

Analysing Social Media Addiction among Referees in Izmir: A Quantitative Study by Demographics*

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the levels of social media addiction among referees working in the province of İzmir. The research was conducted within the scope of quantitative research, using a survey model and a descriptive research design. The research population consisted of referees actively working in the province of İzmir, while the sample group consisted of 300 referees working in the provinces of İzmir in the branches of basketball, volleyball, archery and taekwondo, determined using the convenience sampling method. A demographic information form and the Social Media Addiction Scale were used as data collection tools in the research. IBM SPSS 22.0 software was used for data analysis. The findings revealed that there was no significant difference in the total scores for social media addiction, virtual communication, and virtual tolerance sub-dimensions based on the referees' gender, length of service as a referee, or level of education. However, a significant difference was observed in referees' perceptions of social media addiction, the sub-dimensions of virtual communication and virtual tolerance, and the total social media addiction score according to their age. In light of this study, comparisons with referees in other disciplines and different groups on the same subject could be considered.

Received : 11.06.2025

Accepted: 03.09.2025

Published: 15.10.2025

Keywords

Addiction, communication, referee, social media, sport.

İzmir'deki hakemler arasında sosyal medya bağımlılığının analizi: Demografiye göre nicel bir çalışma

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Anahtar Kelimeler

Bağımlılık, iletişim, hakem, sosyal medya, spor.

Özet

Bu çalışmada İzmir ilinde görev yapan hakemlerin sosyal medya bağımlılık düzeylerinin belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Araştırma nicel araştırmalar kapsamında, tarama modelinde olup, betimleyici araştırma deseninde incelenmiştir. Araştırma evreni, İzmir ilinde aktif olarak görev yapan hakemleri kapsarken, örneklem grubunu ise kolay ulaşılabilir örnekleme yöntemi ile belirlenmiş yine İzmir ilinde basketbol, voleybol, okçuluk ve tekvando branşlarında görev yapan 300 hakem oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada veri toplama araçları olarak demografik bilgi formu ve Sosyal Medya Bağımlılığı ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde IBM SPSS 22.0 paket programından yararlanılmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular sonucunda hakemlerin cinsiyetine, hakemlik süresine ve eğitim düzeyine göre sosyal medya bağımlılığı, sanal iletişim ve sanal tolerans alt boyutlarının toplam puanında anlamlı bir fark olmadığı belirlenmiştir. Yaşlarına göre ise hakemlerin sosyal medya bağımlılığı algıları, sanal iletişim ve sanal tolerans alt boyutları ile sosyal medya bağımlılığı toplam puanında anlamlı bir fark olduğu görülmüştür. Bu çalışma ışığında diğer branşlardaki hakemlerle ve aynı konuda farklı gruplarla karşılaştırma yapılması düşünülebilir.

How to cite: Dumangöz, P. D. & Yıldırım, B. (2025). Analysing social media addiction among referees in Izmir: A Quantitative study by demographics. *Education, Science and Sport*, 7 (2), 38-48.

* This article is derived from Bilal Yıldırım's master's thesis entitled 'An Investigation of Social Media Addiction Levels Among Referees Working in the Province of İzmir According to Certain Demographic Characteristics'.

INTRODUCTION

Addiction means an excessive and irresistible desire for a person, an object or an entity. Psychological addiction, which is one of the types of addiction, is the constant repetition of a certain behaviour in order to achieve satisfaction. Another type of psychological addiction is expressed as “Technology Addiction”. One of the subheadings of technology addiction is “Social Media Addiction” (Gündüzalp et al., 2020). People now spend a significant portion of their day on social media and interact with these platforms. While smartphone use and social media interactions are among the five most frequent activities, experts state that individuals are increasingly spending their time in virtual environments and their consumption habits are changing accordingly (Munusturlar & Munusturlar, 2023). Although the purpose of social networking sites seems to be to make friends, there may be very different underlying reasons, and the behaviours that develop depending on these reasons can affect every area of our lives with continuity (Yılmaz & Karahüseyinoğlu, 2017). The increasing use of social media networks mentioned here makes it necessary to analyse the duration of time people spend on social media platforms and to examine their addiction levels. In this context, this study aims to conduct a detailed evaluation of the relationship between individual demographic variables and social media addiction using a sample of referees, using social networks, which offer virtual interaction environments with the largest user base.

This study aims to determine whether the social media addiction levels of referees working in Izmir differ according to some demographic variables. The secondary purpose is to provide information about the concepts related to the research topic. This study makes a significant contribution to the literature on social media addiction. In particular, the findings regarding referees' social media usage habits and how these habits relate to factors such as age, gender, education level, and length of refereeing will serve as an important reference point for future research. Furthermore, by examining the impact of social media addiction on the world of sports, this study could fill a significant gap in the fields of sports management and sports psychology.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Addiction

Addiction can be considered as a state of uncontrolled and continuous use of a substance or behaviour. While this state continues, the person's control power is usually disabled and life becomes unsustainable without the substance or behaviour (Eyibilen et al., 2021). Addiction is basically addressed in two categories. These are called substance addiction and behavioural addiction. Behavioural addiction includes types such as eating, exercise, gambling money and shopping amount; internet use is also included in this group (Kurtoğlu & Süslü, 2022). With the increase in computer support and internet access, it is seen that technological tools and equipment have increased. This increase negatively affects social relationships in individuals and causes various behavioural disorders. Internet addiction, in particular, draws attention as a prominent example of negatively affecting social relationships (Arslan, 2020; Yang & Tung, 2007). Digital addiction is felt particularly among the younger generations in our age, where communication technologies and the internet environment are constantly being renewed. With the advancement of technology, the internet has become a tool that not only provides access to power, but also establishes relationships between individuals and enables a range of digital components. Social media sites, which are an important member of social media platforms, allow users to create personal profiles, interact with other users, and share information about social and political policies (Eyibilen et al., 2021).

Social Media Addiction

Social media can be described as virtual environments where various users can share content for a specific purpose, retrieve it and manage it. It enables these platforms to reach their target audiences, advertise, disseminate information and receive feedback quickly. Social media acts as a communication channel between individuals and organizations, encouraging mutual interaction and ensuring the growth of the target audience. At the same time, it allows the options to be rearranged and changed according to the situation of the target audience. In addition, social media

contributes to advertising processes by enabling target audiences to learn and companies to improve themselves during feedback periods (Bat & Vural, 2015; Kalfa&Kocaman-Adaş, 2019; Reitz, 2012; Şengöz & Eroğlu, 2017). Studies conducted on young people examine the social media use of different institutions, its reasons, the purposes of using social networks, social media addiction and its effects on daily life. Studies addressing the problems caused by social media also reveal health risks such as inappropriate usage conditions and performance, sedentary lifestyle, problems arising from various posture disorders, musculoskeletal disorders, obesity and poor quality sleep system, and social risks such as difficulty focusing and relationship problems (Eyibilen et al., 2021).

One of the basic elements of social media is the opportunity to chat between users. Social media networks provide a strong communication channel by presenting these chats in the form of group chats or individual chats. According to Naslund et al.'s (2020) research, people with psychological problems make their situation worse when they join social media chat rooms. This also applies to individual chats. On the other hand, Twenge and Campbell (2018) state in their research that constant presence on chat sites without physical contact can lead to an increase in mental health problems among social media users. It has been determined that this situation is associated with psychological disorders such as loneliness. Although chatting does not directly cause mental health problems, it has been observed that prolonged conversations can lead to violent incidents. In addition, research argues that young people should be careful when chatting with their peers on social media. Social media dissemination often highlights positive characteristics while allowing negative ones to be lost and may portray this situation in a false way. Young people may not realize that such posts do not reflect reality and may not understand that their friends' posts are fake and may think that there is something wrong with them in order to appear attractive or successful. For example, a commercial featuring a muscular man may negatively affect social media users who do not have similar physical characteristics psychologically. Similarly, the social reflection seen in advertisements featuring tall women may have negative psychological effects on young girls (Beyari, 2023). Among the common characteristics seen in many types of connections, factors such as mood swings, the need to attract attention and deprivation situations may also occur in social media consumption in a similar way. This platform is used more by those who struggle with social interaction in real life due to the satisfaction of social media (Ünal, 2019).

Referee

The referee is the person who applies the rules in sports competitions and applies penal sanctions in the event of a rule violation. The persons assigned by the relevant federation to manage a competition, who are responsible for the correct playing of the two teams by protecting their rights and adhering to their principles, are called referees. The definition of the job that the referee carries out with the performance he shows on the sports field and the procedure he is obliged to implement is called refereeing (Akdağcık & Polat, 2022). Referees have the following duties: evaluating the events that occur during the competition, making decisions, managing the competition, resolving disputes and maintaining order. Although certain duties are common, they vary from branch to branch. In general, the duties of referees are as follows:

- Protecting the rules of the competition and acting to comply with the rules in the competition,
- Verifying the license information of the athletes who will play in the competition,
- Ensuring that the competition to be played is suitable for the environment,
- Determining which team will start the competition first,
- Starting the competition,
- Detecting, warning and penalizing players who do not comply with the rules,
- Checking the equipment of the athletes and teams and eliminating any situations that may disrupt safety,
- Starting or stopping the game by following the duration of the competition,
- Following the score of the competition and following a series of other rules and keeping records,
- Declaring the winner of the competition (Eren, 2023).

In addition to physical capacity, a referee must also have sufficient competence in terms of mental state and self-confidence. Referees who have these can exhibit positive behaviour against internal and external pressures during the competition and make healthy decisions. Referees can increase their competition performance by being clear in their decisions and being fair to both teams thanks to their knowledge of the rules and self-confidence (Çar et al., 2023).

In order to impose his authority on today's athletes, the referee must have general sports knowledge and sufficient wisdom and experience in the sport he is involved in. For this reason, being an athlete in the branch he is refereeing increases his prestige. In addition, it is seen in studies that referees who have gained experience in their job rarely have problems, are less likely to encounter bad language, and receive higher scores from the team that scores them in the competitions they manage (Başkan, 2003; Başer, 1998).

METHOD

In the study, the survey method, which is among the descriptive studies, was used. This method is a method used to define, analyze and interpret a situation, event or problem in detail. In this method, the relationships between the events and variables examined are questioned within the framework of criteria (Aydoğdu, et al., 2017). In addition, the survey method is descriptive and makes it possible to make inferences about the universe with survey data on the sample (Çepni, 2010). From this point of view, the current study tried to determine the social media addiction levels of referees. In the study, a two-section form was used, which included demographic information about gender, education level, age and refereeing period, and also questioned the social media addiction levels of referees. In the first section, there is a personal information form to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants, and in the second section, there is the Social Media Addiction-Adult Form Scale. Data in the study was collected by the researcher through Google forms. This study was approved by the Aydın Adnan Menderes University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee on 09.02.2024 with the decision number 11/12. In addition, the necessary written permission for the scale used in the research was obtained from the scientists who developed the scale. The hypotheses to be tested in line with these questions are as follows;

- H1. There is a significant difference in the social media addiction levels of referees according to their gender.
- H2. There is a significant difference in the social media addiction levels of referees according to their age.
- H3. There is a significant difference in the social media addiction levels of referees according to their refereeing period.
- H4. There is a significant difference in the social media addiction levels of referees according to their education level.
- H5. The social media addiction levels of referees are high.
- H6. There is a significant negative relationship between referees' social media addiction levels and their age and refereeing duration.

Sampling Method

The universe of the research consists of referees who are actively working in Izmir province; the sample consists of referees who are basketball, volleyball, archery and taekwondo referees who are working in Izmir province. The sample in the research was selected by convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a non-random sampling method in which the sample to be selected from the main population is determined by the judgment of the researcher. In convenience sampling, data is collected from the main population in the easiest, fastest and most economical way (Malhotra, 2004; Haşiloğlu et al., 2015). Similarly, Kurtuluş et al. (2004) stated that the convenience sampling method was used in approximately 90% of the studies conducted in Türkiye. The research data were obtained by means of an online form. 300 referees were included in the research based on voluntary participation (Table 1).

Table 1.
Statistical distributions of demographic characteristics of referees

Gender	N	%	Age*	N	%	Education level	N	%	Refereeing period	N	%
Female	130	43.3	Young adulthood	112	37.3	Secondary school	27	9.0	5 years or less	151	50.3
Male	170	56.7	Middle adulthood	188	62.7	Associate degree	47	15.7	6-10 years	65	21.7
Total	300	100.0	Total	300	100.0	Bachelor' degree	192	64.0	11 years or more	84	28.0
						Postgraduate	34	11.3	Total	300	100.0
						Total	300	100.0			

*Young adulthood (ages 18-30), Middle adulthood (ages 31-60)

It was determined that 43.3% of the referees participating in the study were female, 56.7% were male, 37.3% of the referees were in young adulthood, and 62.7% were in middle adulthood. The proportion of referees who graduated from secondary school was 9.0%, while 15.7% of the referees had an associate degree, 64.0% had a bachelor's degree, and 11.3% had a postgraduate degree. 50.3% of the referees had been practicing refereeing for 5 years or less, 21.7% for 6-10 years, and 28.0% for 11 years or more.

Data Collection Tools

Social media addiction scale-adult form: The scale developed by Cengiz Şahin & Mustafa Yağcı (2017) has a 20-item structure consisting of two sub-dimensions (virtual communication and virtual tolerance). Virtual tolerance has sub-dimensions consisting of items 1 to 11, while virtual communication covers items 12 to 20. Items 5 and 11 in the scale were scored with a reverse scoring system. The highest score (100 points) obtained from the scale indicates that the individual is addicted to social media, while the lowest score (20 points) indicates that the individual is not addicted to social media. The reliability coefficients of the scale were calculated as Cronbach's Alpha value .94 in total, .91 in the virtual communication sub-dimension and .92 in the virtual tolerance sub-dimension (Şahin & Yağcı, 2017).

Data Analysis

In the study, firstly the data were examined and the missing data were checked. In the second section, descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, frequency/percentage were performed. Before testing the hypotheses of the study, the normal distribution test (Kolmogorov-Smirno test) was applied. It was determined that the data were normally distributed according to the independent variable of gender, but the independent variables of age, education status and refereeing period were not normally distributed. Therefore, in the analyses, independent simple t-test was adopted for pairwise comparisons made according to gender, Mann-Whitney U Test for age variable, Kruskal Wallis H Test and Spearman Correlation Test were adopted for the variables of education status and refereeing period. IBM SPSS 22.0 package program was used in the analysis of the data.

FINDINGS

Table 2.
Meaning scale of social media addiction scale

Degree of Participation	Participation Range	SMBO
1	1.00-1.80	Doesn't suit me at all
2	1.81-2.60	Not suitable for me
3	2.61-3.40	I'm undecided
4	3.41-4.20	Suitable for me
5	4.21-5.00	It suits me very well

The participation ranges of the scale were calculated using the formula $(n-1)/n$ (Atalan, 2017). Therefore, the interval unit of the social media addiction scale with a 5-point participation degree was determined as $4/5 = .80$.

Table 3.

Results regarding social media addiction levels of referees

Variables	$\bar{x}$	ss	Minimum	Maximum	Level of participation
Virtual Tolerance	2.39	.57	1	3.91	Not suitable for me
Virtual Communication	2.32	.71	1	4.78	Not suitable for me
SMB Total Points	2.36	.58	1	4.20	Not suitable for me

N (300) ; SMB (Social Media Addiction)

According to Table 3, the reference ranges for the referees' social media addiction levels show that the averages are at the "not suitable for me" level in the sub-dimensions of virtual tolerance ($\bar{x}$ = 2.39), virtual communication ($\bar{x}$ = 2.32) and social media addiction total score ($\bar{x}$ = 2.36).

Table 4.

Distribution of Social Media Addiction Scale subscale scores according to referees' gender

Dependent Variables	Gender	N	$\bar{x}$	ss	t	sd	p
Virtual Tolerance	Female	130	2.41	.59	.407	298	.685
	Male	170	2.38	.55			
Virtual Communication	Female	130	2.36	.68	1.003	298	.317
	Male	170	2.28	.72			
SMB Total Points	Female	130	2.39	.59	.762	298	.447
	Male	170	2.34	.58			

*p<.05; N (300) (Social Media Addiction)

According to Table 4, the social media addiction levels of referees according to gender, no statistically significant difference was found between male and female referees in the sub-dimensions of virtual tolerance (t298= .407; p>0.05), virtual communication (t298= 1.003; p>0.05) and the total score of social media addiction (t295= .762; p>0.05).

Table 5.

Distribution of referees' scores on the social media addiction scale sub-dimensions in terms of age

Dependent Variables	Age	N	Rank Mean	Rank top.	U	p
Virtual Tolerance	Young adulthood	112	166.75	18675.50	8708.500	.012
	Middle adulthood	188	140.82	26474.50		
Virtual Communication	Young adulthood	112	166.13	18606.50	8777.500	.016
	Middle adulthood	188	141.19	26543.50		
SMB Total Points	Young adulthood	112	169.02	18930.00	8454.000	.004
	Middle adulthood	188	139.47	26220.00		

*p<.05; N (300) Young adulthood (ages 18-30), Middle adulthood (ages 31-60); SMB (Social Media Addiction)

When Table 5 is examined, the social media addiction levels of the referees according to their ages, a statistically significant difference was found between the age categories in the sub-dimensions of virtual tolerance (U=8708.500, p<0.05), virtual communication (U=8777.500, p<0.05) and the total score of social media addiction (U=8454.000, p<0.05).

Table 6.

Distribution of subscale scores on the social media addiction scale according to referees' refereeing periods

Dependent Variables	Referee period	N	Rank Mean	sd	χ^2	p	(I-J)
Virtual Tolerance	5 years or less	151	155.89	2	1.357	.507	
	6-10 years	65	148.45				
	11 years or more	84	142.39				
Virtual Communication	5 years or less	151	155.50	2	1.474	.479	
	6-10 years	65	150.91				
	11 years or more	84	141.20				
SMB Total Points	5 years or less	151	156.34	2	1.845	.398	
	6-10 years	65	150.08				
	11 years or more	84	140.32				

*p<.05; N (300) SMB (Social Media Addiction)

According to Table 6, the social media addiction levels of the referees according to the length of time they have been a referee, it was determined that there was no statistically significant difference in the sub-dimensions of virtual tolerance $\chi^2(sd=2, n=300)=1.357$; $p>0.05$, virtual communication $\chi^2(sd=2, n=300)=1.474$; $p>0.05$ and the total score of social media addiction $\chi^2(sd=2, n=300)=1.845$; $p>0.05$ according to the length of time they have been a referee.

Table 7.

Distribution of Social Media Addiction Scale subscale scores according to referees' educational status

Dependent Variables	Education level	N	Rank Mean	sd	χ^2	p	(I-J)
Virtual Tolerance	Secondary school	27	133.98	3	4.724	.193	
	Associate degree	47	136.23				
	Bachelor' degree	192	152.25				
	Postgraduate	34	173.47				
Virtual Communication	Secondary school	27	135.02	3	5.774	.123	
	Associate degree	47	142.78				
	Bachelor' degree	192	149.00				
	Postgraduate	34	181.94				
SMB Total Points	Secondary school	27	135.61	3	5.601	.133	
	Associate degree	47	137.37				
	Bachelor' degree	192	150.72				
	Postgraduate	34	179.21				

* $p<0.05$; N (300) SMB (Social Media Addiction)

The social media addiction levels of the referees in terms of their educational background according to Table 7, it was determined that there was no statistically significant difference in the sub-dimensions of virtual tolerance $\chi^2(sd=3, n=300)=4.724$; $p>0.05$, virtual communication $\chi^2(sd=3, n=300)=5.774$; $p>0.05$ and the total score of social media addiction $\chi^2(sd=3, n=300)=5.601$, $p>0.05$.

Table 8.

Distribution of scores regarding the relationship between referees' levels of social media dependency and their age and length of refereeing experience

Dependent Variables	Virtual Tolerance	Virtual Communication	SMB Total Points
Age	-.212**	-.192**	-.233**
Refereeing Period	-.064	-.067	-.074

* $p<0.05$; ** $P<0.01$; N (300)

When Table 8 is examined, the relationship between the referees' social media addiction levels and age and refereeing period, a statistically low level negative significant relationship was found between the referees' age and virtual communication ($r= -.192$; $p<0.01$), virtual tolerance ($r= -.212$; $p<0.01$) sub-dimensions and social media addiction total score ($r= -.233$; $p<0.01$), while no statistically significant relationship was found between the refereeing period and virtual communication ($r= -.067$; $p>0.05$), virtual tolerance ($r= -.064$; $p>0.05$) sub-dimensions and social media addiction total score ($r= -.074$; $p>0.05$).

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

The referees' social media addiction levels are averaged in the sub-dimensions of virtual tolerance ($\bar{x}= 2.39$), virtual communication ($\bar{x}= 2.32$) and social media addiction total score ($\bar{x}= 2.36$), so it can be said that the referees' social media addiction levels are not very high.

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that there is no significant difference in the scores of virtual communication and virtual tolerance sub-dimensions and the total score of social media addiction according to the gender of the referees. Although no significant difference was found between the sub-dimensions according to gender, the averages show that the total scores of female referees, virtual communication, virtual tolerance and social media addiction are higher than the averages of male referees. In parallel with these results, when the results of the research conducted by Gül & Diken (2018) on social media addiction are examined, although there is no significant difference in terms of gender ($p>0.05$); They found that women ($\bar{x}=2.72$) had higher mean scores than men ($\bar{x}=2.55$). Therefore, it can be said that women are at greater risk than men in terms of social media addiction. Becan (2018) found that there was no difference between male and female students

when he examined the motivation factors for following the news in his study ($p > .05$). There are many studies in the literature that show that women use the Internet more than men and are addicted to social media (Kraut et al., 1998; Okumuş, 2018; Taşçı&Ekiz, 2018). The reason why women use social media more is because they have developed a tendency to maintain social ties regardless of distance and obstacles (Shaw&Black, 2008). In addition, some studies have found that genetic predisposition also increases women's addiction tendencies (Nakaya, 2015). However, there are also studies in the literature that provide evidence that there is no significant difference between the genders (Aktan, 2018; Baz, 2018; Sağar, 2018; Yılmazsoy&Kahraman, 2017).

Contrary to the findings of our study, Çiftçi (2018) found that the conflict and repetition sub-dimensions of men were higher than women. Similar to this study, Karaman & Kurtoğlu (2009) found that female teacher candidates spent less time than male teacher candidates and that the frequency of their internet use differed according to gender. Esen (2010) found that male adolescents had higher internet addiction compared to women ($p < .01$). According to the t-test results in Çam's study on Educational and General Purpose Facebook Use and Facebook Addiction of Teacher Candidates at Sakarya University Faculty of Education, it was determined that boys used Facebook more than girls (2012). Seferoğlu & Yıldız [(2013) compared internet addiction scores according to gender, but they did not find a significant difference in the result ($p \leq .05$). In the study conducted by Balta & Horzum (2008), when the internet addiction levels of the students in the sample group were examined, it was seen that there was a statistically significant difference before the lessons ($U = 4353.50$, $p < .05$) and after the lessons ($U = 4230.50$, $p < .05$) according to the gender variable. According to the study conducted by Uslu (2021), social media addiction scale scores differ significantly in men and women. The findings reveal that the average social media addiction scores of men are statistically significantly higher than the average scores of women. The underlying reasons why women, in particular, use social media networks more intensively and actively than men; the emergence of alternatives such as online shopping, sharing recipes, promoting and selling products, etc. have made the examination of addiction levels an element of curiosity (Munusturlar & Munusturlar, 2023).

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that there is a significant difference in the scores of virtual communication and virtual tolerance sub-dimensions and the total score of social media addiction in terms of age in the referees' social media addiction levels. When the mean ranks of virtual communication, virtual tolerance and social media addiction total scores are examined, it is found that the referees in the young adulthood period are higher than those in the middle-aged period. In other words, it can be said that the referees in the young adulthood period spend more time on social media, prefer to communicate more through social media, and therefore have a greater tendency towards social media than the referees in the middle-aged period. Çiftçi (2018) found in his study that there is no significant difference between the social media and its sub-dimensions and age groups ($p > .05$). According to Hazar (2011), the rankings change when the grades of the students are taken into consideration. Although the 1st grades spend less time on social media, they are more addicted than the other grades. According to research conducted in 2023, it was determined that the most frequent users of social media applications are the 20-29 age group and university students (We Are Social, 2023). The intense competition environment of university students, the responsibilities of daily life, the rapid change in technology and the effort to adapt to this change, the desire to follow global and local developments, and economic and psychological problems, such factors, distance them from the real world and direct them to the virtual world. This situation leads to deterioration in their relationships and leads to the emergence of individuals addicted to social media (Malikova & Şahin, 2023).

It was determined that there was no significant difference in the scores of virtual communication and virtual tolerance sub-dimensions of referees' social media addiction levels and the total score of social media addiction according to the period of refereeing (Table 6). Therefore, it can be said that the referees' attitudes towards social media are similar. However, even though there is no significant difference, it can be stated that referees who have served for 5 years or less feel more free on social media and spend more time on social media than those who have served for 6-10 years and more than 11 years, based on the mean ranks. When we look at the previous studies that

have addressed the variable of refereeing period, no study has been found and it is possible to state that the current study represents a first in the literature in this respect. Therefore, the results of the study, especially regarding refereeing period, will serve as an example for future studies.

It is seen that the level of education, referees' perceptions of social media addiction, virtual communication and virtual tolerance sub-dimensions and social media addiction total score do not differ (Table 7). It can be said that the level of education graduated does not affect the referees' social media addiction. When the mean ranks are examined, it is seen that referees who graduated from postgraduate programs are more active on social media.

The results in Table 8, which are aimed at determining the relationship between the referees' age, refereeing period and social media addiction levels, show the existence of a low-level negative significant relationship between the referees' age and the virtual tolerance and virtual communication sub-dimensions and the social media addiction total score (Table 8).

The findings of the study are limited to the qualities that can be measured by the Social Media Addiction Scale-Adult Form and the personal information form created by the researcher; the answers given by the 300 referees who constitute the sample; referees with at least 1 year of refereeing experience and 300 referees working in the province of Izmir. In the light of this study, it may be considered to compare the same topic with referees in other branches and with different groups. Federations may recommend that referees create policies that regulate and limit social media use. These policies may include issues such as what content can be shared and when it can be shared. It may be recommended that federations organize alternative activities for their referees that can replace social media. These may be sports events, seminars or workshops.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Statement

This study was approved by the Aydın Adnan Menderes University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee on 09.02.2024 with the decision number 11/12. In addition, the necessary written permission for the scale used in the research was obtained from the scientists who developed the scale

Financial support

This study has not received any contribution and/or support from any organisation or person.

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