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## THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF STUDENTS IN THE VOCATIONAL SCHOOL TO USE SOCIAL NETWORK: QUALITATIVE STUDY

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### Abstract

*The aim of the study is to determine the opinions of students in Develi Vocational School about their social problems prompting them to use social networks. The qualitative research method was used in this study and phenomenology design was taken into consideration. The sample of the study consisted of students studying in Erciyes University Develi Vocational School in fall semester of the 2014-2015 academic year. The sample group was determined according to criterion sampling. The data of the study were analysed by using a computer program appropriate for the qualitative data analysis by being collected from a total of 15 students through a semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers and consisting of open-ended questions. In analyses, descriptive analysis technique was used. As a result of the study, social problems prompting the students to use social network were collected under five categories. These categories were determined as problems caused by social environment, decreased social activities, transportation to city centre, personal characteristics, and finance. Due to limited social environment and social activities for which they spent time in the campus and district, time they spent on the internet and their social network addiction were found to increase. They had difficulties in establishing communication within the campus and with people of the district due to social and cultural reasons and they stated that they spent more time on social networks due to these reasons. Moreover, another results were that the students had an increased social network addiction due to problems in transportation network between the district and city centre, financial problems of the students and their personal characteristics.*

**Keywords:** Social Networks, addiction, social problems.

## MESLEK YÜKSEK OKULU ÖĞRENCİLERİNİ SOSYAL AĞLARA İTEN SOSYAL SORUNLAR: NİTEL ÇALIŞMA\*

### Özet

*Bu araştırmanın amacı, Develi Meslek Yüksek Okulu öğrencilerinin sosyal ağları kullanmaya iten sosyal sorunlarını belirlemeye yönelik görüşlerini belirlemektir. Bu çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılarak olgu bilim deseni dikkate alınmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu 2014-2015 eğitim-öğretim yılı güz döneminde Erciyes Üniversitesi Develi Meslek Yüksekokulu'nda öğrenim gören öğrenciler oluşturmaktadır. Çalışma grubu ölçüt örnekleme göre belirlenmiştir. Araştırmanın verileri araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanan açık uçlu sorulardan oluşan yarı yapılandırılmış bir görüşme formuyla toplam 15 öğrenciden toplanarak nitel veri analizine uygun bir bilgisayar programıyla çözümlenmiştir. Çözümlemelerde ise betimsel analiz tekniği kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonucunda öğrencileri sosyal ağ kullanımına iten sosyal sorunlar beş kategoride toplanmıştır. Bu kategoriler sosyal ortamdaki kaynaklı, sosyal aktivitelerin az olmasından kaynaklı, il*

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*merkezine ulaşım sorunundan kaynaklı, kişisel özelliklerden kaynaklı ve maddiyattan kaynaklı sorunlar şeklinde belirlenmiştir. Öğrencilerin kampüs içerisinde ve ilçede vakit geçirebilecekleri sosyal ortamlar ve yapabilecekleri sosyal aktivitelerin kısıtlı olması nedeniyle internet başında geçirdikleri sürenin ve sosyal ağ bağımlılıklarının arttığı belirlenmiştir. Öğrenciler gerek kampüs içerisinde gerekse ilçe halkıyla sosyal ve kültürel nedenlerden dolayı iletişim kurmakta zorlandıklarını, bu nedenler sosyal ağlarda daha fazla vakit geçirdiklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Ayrıca ilçe ile il merkezi arasındaki ulaşım ağında yaşanan sıkıntılardan, öğrencilerin maddi sorunlarından ve öğrencilerin kişilik özelliklerinden kaynaklı olarak sosyal ağ bağımlılığı artışı yaşandığı da ulaşılan diğer sonuçlardır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sosyal ağlar, bağımlılık, sosyal sorunlar

## INTRODUCTION

Vocational school is stated in the Higher Education Law as “It is a higher education institution aiming to train qualified labour force for certain professions, providing associate degree, and offering two-year education as two or three semesters in a year” (YOK). Vocational schools are the higher education institutions established to raise qualified labour force in various business lines in Turkey and all over the world (Akyurt, 2009: 177). In the 1950s, 'one millionaires in every neighbourhood' policy reflected on higher education in the sense of “university in every city and vocational school in every district' and vocational schools have been established even in the small residential areas even though they do not have any technical high school and substructure. In the light of these developments; when the excessive clusters in front of the universities are added to these political investment practices after 1970s, vocational schools started to be established even in small districts having a half-hour distance between them (Örs, 2003: 2). These vocational schools host students from city centres where they are established as well as other provinces. Students who come from the bigger cities in terms of both social facilities and physical conditions in particular experience various problems in vocational schools in the districts. These problems come to light in various dimensions. One of these dimensions is the social networks and their usage.

Information technologies have reshaped the learning-teaching process, social, economic and cultural life, and interpersonal interaction in the twenty-first century called as the information and technology age (Özmen, Aküzüm, Sünkür and Baysal, 2012). The unavoidable development and progress of the technology today lead to diversities in terms of both hardware and software and the flow of these diversities into the life. In particular, the internet used by individuals from all ages is effectively used by adolescents and young people in their daily life practices and as a means of socializing in Turkey where the young population is dense (Dikme, 2013: Fuat and Him, 2013). In parallel to these developments, virtual media environments have also entered into our daily life rapidly. Commonly used virtual media environments are social networking sites, blogs, microblogging, wikis, forums, commerce communities, content communities, podcasts, virtual gaming environments, and social bookmarking sites. Mostly visited websites include social networks with Web 2.0 features such as Facebook, MySpace, Flickr, and YouTube. Especially, studies on Facebook, which is preferred for socializing have revealed that facebook users enter facebook at least once a day, an average facebook user has about 130 friends, and there are more than 900 million applications where facebook users can interact with each other (Dikme, 2013: Tonta, 2009: Bilen, Ercan and Gülmez, 2014).

Social networks, which are online platforms where social communication and social relations can be established, people can share their ideas, activities, events and interests, create a second living space that affects and changes the users' emotions, thoughts, values, and forms of communication, in short, all their lives (Tiryakioğlu and Erzurum, 2011; Kalkan and Kaygusuz, 2013). It was asked to investigate the problems that pushed the students studying in the vocational schools established in the districts to this second living area and this study was decided to be conducted.

## METHOD

### Research Model

This study is a qualitative study conducted to determine the opinions of the students studying in Develi Vocational school regarding the problems they have experienced in their social life and the reasons prompting the students to use social networks in the context of these problems. In this study, the phenomenology pattern was taken into consideration. Phenomenology pattern is a qualitative study method focusing on cases who are

aware of they do not have a deep and detailed understanding and aiming to determine the experiences, perceptions, and orientations related to the subject (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013; 78).

### Sample group

The population of the study consisted of the students studying in Erciyes University Develi Vocational School during the fall semester of 2014-2015 academic year. In the study, the sample group was determined by using criterion sampling method. It is essential in this sample selection to have a set of predefined criteria (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). In this context, the sample group was formed by considering the criteria of “coming from outside of the province”, “Residing in Develi district”, “Having a smartphone/tablet/personal computer”, “having its own internet package or accessing the wired/wireless internet anytime”, and “being voluntary to participate in the study”. Accordingly, opinions of a total of 15 students including 8 males and 7 females, were taken.

### Development of Data Collection Tool and Analysis of Data

The data of the study were collected by using a semi-structured interview form consisting of six open-ended questions prepared by the researchers. The obtained data were analysed in accordance with the descriptive analysis by using the QSR N-VIVO 10 program. Descriptive analysis is based on the summarization and interpretation of data based on themes, which were previously determined by research questions (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013).

## RESULTS

In accordance with the data gathered as a result of the interviews with the students, firstly, quantitative information about which cities the students came from, whether or not they were residing in a dormitory or a house, social networks where they had memberships, how many hours in a day they spent on social networks, and how many times in a day they entered these networks. The students had memberships for the following social networks as Instagram (14), facebook (13), whatsapp (13), twitter (10), swarm (5), tango (5), youtube (4), line (4), viber (4), Skype (2), and chat on (1), respectively from most to least. When the period the students spend on social networks daily was examined, it was determined that 7 students spent 1-5 hours, 4 students spent 6-10 hours and 4 students spent 11-24 hours in social networks in a day. When the number of entering the social networks per day was examined, it was found that 6 students entered the networks 1-50 times, 2 students entered the networks 51-100 times, 2 students entered the networks 101-200 times, and 5 students entered unlimited times.

A code list was prepared by analysing the opinions of the students about their social problems in the district that prompted them to use the social network. Five main themes have been identified by reviewing this code list. These themes are 'Social Environment', 'Social Activities', 'Transportation to City Centre', 'Personal Characteristics', and 'Finance'. The model prepared related to the main themes was given below.

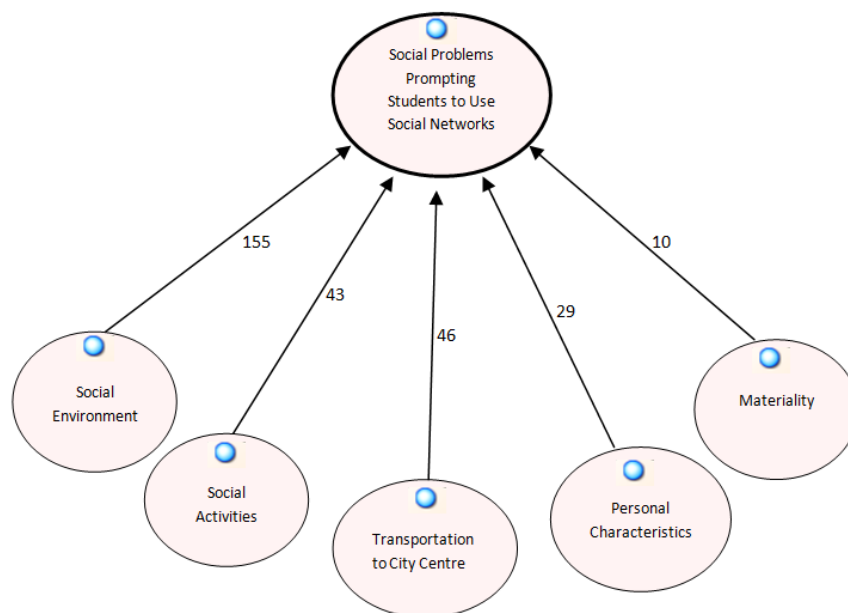


Figure 1. Model Related to Social Problems Prompting Students to use Social Networks

### Results Related to the Social Environment Sub-theme

When the data were examined, the social environment problem was examined firstly among the social problems that prompted the students to use social networks more. The sub-themes and loading numbers included in this theme are shown in below figure.

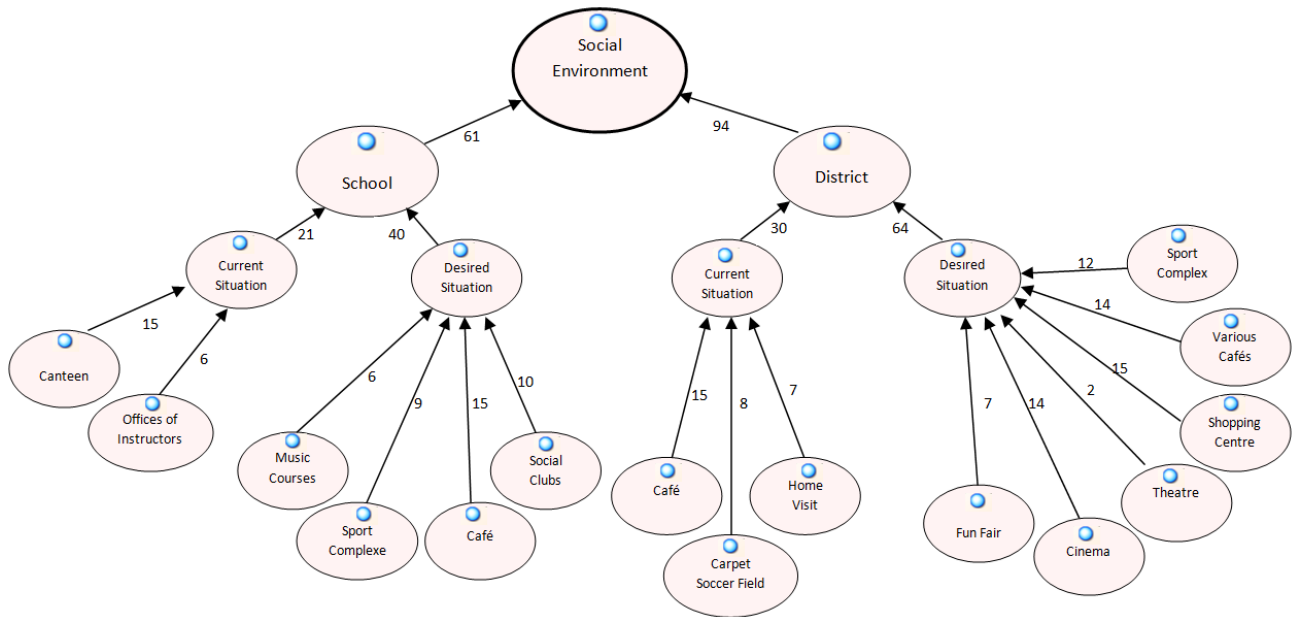


Figure 2. Model Related to Social Environment

When the figure was examined, problems caused by the social environment were observed to be collected in two categories. The students expressed both the current situation and desired situation of social environments both in the school and the district. The students stated that the social environments in which they can spend time in the school were very limited and as a social environment, they only described the canteen and some of Instructors' offices as environment. Similarly, they stated that there was no environment to socialize other than a few cafés in the districts, and social environments such as carpet soccer field for male students and home visit for female students. Because of these limited social environments, the students stated that they spent more time on the Internet, that is, on social networks and their memberships to new social networks increased day by day. Opinions of the students on social environment were as follows;

-“ Develi does not have much social environment. There is only a canteen in the school. I do not go there a lot. There are only two cafes in Develi. Sometimes we hang out there. But there is nothing to do in those cages, so everybody spend time with phone. Yet we fall apart.”

-“ Life here is very monotonous. I wish we have social clubs. I wish they arrange technical trips. We go back and forth between the school and the dormitory. The most social thing we do is gathering in the dormitory and playing online games.”

-“ The only place I can socialize in the school is the offices of some of our instructors. If they were not, I will become exasperated. I wish we have a good cinema or a theatre. We are deprived of all kinds of cultural activities here. If there is a shopping mall, we would not have to shop online. There is nothing other than hanging out on Facebook. ”

-“At least men are going to the soccer match. We are going on a visit to our friends who live here and have to socialize with the neighbour aunts. Instead, of course I prefer socializing with my own peers from twitter or facebook.”

### Results related to the sub-theme of social activities

When the data were examined, another social problem prompting the students to use the social network more is the limited social activities. The sub-themes and loading numbers included in this theme are shown in below figure.

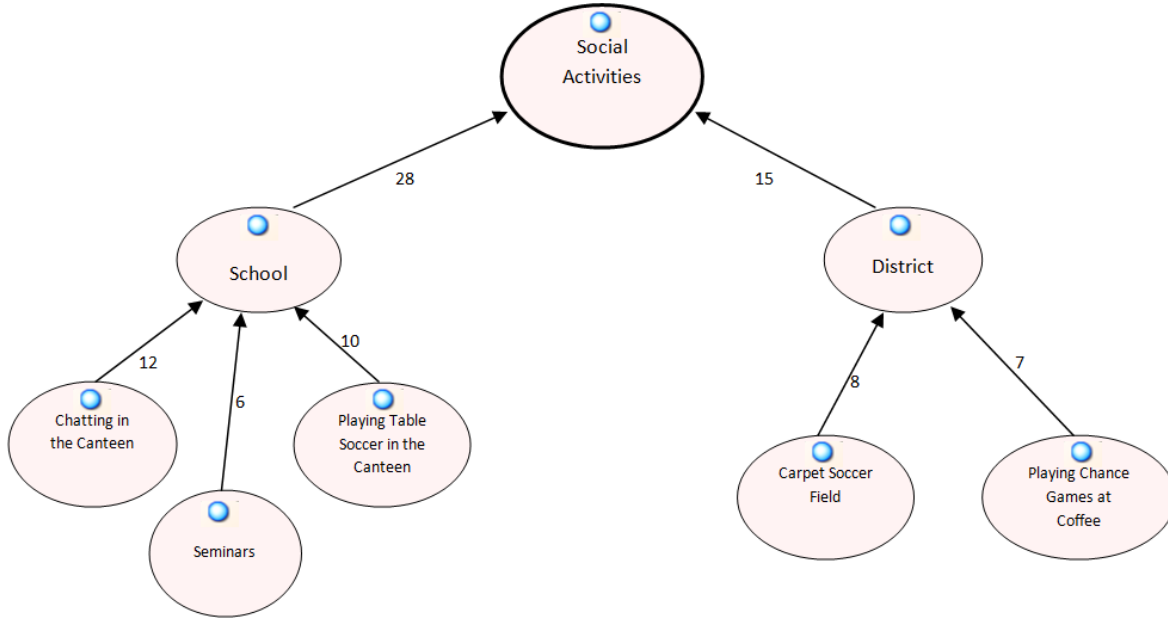


Figure 3. Model Related to Theme of Social Activities

When the sub-theme of social activities was examined, it was observed that this problem was addressed by the students based on school and the district as in the social environment. The students listed the social activities they made at school as chatting with friends in the canteen, playing table soccer in the canteen and participating the seminars organized by the school. In the district, male students listed the social activities as playing soccer matches in carpet soccer fields and playing chance games at coffee shop/café. Problems arising from the lack of social activities that arise in parallel with the social environment-related problems sub-theme similarly caused students' relations with social networks to increase to an addiction level. Opinions of the students on sub-theme of social activities were as follows;

-“We are bored at school. Because there is no activity. I wish there could be some nice activities. For example, there is no volleyball or basketball field. Since we do not have any useful activity, we are hanging out on facebook and writing in whatsapp until the evening.”

-“We have one canteen in the school. The only thing we can do in there is to play table soccer. I wish we could be on campus environment. So I prefer living in a virtual campus environment.”

-“The only social activity I can do in the district after school is to play batac or okey. This is something. At least we do not play okey on the internet”

### Results related to the sub-theme of transportation to city centre

When the data were examined, another social problem prompting the students to use social network more is the problems experienced in transportation to city centre. The sub-themes and loading numbers included in this theme are shown in below figure.

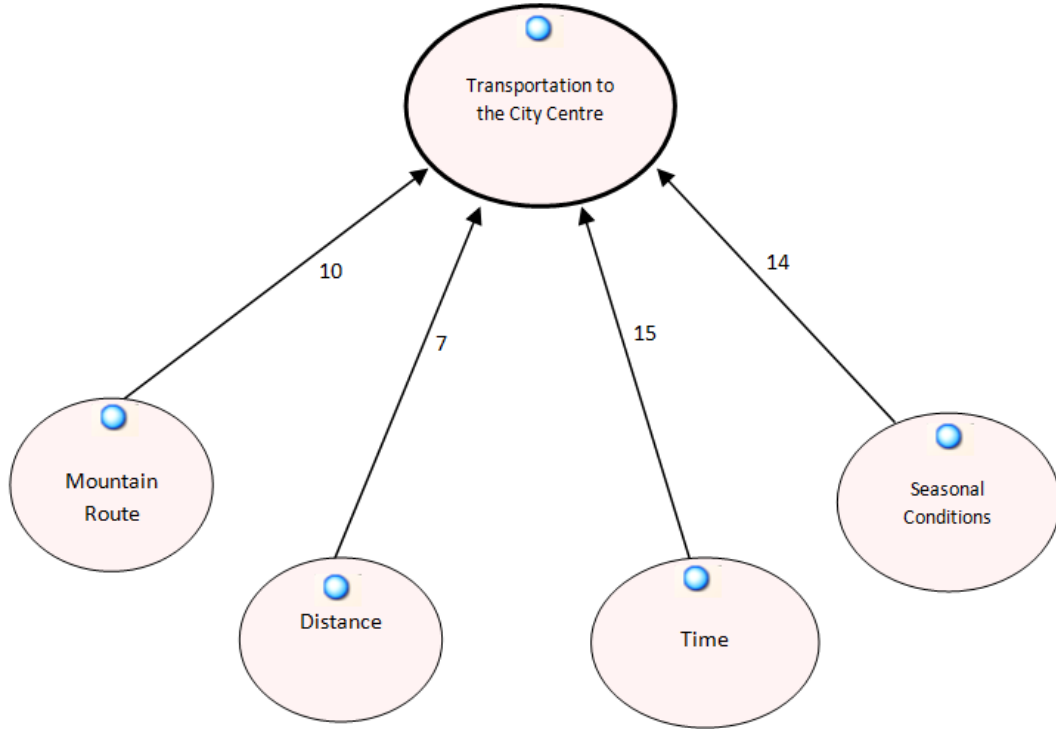


Figure 4. Model Related to Theme of Transportation to the City Centre

The students stated that they needed to go to the city centre because of the limited social activities and social environments in the school and in the district. However, they stated that they had problems due to the settlement of the district to the city centre. Since people have to cross the Erciyes Mountain to reach the district from the city centre, the students complained about the problematic mountain road due to the geographical properties, the roads to be closed with snow due to the winter conditions, distance from the centre, and lack of any public transportation from the district to the city centre after 7 pm due to these three difficulties. The students who had to socialize in the district stated that they had to use the social network, which is the easiest form of socialization, as a mean. Opinions of the students on sub-theme of transportation to the city centre were as follows;

*“Last vehicles to Kayseri are at 7 pm here. On the other hand, we want to go to the cinema and to hang out in Kayseri in the evenings. However, these requests are limited both in the district and in the province.”*

*“The mountain road is very dangerous here because it is very snowy in winter. We cannot go to Kayseri any time we want. We must concentrate on social networks due to boredom.”*

### Results related to the Sub-theme of Personal Characteristics

When the data were examined, another social problem prompting the students to use social networks more was found to be the problems causing by the personal characteristics of the students. The sub-themes and loading numbers included in this theme are shown in below figure

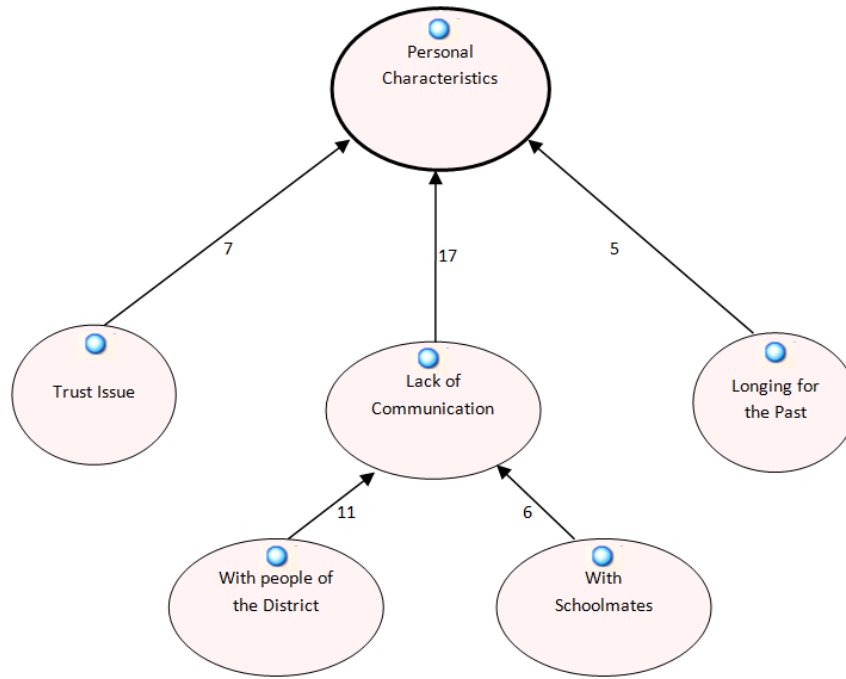


Figure 4. Model Related to Theme of Personal Characteristics

When the coding about the personal characteristics of the students was investigated, it was revealed that the students emphasized mostly the problems arising from the lack of communication among the personal characteristics prompting the students to use the social networks. Particularly, the students, who wanted to socialize outside the school, expressed that they felt too lonely outside the school when they could not establish a common communication platform with the town people and therefore they preferred to use virtual platforms to socialize. In addition, some students stated that they spent more time on social networks because of the longing and curiosity they had with their family and circle of friends in their own town before starting the vocational school in the district. Some students stated that they preferred virtual communication instead of direct communication because they could not trust the other people. Opinions of the students on sub-theme of personal characteristics were as follows;

-“*I constantly check the swarm and instagram. Because, my closest friends from high school are studying at very good universities. At least, they are in the central campus. I stalk their location notifications and pictures and I feel very sorry for myself*”

-“*The people of the district could not accept us. That's why we are asocial. We live sociability in social networks.*”

-“*I hesitate to contact with the girls face to face. It's easier to search and find the girls I like from Facebook.*”

#### Results related to the sub-theme of finance

When the data obtained after the interview with the students were examined, 10 opinions about finance were found. The students stated that they spent more time on social networks due to the financial difficulties they were experiencing. This is because the virtual world opens a door of a social world with almost zero cost. Opinions of the students on sub-theme of finance were as follows;

-“*I think finance is very important. Because sometimes I do not have enough money when it is close to get the scholarship credit. Even if we go to a café, we still have to spend money. When I do not have any money, I hang out and talk to my friends in facebook.*”

-“*My money is running out at the ends of the months since I also pay my girlfriend's bill. We are texting through whatsapp. This is the cheapest.*”

## CONCLUSIONS

In the study, the social life problems of the students who were studying in the vocational school in the district and the reasons prompting the students to use social networks in parallel with these problems were examined. As a result of the obtained data, it was observed that the students spent their time mostly in instagram, facebook and whatsapp social networks. The students often connected to social networks during the day via their personal computers and smartphones and spent long hours on social networks. The most important social reason prompting the students to use social networks is the limited social environment and social activities. This is because the students stated that they could not find any environment to socialize and spend time other than the school canteen and the cafes in the district and thus they directed to the social networks. In addition, transportation problems between the district and the city centre and financial problems prompted the students to use the social networks more. Finally, they talked about the effect of personal characteristics on usage of social network. Those who had communication problems with their schoolmates and the people of the districts expressed that they were more directed to social networks. Moreover, those who longed for their families stated that they often communicated with them by using communication platforms such as Whatsapp or line frequently. In accordance with the results obtained as a result of the study, it could be recommended to investigate both social network and internet addiction levels of the students studying in the district by using larger sample and different analysis methods.

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