Pandemic, Social Media, Uses and Gratifications, Health Communication

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Öz

Tüm dünyayı etkisi altına alan COVID-19 salgını bireyleri fiziksel, ruhsal ve sosyal yönden tehdit altına alırken, yaşam tarzlarını da büyük ölçüde etkilemiştir. Hastalığın yayılış şekli, görüldüğü yaş grupları dikkate alındığında; konunun sadece tıbbi boyutla sınırlı kalmayıp, sosyal yönden de ele alınması gereken bir konu olduğunu gözler önüne sermektedir. Bu noktadan hareketle makalede, COVID-19 salgınının sosyal yaşamı etkileyen yanına dikkat çekilerek bu durumdan sosyal medya kullanımının ne şekilde etkilendiği ortaya konmaya çalışılmıştır. Çalışmanın genel amacı, pandemi sırasında bireylerin sosyal medya kullanım amaçlarını ve motivasyonlarını "kullanımlar ve doyumlar yaklaşımı"ndan hareketle incelemektir. Araştırma kartopu örnekleme yöntemi ile seçilen, üniversite mezunu 50 yaş üzeri 12 kadın katılımcı ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu çalışmada elde edilen bulgular, katılımcıların salgın sırasında sosyal medyayı salgın öncesi döneme göre daha fazla takip etmeye başladığını göstermiştir. Katılımcıların bir kısmının COVID-19 ile ilgili haberlere daha hızlı ulaşabilmek için sosyal medya kullanımını artırdıkları belirlenirken, büyük çoğunluğunun doğru bilgi almak için sosyal medyayı kullandığı tespit edilmiştir. Katılımcıların, COVID-19 öncesi döneme göre sosyal medya kullanımındaki en önemli değişikliğin ise Twitter kullanımında olduğu görülmüştür. Sonuçlar, COVID-19 salgınının sosyal medyayı kullanma tercihlerini değiştirirken, sosyal medyanın etkin gücüne dikkat çekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: COVID-19, Salgın, Sosyal Medya, Kullanımlar ve Doyumlar, Sağlık İletişimi

Introduction

Pandemics are health events that had global effects in history. There have been many different types of epidemics that have affected the world so far, including cholera, plague, smallpox, typhus, ebola and flu. Throughout the history, pandemics have affected communities and individuals, not only concerning health but also in socio-economic terms (Yıldız, 2014, p. 97; Yiğit & Gümüşçü, 2016, p. 390; Yolun, 2012, p. 128). The new type of coronavirus, which emerged for the first time in Wuhan, China and is called the COVID-19, has been defined as pandemic by the World Health Organization (2020) as a on March 11, 2020 due to its rapid spread in a short period of time. The COVID-19 pandemic considerably affected the socio-economic order and lifestyles, (Zhu et al., 2020), causing many transformations and problems, which also affected Turkish society socially and economically. The pandemic caused radical changes in the daily life routines of individuals as people spend more that at home and their participation to the public space was limited as they were encouraged to do so due to newly emerging business formats and health concerns. The transformation of social life as a result of COVID-19 pandemic also raised questions regarding the potential changes in individuals' social media usage habits, their preferences regarding difference social media platforms and what kind of social needs are met through social media usage. In this context, this study aims to analyze how the pandemic caused changes in the individuals' social media usage based on uses and gratifications theory. In researching the changes in social media usage, particular attenton will be given to the analysis of the individuals' confidence in gathering news on social media during the pandemic.

Theoretical Framework: Uses and Gratification Approach

The Uses and Gratifications Theory is one of the main approaches that emphasizes the central role of users in their relationship to mass media. The audience, reader, or listener-centered approaches assert that the users are active in communication processes, they are in a position of selective exposure regarding mass media messages, and have the ability to know how and in what situations they need to use mass media tools. According to this approach, the audience chooses the messages and channels based on their individual preferences and conditions, according to their needs, opinions and tastes (Mcquail & Windahl, 1997, pp. 153-154). Furthermore, according to the Uses and Gratifications Theory, the individuals shape their relationship with the environment through their own needs. Thus, the individuals, who act according to the desire to fulfill their needs, also instrumentalize mass media in this direction. Therefore, rather than explaining what media does to the audience, the Uses and Gratifications Theory focusses on what the audience does with the media (Ruddock, 2001, p. 40).

Historically, the initial studies conducted regarding the audience's relationship to the media in an active way included the systematic perspectives offered by researchers such as Lazarsfeld (1940), Katz (1959) and Klapper (1963). In this regard, the Uses and Gratification Theory focused on two main developments in individuals' engagements with the media: the individuals' increasing participation in the production of media content and the individuals' usage of mass media for satisfying their humanly necessities (Lull, 2000, p. 129). This process identifying the newly established engagements between the audience and the media is generally examined in two periods. Firstly, the classical period, focussing on experimental and quasi-experimental research, included the studies conducted by the Bureau of Applied Social Research since the 1940s (Mcquail & Windahl, 1997, pp. 166-167). Secondly, following this classical period, a new perspective has been developed under the leadership of Blumler & Katz (1974), pointing out a radical difference from the existing media effects studies (Mcquail & Windahl, 1997, pp. 154-155). In this period, the audience moved on to the position of active individuals, who can make decisions in the light of their own choices rather than the media influencing them. Following these perspectives, the theory was expanded and new aspects were added to by Rosengren (1983) who emphasized the biological and the psychological infrastructure that constitutes human behavior, stating that needs must emerge as a problem for individuals to take action.

During the periods when Uses and Gratifications Theory was proposed, the concept of "media" referred to different mediums of mass media, such as newspapers, radio, television, etc. However, with the development of new communication technologies particularly throughout the 2000s, the concept of media diversified and social media gained a prominent role in mass communication. Therefore, academic researches pointed out the role of social media in establishing uses and gratifications by applying the theory in the understanding of changes brought by new communication technologies and online environments such as how individuals use social media to meet some of their needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974, p. 510) that include searching information (Ferguson & Ferse, 2000, p. 164; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000, pp. 175-176; Parker & Plank, 2000, p. 44; Kaye & Johnson, 2004, p. 201; Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005,

p. 58), relaxing (Ferguson & Ferse, 2000, pp. 163-164; Parker & Plank, 2000, p. 45), fun and their hobbies (Ferguson & Ferse, 2000, p. 171; Ruggiero, 2000, p. 21; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000, p. 193; Charney & Greenberg, 2001, p. 44; Bumgarner, 2007). Since the theory focuses on the psychological and social needs of people in order to understand how a particular communication tool satisfies their needs and motives, it is an extremely appropriate approach in social media studies (Chen, 2011, p. 759).

In the meantime, Uses and Gratifications Theory was also applied by scholars in various researches conducted in the Turkish context, which revealed that individuals use social media for different purposes. For example, in his study, Köseoğlu (2012) determined that individuals use social media to interact with people who do not have the oppurtunity to get together in the offline world and to gain emotional support (p. 66). Çerçi, Ü. Ö., Canöz, N., & Canöz, K. (2020) indicated that in the COVID-19 crisis, individuals are mostly using social media to follow the agenda, to get information and news (p. 192). In his research, Ünlü (2018) analyzed social media addiction in individuals over the age of 50, and conculded that individuals approach social media as a medium that provides relaxation and makes them feel good (p. 171). Another study emphasized that women regard social media as an effective communication tool that can be utilized in their daily life (Fidan & Şentürk, 2016, p. 80). Finally, Akçay (2011) conducted a research with youth and pointed out that young people attach more importance to social media in terms of social environment acquisition and socialization (p. 150).

The COVID-19 pandemic caused radical changes in the daily life routines of individuals, due to the lockdowns imposed by the states, the limited amount of time to spent outdoors for health reasons, and the newly emerged work-at-home format. The new social conditions brought by the pandemic raised questions regarding the changes in individuals' purporses for social media usage and their preferences in social media platforms. In this regard, this research focusses on the social media usage habits of women over the age of 50, who are university graduates and spent lots of time outside their homes before the pandemic. Since this group of women had to spend most of their time at home during the pandemic, there has been a radical shift in their lifestyles, such as their increased use of social media, which effected their levels of happiness in different ways. Therefore, this study conducted in-depth interviews with women to point out their changing social mdia usage habits.

Methodology

The main purpose of this study is to reveal the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on social media usage of women over the age of 50 living in Ankara and Istanbul, two mostly populated cities in Turkey, in the context of the uses and gratification approach. To our knowledge, there is no study in the literature on the use of social media tools by women over the age of 50 during the COVID-19 outbreak. Thus, the originality of the research in its field marks the significance of this study. On the other hand, it should also be noted that this study is limited to the discussion of women over the age of 50 and does not reflect the whole population. In this regard, this study

aims to analyze the potential changes in women's social media usage in terms of frequency and duration as an outcome of the pandemic. Additionally, the participants' levels of confidence on the news that they gathered from social media during the pandemic were also analyzed.

As a qualitative research approach, case study design was used in this research. The qualitative research approaches that include the use of interviews, observation and document analysis provide a holistic and a realistic presentation of the events and perceptions in their natural environment (Yıldırım & Şimşek 2005, p. 39). The case study is defined as an in-depth description and examination of a limited system (Merriam, 2009 p. 28). According to Creswell (2007), a case study is a qualitative research approach in which the researcher examines and defines the situations and the situation-related themes that are confined over time by using various data collection tools (e.g., observations, interviews, audio-visuals, documents, reports) including multiple sources (p. 76). In a case study, a single situation or event is examined in-depth and longitudinally, the data are collected systematically and real-life environment is studied. The results reveal why the event has occurred in that way and what should be focused on in the future studies (Davey, 1991, p.1). Yin (1984) described the case study as a research method used under following circumstances. The research in the case study focuses on "how" and "why" questions; the researcher has little or no control over the events; the event or phenomenon is examined within its natural context; and there are no sufficient connections between the event and real-life. It is to explore, examine, understand, explain and clarify the feelings, situations, attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, values and experiences of a certain group of individuals through qualitative research (Çokluk, 2014, p. 110). Therefore, this research was more concerned with understanding individuals' perceptions of the world and seeking insights rather than statistical analysis.

Data Collection Tool and Technique

This research started after obtaining ethical approval from the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board of Akdeniz University. Before each interview, the participants were informed about the aims of this research and their written consent to participate in this study was obtained. A semi-structured interview form was used as the data collection tool. The semi-structured interview form was prepared in light of the literature, after pilot interviews were conducted and experts' opinions were obtained. In the form, after a briefing on the subject, the participants' demographic information was included. After the demographic information, the participants were asked questions about the use of social media (Table 1) during the quarantine period.

Table 1. Semi – Structured Interview Questions

What do you think about the use of social media during the COVID-19 outbreak (quarantine days), the benefits or possible harm of social media?
Has there been any change in your thoughts during the current periods?
Which of the social media tools did you use? Is there any new addition now? If yes, which of them? And why have you used them?
For what purposes did you use social media?
What are your daily usage habits of social media? Is there any change in these habits?
How often do you use social media? How was it before? What about now?
What kind of content were you sharing on social media? Has there been any change in them? How was it before and how is it now?
In these times, is there any use that you have not experienced before while accessing social media? What are your thoughts on this situation?
Once the pandemic is over, would you like to continue to use social media in the same way? What would you like to say about this? Why?

Using in-depth interviews as a data collection technique, voices were recorded by conducting an average of 40-50 minutes of interviews, in line with the participants' permission. The interviews were conducted between 07.07.2020-25.08.2020 via phone or messaging applications with audio and video calls (Table 2).

Table 2. Interview Times

Participant	Interview Date	Interview Hour	Interview Duration
Participant (P1)	07.07.2020	13.30	37 min.
Participant (P2)	08.07.2020	14.00	42 min.
Participant (P3)	09.07.2020	20.25	45 min.
Participant (P4)	15.07.2020	21.30	43 min.
Participant (P5)	17.07.2020	12.15	39 min.
Participant (P6)	17.07.2020	17.00	42 min.
Participant (P7)	01.08.2020	16.30	52 min.
Participant (P8)	11.08.2020	18.00	50 min.
Participant (P9)	12.08.2020	13.30	50 min.
Participant (P10)	13.08.2020	16.30	49 min.
Participant (P11)	14.08.2020	11.15	43 min.
Participant (P12)	15.08.2020	14.15	46 min.

The data obtained in the light of the deciphering of sound recordings and literature review are presented with descriptive analysis findings.

Working Group

In this study, snowball sampling technique, one of the purposeful sampling methods in qualitative research, was used. In this methodology, after determining a reference person within the sample, other participants were reached with the help of the first person. The sample group was expanded under the guidance of the participants. The aim of qualitative research is not

to generalize the results to the whole universe but to make specific explanations (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 24). Therefore, it is emphasized that one or two cases (e.g., individuals, groups) are sufficient (Collins, Onwuegbuzie & Jiao 2008 p. 86). In qualitative research, researchers try to investigate the daily, real experiences of the participants with small samples through interviews or observations (Houser, 2016, p. 454). In this context, without calculating the sample size, data collection continued until it reached the saturation point. This study was conducted with 12 participants. Thus, the working group consisted of 12 women over the age of 50, who are university graduates and using social media. The reason for choosing university graduate women over the age of 50 as the study group was that this age group within the Generation X is the transitional generation and the technology developed very rapidly during their lifetime. Although generation X was born in a world without the internet, the members of this generation have become social media users at a level that almost surpasses the Y and Z generations who were born into the internet age. The vast majority of individuals in the Generation X, who had to make long efforts to be able to use social media, do not work intensively and actively. Therefore, the members of the Generation X with much more free time were selected as the study group to reveal the effects of pandemic restrictions on the social life with respect to social media use. On the other hand, research points out women's engagement in social media as women use the internet more for communication purposes than men (Fallows, 2004), which was the main factor in conducting this research with women. With regard to the participants, code names (P1, P2, P3...) were used instead of real names during data analysis. The demographic data of the participants are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Marital status	Education Status	Employement Status
Participant	55	Female	Married	University Graduate	Retired and company owner
Participant	57	Female	Married	University Graduate	Retired
Participant	55	Female	Single	University Graduate	Home office
Participant	55	Female	Married	University Graduate	Government official, working at home
Participant	57	Female	Divorced	University Graduate	Private sector employee, working at home online
Participant	56	Female	Single	University Graduate	Government official and on leave
Participant	56	Female	Divorced	University Graduate	Government official, two days at office and three days at home
Participant	55	Female	Divorced	University Graduate	Bank manager one week at bank and two weeks at home
Participant	56	Female	Divorced	University Graduate	Retired and home office working
Participant	58	Female	Married	University Graduate	Retired
Participant	55	Female	Married	University Graduate	Retired
Participant	55	Female	Married	University Graduate	Retired and company owner

Findings Regarding the Use of Social Media Before COVID-19 and During the Lockdown Period

Purposes of Using Social Media Before and During Pandemic

The present study aimed to ask the participants about their views on social media use before the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown days and reveal their pre-lockdown ideas about the purpose of using social media, the benefits or possible harms of social media.

As a result of the interviews, half of the participants stated that they used social media for communication purposes due to their ease in providing correspondence. Some participants used social media for the purpose of accessing accurate information; some of them preferred it because they reached information faster. On the other hand, some participants stated that they prefer not to use it because there was information pollution in the social media that caused the waste of their time. One participant specified that she used social media for hobby purposes.

Examples of participants who stated that they use social media tools for convenience in communication and correspondence are as follows:

> *"It can enable people to communicate and receive news from each other, even though they are far away." (P4)*

> *"I generally used it to exchange information with my friends." (P11)*

> *"We can share a lot of news with many people, our spouse, our friends and even the business community through social media." (P12)*

One of the participants who used social media tools for fast access to information (P7) addressed the purpose of using social media tools as follows:

> *"It allows me to follow the agenda very quickly; at first glance, you can see everything there that has attracted the attention of the public."*

Other participants pointed out that they reached accurate information through several participatory social media tools:

> *"Although I wasn't a very active user, I was following. I felt that I could get some true news only from there." (P2)*

> *"It has benefits in terms of getting informed, in terms of reaching healthy news." (P6)*

On the other hand, some of the participants expressed the opposite view by explaining that social media tools caused information pollution:

> *"About the damages as follows, it is true that there is a lot of information pollution." (P1)*

> *"There were times when I got angry and left due to information pollution." (P9)*

A participant (P10) stated that she used social media for hobby purposes by saying that: "*I use it only for seeking knowledge about my specific hobbies and communication with my very close*

environment." On the other hand, regarding the harms of social media (P12) reported that: "*I think it is harmful to kids, at times for teenagers because they spend most of their time on social media.*" She emphasized that social media leads to the abuse of time. As a conclusion, it was determined that the participants used social media for various purposes such as seeking information, relaxing and meeting their needs regarding leisure activities.

Differences between social media tools used before and during the pandemic

The participants were asked which social media they used before the COVID-19 outbreak (lockdown days) to reveal whether or not there were any changes after the lockdown. It was determined from the interviews that Facebook was the most widely used social media platform among the participants; followed by Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp. In addition, it was found that one participant used Youtube and one used Pinterest.

Most of the participants, who were asked for their opinions about what social media platforms they used and whether there was a change in their social media habits during the pandemic process, stated that there was a difference regarding the use of Twitter:

> "*In the past, I was using Twitter, Facebook, Instagram very rarely and nothing changed much lately regarding their use; and most of the time it does not come to my mind using them. But I have been following Twitter more intensely.*" (P6)

> "*Instagram, Facebook and Twitter are the ones I use primarily. I moved away from Facebook a little bit, more concentrated on Twitter. Only to get information and watch the news from there.*" (P9)

> "*Before COVID-19, I was using Instagram; I was using Facebook. Twitter from time to time, so I use all of them more. I was using Twitter less but now using more. With the COVID-19 days, there was no extra, but I started using Tweets more. I can say so.*" (P12)

The participants expressed that the social media platform they used more frequently during the pandemic was Twitter. The increase in the use of Twitter could be attributed people's interest in receiving reliable information from this medium as many public institutions make their announcements primarily on Twitter.

One participant who stated that she found Facebook less reliable in this process:

> "*I started to be on Instagram, I was more on Facebook, but I do not log in as before. Facebook accounts seem less secure to me.*"

One participant, who turned to handcrafting during her stay at home, stated the increase in WhatsApp usage;

> "*Of course, my use of WhatsApp increased much more to obtain handcrafted models.*" (P3)

Another participant who attributed the increase in WhatsApp usage to the increase in communication rate due to staying at home stated the following:

"Of course, we are communicating more with WhatsApp these days. Of course, there can be face-to-face meetings and collective meetings on WhatsApp." (P7)

Other participants stated that there were no new tools added to their social media tools. Examples of participants who stated that there was no change in their usage habits are the following:

"As we are older generation preferring face-to-face relationships and conversation, I was not using social media intensely before; I have not begun to use new social media platforms during the pandemic, and nor have I also felt the need. Existing ones were enough."(P4)

"The social media platform I used most widely before was twitter. I still use it most [...] I follow some new internet pages, if those are considered as Social Media. But I have not started to use additional social media platforms."(P1)

As a result, it was seen that before the pandemic the participants used Facebook more often, while their usage of Twitter increased during the pandemic. It can be concluded that the effective use of Twitter by public institutions in informing the public about health-related issues in this process caused this increasing usage of this social media platform.

Frequency and Duration of Social Media Use Before and During Pandemic

Participants were asked if there were any post-lockdown changes in the usage periods of the social media tools they used before the COVID-19 outbreak (lockdown days). As a result of the interviews, the majority of the participants stated that the frequency of using social media increased, while some of the participants stated that the usage time of social media increased. One participant stated that there was no change in the frequency or duration of use of social media.

Participants explained the increased frequency of using social media in connection with the pandemic process they experienced by saying:

"A little bit more than before because we are also trying to follow the developments regarding the COVID, what is happening in the world. There are issues about vaccines and medicines. Some countries have been devastated as we never expected, such as some European countries and the United States of America. By the way, we have had a chance to learn in detail about their systems and health infrastructure. We followed our own system. In this sense, of course, I use more. I look in more detail, I read the publications of foreign countries, I look at various posts, so, my usage of social media has increased[...]"(P7)

The reason for the increase in the frequency of using some participatory social media and the time spent in front of social media was due to the excessive time during the quarantine period:

"As I expressed, since we have more spare time during pandemic, we communicate more with our friends/relatives using social media. Before the pandemic, when I noticed an incoming message during the day, I was responding in the evening, or after the working hours, or on weekends, etc. Now I can respond in a shorter time because I am available. Our

usage of social media has increased a bit, [..] which led us to share more posts with friends or among us. I do not think that we will have time for this when life returns to normal." (P4)

"Before the quarantine, I was not using social media as intensely as now because I was working in the office or going intercity business trips. On business trips, I was checking in to social media whenever I had the opportunity; or when an incident happened, if I could not access the sufficient information I was using social media since I could not trust news websites or news on TV. However, during the quarantine, I spend most of the day at home using social media." (P1)

One of the participants who said that there was no increase in the frequency or duration of using social media tools expressed this situation as follows: *"There is no change. I log in Facebook every now and then. Occasionally, I use shopping sites."* (P5).

As a result, the findings indicated that the frequency as well as the duration of social media usage for the individuals increased during the pandemic period.

Differences in Social Media Content Before and During Pandemic

The interviewees were asked about their social media content before the COVID-19 outbreak and the social media content during the pandemic to reveal their opinions on whether there was any change in social media content.

The majority of the participants stated that they did not share any content on social media but only followed them. Some of the participants said that they shared entertaining posts before the pandemic, and they kept doing the same thing during the pandemic, but this time the contents were in relation with COVID-19. In addition, some of them shared about the COVID-19 during the pandemic while sharing issues that concerned society, such as economy and education before the pandemic.

Stating that she did not share content on social media, a participant claimed that COVID-19 did not change this situation: *"I do not share much. I am usually a follower."* (P6) and *"I don't share too much."* (P10). On the other hand, some participants shared their social activities on social media and that there was no change in this with COVID-19:

"Previously, I was sharing posts about gatherings with friends, trips, meals, birthday celebrations. They were mostly about social affairs; similar to the sharings I did when I was with my friends. I was not sharing any content about politics or public order[...] Now, I share the same things, I do not even share content about COVID." (P7)

Furthermore, the participants state that they generally share entertaining posts on social media, and that during the pandemic they keep sharing entertaining content, specifically but in relation to COVID-19, as follows:

"I shared some fun things to make people laugh and entertain. [….] Well, I can say that I shared those more than normal times, because I believe that fun things in such troubled times refresh people and make people feel better." (P12)

"I usually forward the entertaining contents to my close friends or my acquaintances. I am not a fan of sharing too much; I think that posts should be either information or entertainment related." (P8)

The people who shared posts on education and economy to inform the society before the pandemic began to share content about COVID-19 after the emergence of the outbreak. The participant (P2) explained this situation as follows:

"Before COVID-19, in general, [...] I was sharing issues related to the economic situation, development, education status of the country [...] Especially after COVID, I share the effects of this COVID on human life."

Considering the answers given by the participants to the questions in terms of revealing the changes in the content shared on social media, the findings showed that those who share nothing on social media still continued their habit of not sharing. Those who generally shared entertaining content kept doing the same thing during the pandemic. However, the entertaining content became in relation with COVID-19. It was also found that the participants who share the issues concerning the society started to share content to inform people about COVID-19.

Opinions on Social Media Use after the Pandemic

In order to reveal probable changes in people's social media usage habits in the post-pandemic period, the participants were asked about their foresight whether or not there will be a change in their social media usage habits at the end of the pandemic process. As a result of the interviews, the majority of the participants stated that the use of social media would decrease after the pandemic, while some stated that their current habits would not change. On the other hand a few of the participants predicted that their social media usage would increase.

Some thoughts of the participants who stated that the use of social media would decrease after the pandemic are presented below:

"I do not think that I will continue to use it so intensely [...] If the situation returns to normal in the future, I will probably not use social media so intensely, but I think I will use it more selectively." (P1)

"Of course, because we do not have much time or we will deal with other things more intensely, it will not be possible to enter social media as much as now. If we message 20 times a day on WhatsApp, this will decrease to 10, and the content will diverge from COVID-19 and turn into the subjects of our daily life. The change will be like this." (P4)

"You know, after the pandemic is over, the things I will follow about it will decrease a little more." (P7)

Some participants stated that there would be no change in their social media usage habits after the pandemic, and the current situation would continue. Some of the answers given by the participants are presented below:

"The pandemic process has not caused any change in my life, so I continue my normal life in the same way. I do not think anything will ever change (in the post-pandemic period)." (P10)

"I think I will use it to get information at a minimum level of information [...] So it doesn't change." (P9)

Stating that the use of social media would increase after the pandemic, the participants made the following statemets:

"It is not possible for me to predict, but I will log in more often because the habit is formed. However, I will not be accessing to social media as anxious as it is now." (P6)

"It seems like our habits will change and we will probably use social media more." (P 3)

When the predictions of the participants regarding the post-pandemic period are evaluated, it can be stated that the use of social media has increased due to the effects of the pandemic on social life. However, it can be said that when the pandemic is over, the use of social media will return to the former status. In sum, it has been determined that women who are university graduates over the age of 50, who are the subject of this study, generally use social media for many different purposes such as seeking information, relaxing, avoidance, having fun and meeting their need for hobbies. While people used Facebook more than any other social media platforms before the COVID-19 pandemic, it was observed that there was an increase in the use of Twitter and Instagram for news and information purposes with the emergence of COVID-19. In addition, the frequency of using social media applications increased during the pandemic period and the time spent by individuals on social media extended. It was determined that social media contents of participants during the pandemic period were heavily related to COVID-19.

The findings obtained in this study suggest that the use of social media has increased due to the effects of the pandemic on the social life. Social media and other communication tools, of course, will continue to be used for long distances correspondence due to their ease of use. In addition, it could be claimed that once the pandemic is over, we will turn back to our normal social lives.

Conclusion

As in all outbreak situations, COVID-19 has affected the lives of individuals and societies. The main claim of this study is that the change in the social life of individuals with COVID-19 affects the usage of social media. As a result of the study conducted in line with this claim, it was determined that all participants started to follow social media more often than before COVID-19. On the other hand, while the participants stated that they increased the usage of social media to reach the news about COVID-19 faster, it was determined that the majority of them used social media to obtain accurate information. It can be said that this situation stems from the idea that other media channels hide information and mislead them; therefore, they can only access reliable information through social media. However, it has been observed that those who have their own

companies and whose working conditions did not change draw attention to the information pollution in social media.

The results of the present study revealed that the most important change in social media usage for participants who work from home was regarding their engagements in Twitter. This increase could be attributed to the fact that the official statements regarding COVID-19 pandemic were generally shared on Twitter during this process. On the other hand, some of the participants stated that their usage of Pinterest and Whatsapp increased since their interest in hobbies increased to spend time as they had to stay more at home during COVID-19 pandemic. The foresights about the usage of social media in the post-pandemic period revealed that the participants who had to stay home due to disease or work leave and even shop online stated stated that with the return to normal life and therefore to work life, social media usage will not be the same as in the COVID-19 pandemic. They assume that their social media use will decrease in the post-pandemic period. However, the participants indicated that there will not be much change in social media use for those who work from home before COVID-19. They just state that the subjects they are interested in or share will not be COVID-19 related. In addition, those who are self-employed or work from home as freelancers expressed that their social life will come to the fore when everything returns to normal noting that the social life differs from social media.

These results show that individuals use social media tools to obtain information, reach information quickly, help their various hobbies, and sometimes to relax and spend the free time. In this process, with the increase of time spent at home and the decrease in social relations, it is observed that the participants who are not as effective as Generation Y in using social media tools (Toruntay, 2011, p. 74) who comply with the definition of Generation X, also increase the use of social media tools. To get rid of the negative effects of the COVID-19 epidemic and lockdowns, a collective production and sharing network has been established on social media. Thus, the effective power of social media tools has once again been demonstrated through this study. This research only covers the views of university graduate-women over the age of 50, which is a limitation. Their statements illustrate the usage of of social media in the COVID-19 period by the generation X. It would be crucial for future studies to analyze the changes in the social media usage of the generation Y and younger participants who experienced the lockdown.

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