



Well-Being and Intolerance of Uncertainty as Predictors of Social Media Addiction

Umay Bilge BALTACI¹ , Özge METİN² 

Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the predictive role of intolerance of uncertainty and general well-being on social media addiction. A correlational research design, one of the quantitative research methods, was employed. The study sample consisted of 519 adults aged between 18 and 52, including 345 women (66.5%) and 174 men (33.5%). Data were collected using the Social Media Addiction Scale, the Short Form of the Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale, the Short Form of the General Well-Being Scale, and a personal information form. The data collection process was conducted online. Data were analyzed using SPSS and JAMOVI software. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression analysis were employed for data analysis. The results of the correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between social media addiction and intolerance of uncertainty, and a significant negative relationship between social media addiction and general well-being. According to the results of the regression analysis, both intolerance of uncertainty and general well-being were found to significantly predict social media addiction.

Keywords: Social media addiction, well-being, intolerance of uncertainty

Sosyal Medya Bağımlılığının Yordayıcıları Olarak İyi Oluş ve Belirsizliğe Tahammülsüzlük

Özet

Bu araştırmanın amacı, belirsizliğe tahammülsüzlüğün ve genel iyi oluşun sosyal medya bağımlılığı üzerindeki yordayıcı rolünü incelemektir. Arařtırmada nicel araştırma desenlerinden ilişkiisel araştırma modeli kullanılmıştır. Arařtırma grubunu yaşları 18-52 arasında deęişmekte olan 345 kadın (%66.5) ve 174 erkek (%33.5) olmak üzere 519 yetişkin oluşturmaktadır. Arařtırmada veri toplama aracı olarak Sosyal Medya Bağımlılığı Ölçeđi, Belirsizliğe Tahammülsüzlük Ölçeđi Kısa Formu, Genel İyi Oluş Ölçeđi Kısa Formu ve kişisel bilgi formu kullanılmıştır. Veri toplama süreci çevrimiçi olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu arařtırmada veriler SPSS ve JAMOVI programı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Verilerin analizinde betimsel istatistikler, Pearson korelasyon analizi ve çoklu doğrusal regresyon analizi kullanılmıştır. Korelasyon analizi sonuçlarına göre, sosyal medya bağımlılığı ile belirsizliğe tahammülsüzlük arasında pozitif yönlü; sosyal medya bağımlılığı ile genel iyi oluş arasında ise negatif yönlü anlamlı ilişkiler bulunmuştur. Regresyon analizi sonuçlarına göre ise, hem belirsizliğe tahammülsüzlük hem de genel iyi oluş deęişkenlerinin sosyal medya bağımlılıđını anlamlı düzeyde yordadıđı belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal medya bağımlılığı, iyi oluş, belirsizliğe tahammülsüzlük

¹ Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Kırşehir Ahi Evran Üniversitesi, Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık, umaybilgee@gmail.com

² Lisansüstü Öğrencisi, Kırşehir Ahi Evran Üniversitesi, Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık, sararozge29@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The internet has become a global communication tool affecting all areas of an individual's life (D'Souza & Sowmya, 2018). Currently, social websites on the internet have become an inseparable part of people's lives (Nikbin et al., 2022). Increasing global use of social websites have brought about significant changes in the daily lives of individuals and their interpersonal relationships (Sharifi Fard et al., 2022). People use social media as a way to communicate with a broad audience, as a way to describe themselves and their adventures, or as a way to follow others from their own homes (Hetz et al., 2015). Additionally, individuals may use social media posts to communicate messages to family and friends to inform others about life events, instead of simultaneous communication methods like telephone conversations (Holte & Ferraro, 2020). Moreover Kepios reported that, according to its 2025 analysis results, the number of social media user identities worldwide reached 5.24 billion (Kemp, 2025a). Additionally, as of January 2025, the number of active social media users in Türkiye was reported to be approximately 58.5 million (Kemp, 2025b). This digital transformation has increased dependence on technology in the daily lives of individuals and redefined forms of social interaction (Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2018). A variety of social media applications on the internet easily attract the attention of young generations at present. They are extremely addictive and negatively impact the lives of people who have immersed themselves in social sharing sites (D'souza, 2019).

When the use of social media sites is stopped, dependent individuals will experience negative psychological and this generally will cause a reoccurrence of the problematic behavior (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). Social media addiction is complex and is shaped by biological, psychological, social and cultural factors (Andreassen, 2015). At the same time, social media addiction may cause negative outcomes like lack of sleep, back pain and eye fatigue, feelings of envy, deep deficiencies in relationships and a tendency toward seeking approval (Priyadarshini et al., 2020). Social media addiction was shown to be predicted by certain biopsychosocial traits with tendency toward negative emotional experiences emerging as a result of weak mental health or unsatisfactory psychosocial outcomes (Meynadier et al., 2025). Individuals with high intolerance of uncertainty orient toward social media use in their search for instantaneous feedback and certainty, and this situation was stated to reinforce problematic use over time (Sun et al., 2022). Research revealed that individuals threatened by uncertainty have a tendency to orient toward safe and controllable fields (Buhr & Dugas, 2002). In this context, social media may assist these individuals in meeting their needs in this area.

Intolerance of uncertainty is defined as a tendency to negatively interpret uncertainty and give negative responses to it (Morriss et al., 2024). Intolerance of uncertainty is defined as a temperamental deficiency in coping with the distress of uncertainty (Ye et al., 2025). Intolerance of uncertainty is a

transdiagnostic factor in psychopathology in general (Sandhu et al., 2023). Intolerance of uncertainty involves acceptance of a regulatory mechanism for arousal experienced when there is a discrepancy between the perceived threat and the individual's failure to achieve their goals (Sahib et al., 2023). Individuals without tolerance of uncertainty find uncertainty stressful and sad, believe that uncertainty is negative and must be avoided, and have difficulty functioning in uncertain situations (Buhr & Dugas, 2006). Intolerance of uncertainty is positively and significantly associated with beliefs about being unable to control negative and positive feelings (Becerra et al., 2023).

Increasing intolerance of uncertainty or distress felt when faced with situations with unknown outcomes appears to have a variety of negative impacts on mental health (Carlson et al., 2025). Individuals with intolerance of uncertainty in stressful situations perceived as not being enjoyable were observed to avoid situations involving intolerance of uncertainty (Dugas, 2004). Individuals with high intolerance of uncertainty may use social media as an avoidance mechanism and this may cause the development of addiction (Rozgonjuk et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2022).

Another factor causing problematic social media use is the individual having low levels of well-being. Falls occurring in well-being were shown to overlap with increases in problematic social media use (Mader et al., 2025). Well-being is defined as a person's cognitive and emotional assessments related to their life. These assessments involve emotional responses to events, in addition to cognitive judgements related to satisfaction and fulfillment (Diener et al., 2001). Additionally, well-being is a person's hedonic experience of feeling good and their eudaimonic experience of feelings of satisfaction and purpose (Sonnentag, 2015). Well-being encompasses not just positive emotions but elements like meaning, deep connection and success (Seligman, 2011). For individuals to have high well-being, several experiences are required like having quality communication and closeness with others, sustaining activities, searching for true learning, and feeling and perceiving the truth (Al-Saifi & Al-Barbary, 2023). Well-being is related to economic level in a sense. Though increased income may increase well-being to a certain threshold, it has a reducing effect after this (Diener & Oishi, 2000). In short, there is a need for a range of psychological, social, economic and environmental power ensuring resources and contexts to induce and sustain well-being in all levels of society (La Placa et al., 2013). Having high well-being may protect individuals from social media addiction (Yang et al., 2021, Webster, 2022).

When the relevant literature is evaluated, the aim of this research is to investigate the predictive roles of intolerance of uncertainty and well-being on social media addiction. With this aim, the answers to the following questions were sought:

Are there significant correlations between social media addiction, intolerance of uncertainty and well-being?

Do intolerance of uncertainty and well-being predict social media addiction at significant level?

METHOD

Research Model

This research used the correlational research model from the quantitative research patterns. The relational research model is a research design used to measure the relationships between two or more variables (Creswell, 2012).

Research Group

The research group comprised volunteer individuals aged 18 years or older. The G*Power program, a power analysis program, was used when determining the research group (Faul et al., 2009). When performing analysis with the G*Power program, the criteria of $\alpha = .02$, $1-\beta = .95$, and $f^2 = .02$ were accepted and the research group was determined to require minimum 485 people. As there may be outlier values and participants with missing data, data were collected from 524 participants. Five participants with outlier values were removed from the dataset. The research group comprised 519 adults, including 345 women (66.5%) and 174 men (33.5%), with ages from 18 to 52 years ($\bar{X} :22.18$, $sd:4.31$).

Data Collection Tools

Personal Information Form

This was created by the researchers to obtain information about the age and sex of the individual.

Scales of General Well-Being – Short Form (SGWB)

SGWB was developed by Longo et al. (2018) and adapted to Turkish culture by Kalafatoğlu and Çelik (2020). After Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), the goodness of fit indexes showed the single-factor structure of the scale was confirmed ($\chi^2/df=2.29$, $CFI=.93$, $GFI=.90$, $TLI=.91$, $RMR= .05$, $RMSEA=.08$). The Cronbach alpha value was identified as .90. The item-total correlations for the scale varied from .41 to .68. The two half-test reliability analysis found the Spearman Brown correlation coefficient was .83, while the Guttman split-half correlation coefficient was .82. In the present study SGWB-12's Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .91.

Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS)

With the aim of measuring the social media addiction levels in the research, the SMAS developed by Çömlekçi and Başol (2019) was used. The scale is the "functional disorder" subscale of the Internet Addiction Scale developed by Günüş (2009) adapted for the social media context. The scale has 5-point Likert rating (1=never, 5=all the time) and comprises 7 items. As a result of CFA, the item factor loads

varied from .52 to .86 and all loads were significant ($t > 1.96$). The model fit indexes had acceptable levels ($\chi^2/sd = 3.88$; RMSEA = .078; NFI = .96; NNFI = .95; CFI = .96; GFI = .95; AGFI = .89). The Cronbach Alpha was calculated as .85, and it was observed to be a valid and reliable scale tool. In the present study, SMAS's Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .83.

Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale – Short Form (IUS-12)

The IUS-12 was developed by Carleton et al. (2007). Adaptation to Turkish was performed by Sarıçam et al. (2014). The IUS-12 has 5-point Likert rating and comprises 12 items. The construct validity of the IUS-12 was found to be at sufficient levels according to CFA results ($\chi^2= 147.20$, $sd= 48$, RMSEA=.073, CFI=.95, IFI=.95, GFI=.94, SRMR=.046). The factor loads of the scale were ranked from .55 to.87 and Cronbach alpha internal consistency for the whole scale was identified as .88. Test-repeat test correlation coefficient was found to be .74 (Sarıçam et al., 2014). In the present study, IUS-12's Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .89.

Data Collection Process

Ethical approval for the research was obtained prior to the commencement of data collection procedures. Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Social and Human Sciences Board of Kırşehir Ahi Evran University (Decision Date: 12/15/2024; Decision No: 2024/05/22). Data were collected online using a Google Form prepared by the researchers. Participants completed the form voluntarily. Informed consent was obtained from all participants during the data collection process. The whole survey lasted mean 10 minutes.

Data Analysis

The data in this research was analyzed using the SPSS and Jamovi program. Analysis of data used descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis and multiple linear regression.

RESULTS

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, Kurtosis and Cronbach Alpha Values for Variables

Variables	\bar{X}	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	α
SMAS	18.53	5.40	-.252	-.265	.83
SGWB	48.66	8.83	-.367	.262	.91
IUS	41.08	9.06	-.393	.475	.89

Note:SMAS: Social Media Addiction Scale, SGWB: Scales of General Well-Being, IUS: Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis and Cronbach alpha values for the variables. Before beginning data analysis, firstly the normal distribution assumption and outlier values were investigated. To detect outlier values, standardized Z points were used and observations outside the ± 3 limit were accepted as outlier values (Field, 2018). In line with this, 5 outlier values identified in the

data set were removed from the analysis. This process was completed with the aim of increasing the validity and reliability of the analysis results. When the descriptive statistics related to the variables included in the research are examined, mean and standard deviation values were $\bar{X} = 18.53$ and $SD = 5.40$ for the SMAS, $\bar{X} = 48.66$ and $SS = 8.83$ for SGWB and $\bar{X} = 41.08$ and $SS = 9.06$ for the IUS. The skewness and kurtosis values for the variables were in the ± 1 interval so data had normal distribution. The skewness and kurtosis values were $-.252$ and $-.265$ for the SMAS, $-.367$ and $.262$ for the SGWB and $-.393$ and $.475$ for the IUS, respectively. The internal consistency coefficients for the scales were at high levels. The Cronbach α coefficients were $.83$ for the SMAS, $.91$ for the SGWB and $.89$ for the IUS. These values show the scales ensured reliable measurements in the research sample.

Table 2. Correlations between Variables

Variables	SMAS	SGWB	IUS
SMAS		-.201**	.304**
SGWB			-.110*
IUS			

Note: ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, SMAS: Social Media Addiction Scale, SGWB: Scales of General Well-Being, IUS: Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale

Table 2 gives the correlation results for the variables. When the correlations between variables are examined, a negative and significant correlation was observed between the SMAS and SGWB ($r = -0.201$, $p < .01$). There was a positive and significant correlation between SMAS and IUS ($r = .304$, $p < .01$).

Table 3. Regression analysis results related to prediction of social media addiction

Model	B	SE	β	t	p	Tolerance	VIF
Fixed	16.603	1.698		9.776	.000		
SGWB	-.104	.025	-.170	-4.087	.000***	.988	1.012
IUS	.170	.025	.285	6.866	.000***	.988	1.012
R: .347 R ² : .121 SR ² : .117 F(2-516) = 35.434 DW:2.155, $p < .001$							

Note: *** $p < .001$, SGWB: Scales of General Well-Being, IUS: Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale

As seen in Table 3, the prediction of social media addiction was investigated with linear regression analysis. Statistics related to the model obtained as a result of the analysis showed the model was significant ($F(2-516) = 35.434$, $p < .001$). The R value was $.347$, while the R² value was $.121$. These values show the SGWB and IUS variables together explained 12.1% of the total variance of the dependent variable. The corrected R² value (SR²) was $.117$.

The Durbin-Watson coefficient was 2.155; as these values increase, it shows there is no autocorrelation. When the regression coefficients are examined, the SGWB variable was observed to be a negative and significant predictor ($\beta = -0.170$, $p < .001$). Additionally, the IUS variable was a positive and significant predictor ($\beta = .285$, $p < .001$). The VIF and tolerance values related to the SGWB and IUS variables revealed there was no multiple linear connection problem between the variables (VIF: 1, tolerance: .99).

DISCUSSION

In this research, a significant positive correlation was found between social media addiction with intolerance of uncertainty and intolerance of uncertainty was a significant predictor of social media addiction. The results of this research support the relevant literature. For example, a similar study completed with university students identified a significant positive correlation between social media addiction and intolerance of uncertainty, and intolerance of uncertainty was concluded to be a significant predictor of social media addiction (Zhang et al., 2022). A study during the pandemic (Sun et al., 2022) and another study with adults concluded with similar results (Reed & Haas, 2023).

Individuals who cannot tolerate uncertainty may find several situations unbearable as they cause increasing distress and worry due to the individual's tendency to have negative reactions to uncertainty and there being a certain amount of uncertainty present in daily life (Buhr & Dugas, 2006). To avoid this situation, seen as unbearable, the use of smart phones with the aim of confronting uncertainty may be explained from the perspective of the compensatory internet use theory (Vujić et al., 2023). Within this scope, the increased tolerance individuals have for uncertain situations may be evaluated as a protective factor against addiction (Wojtaszek & Saules, 2024).

In this research, a negative correlation was found between well-being and social media addiction, and well-being was observed to be a significant negative predictor of social media addiction. A study performing a systematic investigation of social media addiction and well-being identified a negative correlation with small effect size between social media addiction and well-being (Duradoni et al., 2020). In some studies, a negative correlation was identified between social media addiction and well-being (Aslan & Tolan, 2022; Erdemir & Ayas, 2023; Hatamleh & Aissani, 2024; Kılıç et al., 2024). Additionally, there are studies that found well-being was a negative and significant predictor of social media addiction (Balcı et al., 2020). There is research available showing sub-elements of well-being predicted internet addiction (Agbaria & Bdier, 2021; Koç, 2017). In a study, individuals with mobile telephone addiction were identified to have lower well-being by a significant level compared to individuals without addiction (Morse et al., 2015). Another study concluded that indicators of low well-being increased game addiction (Myrseth et al., 2017).

Social media sites allow individuals to present themselves in a positive way and this may improve mood because this is an enjoyable experience. This can lead to positive experiences that potentially enhance and facilitate the learning experiences that drive the development of CNS addiction (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). An individual with high well-being may focus on a plan to meet their need for recognition, rather than using Instagram as a short-term alternative to meet needs. Students with high psychological well-being are able to manage their need for entertainment and this ability is believed to prevent their

dependence on Instagram (Ponnusamy et al., 2020). For social media addiction, low well-being may be evaluated as a risk factor (Peris et al., 2020). Strengthening psychological well-being appears to be an important potential component requiring attention in social media addiction interventions targeting adults (Mitropoulou et al., 2022).

There are a range of limitations to this research. Firstly, as this research was completed with a cross-sectional approach, though correlations were identified between variables, causative inferences cannot be made. This cross-sectional approach, which does not allow investigation of variations over time of dynamic variables like social media addiction, well-being and intolerance of uncertainty, requires support from longitudinal studies. From this perspective, future research may be completed with the longitudinal approach. Additionally, as data were collected based on self-report, there is a probability of individual response errors like social approval bias. This research was performed with adults. Similar research may be performed with different age groups like children, adolescents or elderly individuals.

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Informed Consent: Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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