



## KENDİNİ GİZLEME İLE SOSYAL MEDYA TUTUMLARI, SOSYAL GÖRÜNÜŞ KAYGISI VE HEYECAN ARAYIŞI ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİNİN İNCELENMESİ

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### Öz

*Bu araştırmada ergenlerde kendini gizleme düzeyi ile sosyal medya tutumları, sosyal görünüş kaygısı ve heyecan arayışı arasındaki ilişki incelenmiştir. Araştırmada veri toplama araçları olarak "Kendini Gizleme Ölçeği, Ergenler için Kısa Heyecan Arayışı Ölçeği, Sosyal Görünüş Kaygısı Ölçeği ve Sosyal Medya Tutum Ölçeği" kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubu, 2023-2024 eğitim öğretim yılında Sakarya'nın Adapazarı ilçesinde iki farklı Anadolu Lisesine devam eden, 9., 10., 11. ve 12. Sınıf düzeyinde gönüllü 354 öğrenciden oluşmaktadır. Katılımcıların 220'si (%62,14) kız, 134'ü (%37,85) erkek öğrenciden oluşmakta, 93'ü (%26,27) 9. sınıfa, 123'ü (%34,74) 10. sınıfa, 27'si (%7,6) 11. sınıfa, 111'i (%31,35) 12. sınıfa devam etmektedir. Verilerin analizinde korelasyon analizi, regresyon analizi, t-test yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada ergenlerde kendini gizleme ile heyecan arayışı, sosyal görünüş kaygısı ve sosyal medya tutumları arasında anlamlı ilişkiler olduğu görülmüştür. Sosyal medya tutumları ve sosyal görünüş kaygısı arasında da anlamlı ilişki görülmüştür. Bu doğrultuda kendini gizleme düzeyi ile sosyal görünüş kaygısı arasında pozitif orta düzeyde; kendini gizleme düzeyi ile heyecan arayışı ve sosyal medya tutumları arasında ise pozitif düşük düzeyde ve istatistiksel açıdan anlamlı ilişkilerin bulunduğu görülmüştür. Sosyal görünüş kaygısı, heyecan arayışı, sosyal medya tutumları değişkenlerinin kendini gizleme değişkenini istatistiksel açıdan anlamlı düzeyde yordadığı gözlenmektedir. Öte yandan t testi sonucunda, ergenlerde kendini gizleme düzeyinin cinsiyete göre anlamlı düzeyde farklılaştığı görülmüştür. Elde edilen bulgular alan yazın ışığında tartışılmıştır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kendini gizleme, Heyecan arayışı, Sosyal görünüş kaygısı, Sosyal medya tutumları.

### *Exploring The Relationship between Self-Concealment and Attitudes Towards Social Media, Social Appearance Anxiety and Sensation Seeking*

### Abstract

*This study examines the relationship between the level of self-concealment and attitudes towards social media, social appearance anxiety, and sensation seeking among adolescents. The "Self-Concealment Scale, Brief Sensation Seeking Scale for Adolescents, Social Appearance Anxiety Scale, and Attitudes towards social media Scale" were used as data collection tools. The study group consisted of 354 voluntary students from two different Anatolian High Schools during the 2023-2024 academic year, including students from 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. Among the participants, 220 (62.14%) were female, and 134 (37.85%) were male; 93 (26.27%) were in 9th grade, 123 (34.74%) in 10th grade, 27 (7.6%) in 11th grade, and 111 (31.35%) in 12th grade. Correlation analysis, regression analysis, and t-test methods were used for data analysis. The study found significant relationships between self-concealment, sensation seeking, social appearance anxiety, and attitudes towards social medias among adolescents. A significant relationship was also observed between Attitudes towards social medias and social appearance anxiety. Accordingly, there were positive moderate-level relationships between self-concealment and social appearance anxiety, and positive low-level significant relationships between self-concealment, sensation seeking, and attitudes towards social medias. Social appearance anxiety, sensation seeking, and attitudes towards social medias were observed to significantly predict self-concealment.*

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*Furthermore, a t-test result indicated a significant difference in stress sensitivity levels among adolescents based on gender. The findings are discussed in the light of the relevant literature.*

**Keywords:** *Self concealment, Sensation seeking, Social appearance anxiety, Attitudes towards social media.*

## 1. Introduction

Adolescence is a critical phase of physical and psychological development, during which individuals are influenced by numerous factors. Adolescents, who are adapting to changes in their lives and preparing for adulthood (Santrock, 2020), encounter various developmental challenges (Ogden & Hagen, 2018), physical and psychological health issues (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022), and a range of social problems (Singh et al., 2019). Specifically, factors such as Self Concealment (Finkenauer et al., 2002; Frijns et al., 2005; Frijns vd., 2013), Attitudes Towards Social Media (Hausmann et al., 2017; Suyanto, 2021), Sensation Seeking (Comeau et al., 2001; Greene & Banerjee, 2008; Hansen & Breivik, 2001; Palmgreen et al., 2001) and Social Appearance Anxiety (Antonietti et al., 2020; Caner et al., 2022) have been identified as affecting adolescents' healthy development, physical, and mental health.

Research conducted both domestically and internationally on adolescents and young adults has reported that Self Concealment negatively affects individuals' functionality, social and psychological well-being, and life satisfaction (Çelik, 2015); it is associated with high levels of social anxiety, depression, loneliness, low self-esteem, and can lead individuals to resort to negative coping mechanisms by reducing their social support (Constantine et al., 2004; Doğan & Çolak, 2016; Frinj & Finkenauer, 2008; Kawamura & Frost, 2004).

Larson and Chastain (1990) define an individual's interest in keeping secrets as "self-concealment" and according to the Anxiety Model put forward by Lane and Wegner (1995), keeping secrets causes some cognitive processes that result in an obsessive anxiety arising from the secret. According to this model, the process that starts with the suppression of thoughts can lead to obsessive anxiety and ultimately to psychopathology. As a result of 137 studies conducted with over 40,000 participants, Larson et al. (2015), who considered self-concealment as a Motivation Model, determined that self-concealment behavior is related to 18 constructs. Accordingly, self-concealment behavior is associated with insecure attachment, trauma effect, social evaluation anxiety, disclosure, concealment, authenticity-openness, suppression, awareness-psychological flexibility, social support, romantic relationship health, depression, anxiety, distress, physical symptoms, mental health, negative mental health behaviors, help-seeking attitudes, and therapy process and outcomes.

Within the scope of Attachment Theory, Vrij et al. (2003) state that being prone to keeping secrets is related to avoidant and anxious attachment style; Larson et al. (2015), who try to explain the relationship between self-concealment and the concept of past experiences, see the trauma experienced by the individual, insecure attachment orientation and anxiety about being criticized in society as potential antecedents of self-concealment. As a result of the self-concealment study model, it is seen that people with high anxiety about being socially evaluated hide themselves more. At this point, it can be said that social appearance anxiety, which is defined as the tension and anxiety that people experience when their appearance is evaluated by others, is also related to self-concealment.

It can be said that social media use carries certain risks in terms of Self Concealment. Social media allows individuals to present themselves differently, providing opportunities for self-disclosure and concealment. In the meta-analysis study conducted by Larson et al. (2015), it is seen that people who conceal themselves are less likely to make sincere disclosures. It is known that people who hide themselves use social support networks inadequately or prefer not to use them at all. Thus, it is

predicted that people who are isolated from social life will become increasingly lonely and will not be able to establish healthy social relationships with other people. It can be said that this situation also poses risks on social media use.

It is thought that social media use increases the isolation of adolescents with a high tendency for Self Concealment from real-life social settings; by fulfilling their unmet sharing needs in real social environments, it enables them to perceive themselves as more competent socially (Bozkur & Gündoğdu, 2017). Doğan and Çolak (2016) also found in their research with high school students that the use of social networking sites is significantly predicted directly through Self Concealment and indirectly through Social Appearance Anxiety and loneliness, supporting the research findings. Considered important in social media use, Self Concealment can lead to anxiety, depression, and other psychological distress, negatively affecting an individual's well-being and causing a decline in relationship satisfaction by depriving the individual of social support (Magsamen-Conrad et al., 2014).

According to the Theory of Inhibition, Pennebaker (1997) developed a model explaining the relationship between undisclosed traumatic experiences and psychosomatic disorders. According to this model, one of the most dangerous aspects of keeping secrets is that emotions cannot be explained and cause psychosomatic disorders (Pennebaker, 1989). It has been determined that self-concealment has significant effects on depression, anxiety, distress, mental health problems and suicidal tendencies (Yüksel, 2019). Masuda et al. (2011) stated that psychological flexibility plays a mediating role in the relationship between self-concealment and negative psychological problems. At the same time, it has been found that experiences of concealing personal information, trying to prevent disclosure, controlling or suppressing disclosure also cause attention deficit. Arnett (1992) also stated that adolescents' impulsive and absent-minded actions are effective in the high level of thrill-seeking. It can be said that this data supports the study model of Larson et al. (2015) and that self-concealment and thrill seeking are related. In studies examining Self Concealment together with Sensation Seeking, it has been found that adolescents inclined to Self Concealment can tolerate their negative experiences, anxiety, negative self-esteem, and psychological distress through Sensation Seeking activities (Çelik, 2015). Positive effects of Sensation Seeking on adolescents can also be discussed.

When reviewing the literature on studies conducted on adolescents, variables such as self concealment, sensation seeking, attitudes towards social media, and social appearance anxiety have been researched with different variables, but it has been observed that the variables mentioned have not been studied together in adolescents. In this context, examining the relationship between adolescents' self concealment and their attitudes towards social media, social appearance anxiety, and sensation seeking together in this research is of great importance.

### **Self-Concealment**

Larson and Chastain (1990) define an individual's interest in keeping secrets as "Self Concealment." Secret-keeping can be defined as the conscious act of keeping certain information hidden from others (Bok, 2011; Kelly, 2002). It is the effective prevention of disclosure and can thus be described as a taxing and stressful condition (Pennebaker, 1989). According to Kelly (1999), keeping secrets often means concealing oneself and not disclosing one's thoughts. Self concealment can be considered to have an important function during adolescence, a period when individuals create their personal space and autonomy development occurs (Yıldız, 2013). Hence, secret-keeping is a significant extension in adolescent development and holds special importance in facilitating secondary individuation, a developmental task intrinsic to adolescence (Akt. Finkenauer et al., 2002).

During their moral development, children and adolescents develop judgments about what information in the moral, conventional, and personal domains should be shared or kept secret. Within

the context of these moral judgments, they make assessments about events in their surroundings to decide which information should be considered confidential in adulthood (Deniz, 2010). According to Vrij et al., (2003), people tend to conceal information that is personally distressing or socially taboo more than other types of information. In other words, they are more inclined to hide personal information that they believe could elicit negative reactions from others. Larson et al., (2015) meta-analysis also found that people with high social evaluative anxiety tend to conceal themselves more.

Research studies have shown that Bozkur and Gündoğdu (2017) identified a significant relationship between students' attitudes towards social media, specifically the sub-dimensions of social competence and social isolation, and their shyness and self concealment scores. It was found that 28% of the study group used fake accounts, 20.7% occasionally, and 3.7% consistently made posts that misrepresented themselves. The research also concluded that adolescents using fake accounts on social media and presenting themselves differently in social media environments had significantly higher shyness and self concealment scores than those who reported not using fake accounts or misrepresenting themselves. Yüksel (2019) found a significant positive relationship between social media addiction level and the level of self concealment; Gölcü et al., (2019) found that tendencies towards self concealment increased the intention to open accounts under different names and present themselves differently on social media, and those who opened accounts under different names had higher life satisfaction levels.

Çelik's (2019) study found that life satisfaction was negatively related to self concealment and positively related to sensation seeking. Sensation Seeking had a suppressive and moderating effect in the relationship between life satisfaction and self concealment, and it was found to increase the negative impact of self concealment on life satisfaction. Another study by Yıldız (2013) showed that adolescents with a high tendency to keep secrets also had high levels of loneliness; secret-keeping significantly predicted loneliness in adolescents.

Adolescents, due to their developmental stage, are intensely engaged in trying out different identities, seeking new sensations, engaging in risky behaviors, and fulfilling their psychological needs for belonging, power, freedom, and entertainment. Adolescents can continue these efforts to fulfill their needs not only in real life but also through the internet in a virtual environment. The anonymity, accessibility, diversity, and freedom provided by the internet can lead some adolescents to neglect their real lives and transfer their efforts to satisfy their psychological needs to the virtual world, leading to unhealthy use of social media. It is stated that students who experience breakdowns in friendship relations in real life or whose functionality in work/school life declines, along with a decreased interest in other social activities, are at risk of internet addiction (Colwell & Payne, 2000).

### **Attitudes Towards Social Medias**

Social media is defined in various ways as a concept. It is a social structure where communication is facilitated through the combination of words, images, and sounds on the internet, where users express examples and observations from their daily lives, and the content is entirely determined by the users. It is a form of communication that is independent of time and place (Bostancı, 2010). Social media and the new communication technologies that underlie it have positively and negatively affected traditional lifestyles. In addition to positive approaches that claim the individual's freedom area has expanded depending on use, there are also negative approaches that claim the individual has become isolated. Positive evaluations include the development of new and more qualitative values that provide social integration (Bilgili, 2013).

Today, individuals fulfill most of their needs, habits, and behaviors using the opportunities provided by the internet environment. The rapid increase in these usage patterns has also increased the

number of internet users, their age range, usage time range, and durations. In this context, according to the results of the research conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute (2023) with the 16-74 age group, the internet usage rate in the last three months was determined to be the highest with 97.7% in the 25-34 age group and 96.6% in the 16-24 age group. Therefore, it is noteworthy that adolescents and young adults are the ones who use the internet most intensively in our country. Functional use of the internet offers many opportunities for adolescent development, but it can also pose many risks to adolescent life if misused (Bayraktar, 2013). According to Taçyıldız (2010), when adolescents cannot find the support they cannot get from family and friend environments, and when they cannot find solutions to communication problems with their families and friends and academic failures, they try to express themselves in a virtual world. This situation may indicate that adolescents perceive the internet as an avoidance area. In this sense, social media is an attractive opportunity for individuals in need of self-concealment. Individuals with weak social relationships and social support in their daily lives, those who experience or fear exclusion, those who have privacy concerns, those who engage in social isolation, have found social media as a platform to seek social welfare, support, and life satisfaction (Yüksel, 2019). Social media offers opportunities for self-concealment behaviors and allows individuals to reflect themselves differently on social media. Individuals have argued that they can participate in a communication process that is free and risk-free without taking responsibility by creating fake profiles and different identities (Bozkur & Gündoğdu, 2017; Ögel, 2012).

The formation of a relational structure within the confusion of virtual-reality, where the individual adopts an identity approved by society, has been facilitated (Bulunmaz, 2013). Research observing the discrepancy between profiles on social media and real identity (Ekşi et al., 2013) supports the existence of fictional identities. Another name for these fictional identities is virtual identity. Ögel (2012) stated that virtual identity is a form of self-expression and mentioned that those who prefer to exist on social media have two identities: "the real identity that contains the real aspects they want to hide and the virtual identity that they endow with the qualities they dream of." The high rate of identity experimentation on the internet among high school students is due to the importance of identity experimentation and identity discovery in adolescent development (Subrahmanyam vd., 2006). The internet provides individuals with a safe environment to experiment with identity without fear of rejection and disapproval (Ando & Sakamoto, 2008).

Social media also includes dimensions such as socialization, sharing, and communication for users. Examining the personality structures that cause users' attitudes towards social media and their behaviors on social media is considered important in reducing the harms of positive and negative uses of social media (Bozkur & Gündoğdu, 2017).

### **Sensation Seeking**

According to Zuckerman's (1994) definition, sensation seeking is "seeking various new, complex, and intense sensations and experiences and taking various physical, social, legal, and financial risks for such an experience." Arnett (1992) linked sensation-seeking behaviors to thoughtless, absent-minded actions of adolescents, stating that individuals with high sensation seeking are more prone and eager to act thoughtlessly and absent-mindedly. As indicators, legal problems, arrests, death or fatal injuries, risky sexuality and unwanted pregnancy, speeding, substance addiction, etc., are stated to be more common during adolescence. The rising sensation seeking levels during adolescence (Arnett, 1992) are said to make adolescents more prone to risky behaviors (Aydın & Karaca-Çiftçi, 2016; Seeley, 2004; Siyez, 2006). Steinberg (2007) argued that this is due to rising hormone values and increased impulses during adolescence and the slow maturation of the mental control system; it is not just due to irrationality, invincibility error, or lack of information that adolescents engage in risky actions. In this sense, it can be suggested that the rise in sensation seeking

levels and the decrease in mental control levels of adolescents may make them more prone to risky, rule-breaking, and problematic actions.

### **Social Appearance Anxiety**

Social appearance anxiety, described as a type of social anxiety, is defined as the tension and anxiety experienced by individuals when their physical appearances are evaluated by others (Doğan, 2010). According to Hart et al. (2008), the concept of social appearance anxiety is a comprehensive concept that goes beyond general physical characteristics such as the shape of the face (nose, smile, distance between eyes, etc.) and skin color, including height, weight, muscle structure, etc. Adolescence is a critical period for the formation of body image. Failure to form a healthy body image can lead to eating disorders, depression, antisocial behaviors, negative sexual behaviors, social phobia, etc. (Özcan et al., 2013). Social appearance anxiety comes along when a healthy body image cannot be formed. Social appearance anxiety expresses an individual's own anxieties about their physical appearance and the anxiety experienced regarding others' evaluations of them. In other words, it is the anxiety experienced about one's negative body image perception (Çınar & Keskin, 2015; Doğan, 2010).

Since the reason for action is the positive impression of others, disappointment is inevitable in any failure situation (Mülazımoğlu Ballı et al., 2014). Body perception plays a significant role in the development of an individual's personality, increasing self-confidence, becoming a social person, and being mentally, physically, and psychologically healthy (Öksüz, 2012). Nowadays, people are much more concerned with their own and others' physical appearances than before (Yüceant, 2013). People develop feelings and attitudes about their bodies according to the ideal measures presented to them. Deviation from ideal measures leads to changes in self-evaluation (Yaman et al., 2008). In addition to people's perceptions of their own bodies, how others perceive them is also important. People want to make positive impressions on others and regulate their behaviors accordingly. However, some people care about this more than others (Çepikkurt & Coşkun, 2010).

It is expected that adolescents will start to care about their appearance during adolescence, and any defect in their appearance can be a big problem for an adolescent (Doğan, 2011). In recent years, social media, actively used by adolescents, can also affect their perceptions of their bodies. In addition to people's perceptions of their own bodies, how others perceive them is also important. People want to make positive impressions on others and regulate their behaviors accordingly (Çepikkurt & Coşkun, 2010). At this point, adolescents' self-concealment behavior may be related to Attitudes towards social medias, sensation seeking, and social appearance anxiety.

### **Present Study**

The purpose of the study is to reveal the relationship between self-concealment, attitudes towards social medias, sensation seeking, and social appearance anxiety in adolescents. According to the literature, it can be said that there is a significant positive relationship between adolescents' tendency to self-conceal and their attitudes towards social media (Yüksel, 2019). The use of social media increases the isolation of adolescents with a high tendency to self-conceal from real-life social environments, while satisfying their unmet needs for sharing in real social environments and making them feel more competent socially (Bozkur & Gündoğdu, 2017). Çelik's (2015) research found that life satisfaction was negatively related to self-concealment and positively related to sensation seeking. It was found that sensation seeking had a suppressive and moderating effect on the relationship between life satisfaction and self-concealment. Additionally, mediation analysis found that sensation seeking increased the negative effect of self-concealment on life satisfaction. Doğan and Çolak's (2016) research with high school students shows that the use of social networking sites is significantly

predicted by self-concealment, directly and indirectly through social appearance anxiety and loneliness. According to the results, social appearance anxiety, self-concealment, and loneliness are striking predictors for the use of social networking sites among high school students. This study is shaped by the hypothesis that Attitudes towards social medias, sensation seeking, and social appearance anxiety will predict students' levels of self-concealment. In this study, which examines the relationship between self-concealment, Attitudes towards social medias, sensation seeking, and social appearance anxiety, the following questions are sought to be answered:

1. Is there a significant relationship between self-concealment and attitudes towards social media, sensation seeking, and social appearance anxiety?
2. Are attitudes towards social medias, sensation seeking, and social appearance anxiety predictors of adolescents' self-concealment behaviors?
3. Do self-concealment, attitudes towards social medias, sensation seeking, and social appearance anxiety scores significantly differ according to gender and grade level variables?

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1. Research Design**

This research was conducted based on the correlational research model. This model was chosen to reveal the relationship between the variables of self-concealment, attitudes towards social medias, social appearance anxiety, and sensation seeking in the study. According to Karasar (2002) this research models aim to describe the presence and degree of relationships between two or more variables.

### **2.2. Participants**

Participants were selected through convenience sampling. In this sampling method, the sample is selected based on time, money and location (Özmen & Karamustafaoğlu, 2019). The most important benefit of this sampling method is the easy accessibility of the participants by the researcher (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). The universe of the research consists of 354 voluntary students attending two different Anatolian High Schools in Adapazarı, Sakarya, during the 2023-2024 academic year, including 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th graders. Among the participants, 220 (62.14%) were female and 134 (37.85%) were male; 93 (26.27%) were in 9th grade, 123 (34.74%) in 10th grade, 27 (7.6%) in 11th grade, and 111 (31.35%) in 12th grade. The selected schools were ensured to be public schools.

### **2.3. Research Proses**

The study was conducted with 400 high school students during the 2023-2024 academic year. The necessary permissions were obtained from the District National Education Directorate to apply the research data set in the determined high schools. After obtaining permission, meetings were held with the administrators and school counselors of the relevant schools to determine the application times. Necessary explanations about the purpose of the research and completing the data set were made to the students before the application, and voluntariness was taken as the basis. 400 high school students participated in the research. After the application, the data sets of the students who participated in the research were examined one by one, and it was observed that 354 students completed the scales in the data set in accordance with the given explanations.

### **2.4. Data Collection Tool**

Data were collected through scales in the study. The "Self-Concealment Scale," "Brief Sensation Seeking Scale for Adolescents," "Social Appearance Anxiety Scale," and "Attitudes towards Social Media Scale" were used to determine the self-concealment levels of adolescents. A personal

information form prepared by the researcher was used to obtain general information about the participants. Descriptive information about the data collection tools used in the study is provided below.

### **Self-Concealment Scale**

The scale was developed by Larson and Chastain (1990) and adapted into Turkish by Deniz and Çok (2010). In the adaptation study, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to determine the validity of the scale. The exploratory factor analysis results showed that the Turkish version of the scale, like the original, had a single-factor structure, with factor loadings ranging from .51 to .74 and explaining 43.76% of the total variance. Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the single-factor structure of the scale, and the obtained fit indices were at an acceptable level (GFI= .93, AGFI= .89, CFI= .97, and RMSEA=.07). Additionally, the reliability coefficient of the Turkish version was found to be .86 in the adaptation study (Deniz & Çok, 2010). In this study, the reliability level of the scale was found to be .85. The Self-Concealment Scale consists of 10 items in a single dimension and uses a 5-point Likert type (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) measurement tool. The self-concealment score is obtained by summing the points from each item of the scale. There are no reverse-coded items in the scale. The lowest possible score on the scale is 10, and the highest is 50.

### **Brief Sensation Seeking Scale**

The scale was developed by Stephenson, Hoyle, Palmgreen and Slater (2003) and adapted into Turkish by Çelik, Turan and Güngör (2014). In the adaptation study, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted to determine the validity of the scale, which showed that the Turkish version of the scale, like the original, had a single-factor structure, with item factor loadings ranging from .74 to .84. Additionally, the reliability coefficient of the scale in the Turkish adaptation study was found to be .81. In this research, the internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be .81. The Brief Sensation Seeking Scale consists of 4 items in a single dimension and uses a 4-point Likert type (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree) measurement tool. The sensation-seeking score is obtained by summing the points from each item of the scale. There are no reverse-coded items in the scale. The lowest possible score on the scale is 4, and the highest is 16.

### **Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS)**

The Social Appearance Anxiety Scale was developed by Hart et al. (2008) to measure individuals' social appearance anxiety, consisting of 16 items in a single dimension. The scale is a Likert type with options ranging from 'Not at all applicable' to 'Completely applicable', scored from 1 to 5. The Turkish adaptation was conducted by Doğan (2010), where the reliability studies resulted in a test-retest reliability coefficient of .85. The scale's validity was assessed through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The EFA revealed a single-factor structure with an eigenvalue of 8.49, explaining 53.4% of the total variance, and item factor loadings ranged from .35 to .87. The CFA showed that the model's fit indices were examined, and the Chi-square value ( $\chi^2= 143.79$ ,  $N= 254$ ,  $p= 0.01$ ) was found to be significant.

### **Attitudes towards Social Media Scale**

The Attitudes towards social media Scale (SMAS), developed by Argın and Otrar (2013) to determine students' attitudes towards social media, was used in this study. The scale's validity and reliability analysis was conducted, resulting in a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.85 for the entire scale. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the sub-dimensions of the scale are above 0.70. The scale, consisting of 23 items including 6 negative and 17 positive statements, is a 5-point Likert type



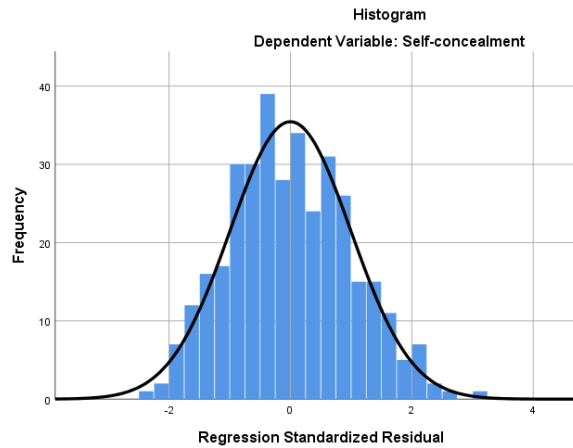
and comprises 4 factors (need for sharing, social competence, social isolation, and teacher relationships).

## 2.5. Data Analysis

The research data were analyzed using correlation analysis, regression analysis, and t-tests. The dataset was examined in terms of regression analysis outcomes before being subjected to regression analysis. As indicated by Çokluk, Şekercioğlu, and Büyüköztürk (2012), the suitability of the data for regression analysis was assessed by calculating Mahalanobis distance values for multivariate outliers in the dataset. Multivariate outliers were evaluated at a significance level of  $p < .01$ , and 46 data points were removed from the dataset to ensure "normality" and "linearity." The skewness, kurtosis values, and normal distribution graphs of the data were examined before regression analysis to determine if the dataset had a normal distribution.

The results related to regression analysis outcomes are presented in Table 1 and Figure 1. It was decided that the dataset ( $N = 354$ ), which met the necessary conditions for regression analysis, was suitable for further analyses. Findings related to each research problem are addressed sequentially.

Upon examining Table 1 and Figure 1, it was found that the skewness values of the research data ranged from .123 to .848, and the kurtosis values ranged from -.076 to .605. It is reported that if the skewness and kurtosis values fall within the  $\pm 2$  range, it indicates that there are no significant deviations from normality (George & Mallery, 2010). Based on this, it appears that the research data meet this condition.



**Figure 1.** Standardized residual normal distribution graph for self-concealment dependent variable

## 2.6. Ethics Statement

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional ethics committee.

The Educational Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Sakarya University awarded ethical approval (Ethical Application Ref: 344777). The approval number issued on 08.03.2024 is 07. Consent form was obtained as written from all participants.

## 3. Results

A correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between adolescents' self-concealment and their attitudes towards social media, social appearance anxiety, and sensation seeking and the findings are presented in Table 1. It is accepted that in the relationship between two values, a correlation coefficient value in the absolute range of .70 – 1.00 indicates a high level of relationship;

.30–.70 indicates a medium level; and .00 –.30 indicates a low level of relationship (Büyüköztürk, 2014). The data obtained in the study have been interpreted in this context.

**Table 1.** *The results of descriptive statistics and colleration analysis*

Variables	a	b	c	d	Skewness	Kurtosis
<b>a: Self-Concealment</b>	1				.209	-.605
<b>b: Sensation Seeking</b>	.277**	1			.123	-.400
<b>c: Appearance</b>	.419**	.021	1		.848	-.076
<b>d: Attitudes</b>	.110*	.092	.138**	1	.293	.272
$\bar{x}$	26.51	9.79	36.24	75.68		
<b>SD</b>	8.68	3.03	15.71	11.80		

\*\**p* < 0.01 \* *p* < 0.05

Upon examining Table 1, it is observed that there are significant relationships between adolescents' self-concealment and their sensation seeking, social appearance anxiety, and attitudes towards social media. A significant relationship has also been found between attitudes towards social media and social appearance anxiety. Accordingly, there is a positive medium-level relationship between the level of self-concealment and social appearance anxiety ( $r=.41$ ); and a positive low-level and statistically significant relationship between the level of self-concealment and sensation seeking ( $r=.27$ ) as well as attitudes towards social media ( $r=.11$ ).

Furthermore, a positive low-level and statistically significant relationship has been observed between social appearance anxiety and attitudes towards social media ( $r=.13$ ). Taking into account the results of the correlation analysis, a regression analysis was conducted to determine whether attitudes towards social media, social appearance anxiety, and sensationseeking predict the level of self-concealment. Details of the analysis and the findings obtained will be presented in the following section.

The results of the regression analysis conducted to determine whether attitudes towards social media, social appearance anxiety, and sensationseeking significantly predict the level of self-concealment among adolescents are provided in Table 2.

**Table 2.** *The results of regression analysis*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B		Standardized Coefficients $\beta$	t	p	CI	VIF	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>
<b>Constant</b>	9.222	2.878		3.205	.001	1.000		
<b>Sensation</b>	.760	.133	.265	5.703	.000	5.411	1.009	.24
<b>Anxiety</b>	.226	.026	.410	8.755	.000	8.261	1.019	
<b>Attitudes</b>	.022	.035	.029	.627	.531	18.166	1.028	

a. Dependent Variable: Self-concealment

Upon examining Table 2, it is observed that social appearance anxiety ( $\beta = .41, p<.001$ ), sensationseeking ( $\beta = .26, p<.001$ ), and attitudes towards social media ( $\beta = .02, p<.05$ ) significantly predict the self-concealment variable at a statistically significant level. Based on this finding, it is concluded that in this regression model, which includes the variables of attitudes towards social media, social appearance anxiety, and sensationseeking, 24% of the variance in the self-concealment variable is explained.

Whether the level of self-concealment among adolescents significantly differs by gender was examined using an independent samples t-test, and the finding is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** *Independent samples test result related to gender*

	Levene's Test		T-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	p	Marital Status	N	Mean	SD
Self-concealment	1.376	.242	2.841	51	.005	Female	19	27.55	8.35
						Male	34	24.87	8.98

The t-test results presented in Table 3 show that the level of self-concealment among adolescents significantly differs by gender ( $p < .05$ ), with males having a mean of 24.87 (SD = 8.98) and females a mean of 27.55 (SD = 8.35).

#### 4. Conclusion, Siscussion, Suggestions

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationships between adolescents' level of self-concealment and their attitudes towards social media, social appearance anxiety, and sensationseeking, as well as to examine the predictive power of these variables on the level of self-concealment. The correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between self-concealment and sensationseeking, attitudes towards social medias, and social appearance anxiety among adolescents. The finding from Doğan and Çolak (2016) that the use of social networking sites is significantly predicted by self-concealment directly, and by social appearance anxiety and loneliness indirectly, supports this study. The results of the study are in line with the results of Larson et al. (2015), who considered self-concealment as a motivational model. Accordingly, it can be said that self-concealment behavior is related to social evaluation concerns, disclosure, concealment, authenticity-openness, suppression, awareness-psychological flexibility, social support, negative mental health behaviors, and help-seeking attitudes.

The study also found a significant relationship between attitudes towards social media and social appearance anxiety. Accordingly, there is a positive medium-level relationship between self-concealment level and social appearance anxiety; and a positive low-level and statistically significant relationship between self-concealment level and sensationseeking (Çelik ve Sahranç, 2015; Çelik, Kaya ve Sahranç, 2019), as well as attitudes towards social medias, which is consistent with previous research findings (Bozkur ve Gündoğdu, 2017; Çolak ve Doğan, 2016). Additionally, a statistically significant and positive low-level relationship was found between social appearance anxiety and attitudes towards social medias, for which no comparative data could be found in the literature.

Siyez (2014) found that the sub-dimensions of sensationseeking among high school students; seeking excitement and adventure, seeking experiences, susceptibility to boredom, and disinhibition were related to problematic internet use. These findings can guide future research investigating the relationships between self-concealment, attitudes towards social medias, social appearance anxiety, and sensationseeking. Previous studies in the literature have examined self-concealment, social appearance anxiety, and attitudes towards social medias together during adolescence, but have not considered sensationseeking, which is extremely high during adolescence and decreases in adulthood (Romer, 2010), in conjunction with social appearance anxiety. When evaluated within the framework of Social Field Theory, the areas that adolescents share or hide with their parents are; "common sense issues (adolescent health, safety, comfort, self-harm, smoking, alcohol and drug use)", "moral and traditional issues (goodness of others, honesty, optional relative behaviors regarding laws)", "personal

issues (privacy, appearance choices, choice of friends)" and "multifaceted issues (personal and both moral and common sense issues)" (Smetana et al., 2006). Adolescents decide which information should be considered a secret with their evaluations in the context of their moral judgments, and at this point, adolescents create a boundary between themselves and their parents by keeping their secrets and create their personal space (Deniz, 2010). This study represents an important step in examining the variable of sensationseeking from different perspectives.

The t-test result indicates that the level of self-concealment among adolescents significantly differs by gender ( $p<.05$ ), with female adolescents concealing themselves more than male adolescents, a finding supported by other studies (Frinj & Finkenauer, 2008). This difference could be explained by societal gender roles.

In Yüksel's (2019) study, it was observed that the level of self-concealment among participants (aged 13-65) significantly differed by gender; as the duration of social media use increased, so did the level of self-concealment. This suggests that the level of self-concealment among participants changes significantly in parallel with the daily duration of social media use. The most significant differentiation is seen among those who use social media regularly every day; their level of self-concealment increases compared to those who use it less frequently.

Those who create accounts under different names on social media and present themselves differently have higher levels of self-concealment, consistent with findings by Bozkur and Gündoğdu (2017). In the meta-analysis study conducted by Larson et al. (2015), it is stated that people who hide themselves use social support networks inadequately or do not use them at all, which can be said to pose a risk on social media use. Therefore, it is inevitable that the social media environment, where self-concealment can be actively used, will become the subject of new studies over time. This research has examined social media use as a whole. Future research could focus on the relationship between self-concealment and the use of each social media tool, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tiktok, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc. Additionally, studies conducted on different samples in various regions of the country are important for enriching the literature and making comparisons.

From a theoretical point of view, according to the Theory of Keeping Secrets, not disclosing emotions in the process of keeping secrets can lead to psychosomatic disorders; according to the Anxiety Model put forward by Lane and Wegner (1995), the process of keeping secrets can lead to obsessive anxiety and ultimately to psychopathology; according to Larson et al. (2015), who treats self-concealment as a motivation model, it has been stated that self-concealment behavior can cause physical symptoms and negative mental health behaviors. In studies examining the relationship between self-concealment and physical-mental health, it was concluded that there was a relationship between self-concealment and depression and suicidal behaviors (Friedlander et al., 2012) and eating disorders (Masuda et al., 2011). At this point, it is important for future research on self-concealment to focus on physical and sexual health research on adolescents or adults and to conduct preventive studies.

This study has significant findings that could contribute to the literature, but it also has some limitations. One major limitation is the small size and other characteristics of the study group. The study group is limited to 354 adolescents attending two different Anatolian High Schools in the Adapazarı district of Sakarya province during the 2023-2024 academic year. The data were collected from 220 (62.14%) female and 134 (37.85%) male students, and the low number of male students can be considered as a limitation. Furthermore, data were collected using self-assessment tools. Therefore, future research could significantly contribute to the development of this study by collecting data from a broader range of ages and different subcultures of society. In line with the results of this study, it is

crucial to inform adolescents about activities that can reduce their social appearance anxieties and positively influence their attitudes towards social medias to ensure their healthy development and reduce their levels of self-concealment.

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