Mediating effects of self-esteem in the relationship between attachment styles and social media addiction among university students

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## Sample

Data were collected from 470 university students; but 15 of them were excluded from the main analyses because of incomplete data, leaving 455 individuals (155 males [34%], 300 females [66%]) enrolled in six different universities in Turkey being included in the study. The students from different departments of two foundation universities in Ankara, Turkey, were recruited as participants, and those who volunteered to participate were given additional course credits. In order to provide the students with equal opportunity for extra course credits, students who did not want to participate were given an opportunity to get the same credit either by providing contact information of friends who would like to be participants or by making a five-minute course-relevant presentation. Participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 42 years, with a mean of 21.36 (SD=2.20).

# Abstract

Objective: In the present time, internet and social media have become indispensable parts of our lives. Apart from the advantages of social media, some individuals have begun to suffer from Social Media Addiction (SMA) which is associated with dysfunctions in academic and/or work domains. Although outcomes of SMA have been relatively widely investigated, its predictive factors have not been studied extensively yet. The aim of the present study was to investigate the effects of secure, fearful, and preoccupied attachment styles on SMA and the mediating role of self-esteem in the links between attachment styles and SMA.

Method: Data were collected from 455 university students (300 females, 155 males) who volunteered to complete the survey package that included SMA Scale, Relationships Questionnaire, and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

Results: The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling and moderated multiple regression. The results revealed that preoccupied and fearful attachment had significant positive direct effects on SMA. While the link of preoccupied attachment with SMA was partially mediated, the relationship between secure attachment and SMA was fully mediated by selfesteem. In addition, exploratory analyses revealed that gender moderated the relationship between self-esteem and SMA.

Conclusion: The findings of this study suggest that fearful attachment and preoccupied attachment can be risk factors for SMA among university students. On the other hand, being securely attached and having high self-esteem can be protective factors for SMA.

# Outcome

Preoccupied and fearful attachment were significant predictors of Social Media Addiction (SMA. Moreover, self-esteem partially mediated the relation of preoccupied attachment with SMA. That is to say, individuals who were high in preoccupied and fearful attachment style were more likely to have high scores on SMA. In addition, individuals who had a preoccupied attachment style were likely to have low levels of self-esteem, which, in turn, was positively associated with SMA. Furthermore, the relationship between secure attachment and SMA was fully mediated by self-esteem. It can be argued that secure attachment may be a protective factor for SMA only through its positive effect on self-esteem. Thus, the present study contributes to the literature by revealing one of the key psychological mechanisms (i.e., self-esteem) that would explain the negative link of secure attachment with SMA. the relation between self-esteem and SMA was moderated by gender: Females generally had higher SMA scores than males and females with low self-esteem got significantly higher scores on SMA than women with high selfesteem. On the other hand, males with low and high self-esteem had similar SMA scores. These findings may imply that low self-esteem significantly contributes to females’ over-involvement in social media, which probably serve as a practical and reinforcing alternative to face-to-face communications for women with low self-esteem. (Demircioglu Goncu Kose, 2020, pp.14-15)