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Social Media Fatigue Scale: Adaptation to Turkish culture, validity and reliability study

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Highlights

- The Turkish version of SMFS has acceptable psychometric properties regarding internal consistency, concurrent validity, and discriminant validity.
- The Turkish version of SMFS can be considered a valid and reliable measurement tool for assessing social media fatigue in future research.
- The Turkish version of SMFS is significantly positively correlated with privacy concerns and negatively correlated with SNS continuance intention.

Abstract

In the present study, the Social Media Fatigue Scale (SMFS) developed by Zhang et al. (2021) was adapted to Turkish culture, and the scale's psychometric properties were examined. A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 409 Turkish teacher candidates (Mage= 21.75 years, 48.7% female). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to confirm whether the original factor structure of the SMFS was validated in the Turkish version. Then, the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio method was used to examine the discriminant validity of the SMFS. In addition, tests of internal consistency, concurrent validity with external criterion measures, and gender differences were conducted. Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP) version 0.18.3 was used for CFA, HTMT ratio, and internal consistency analyses; IBM SPSS version 25.0 was used for the rest of the analyses. The Turkish version of SMFS consists of 15 items and three sub-dimensions, including cognitive experiences (5 items), behavioral experiences (5 items), and emotional experiences (5 items). This result indicated that the original three-dimensional structure was harmonized with Turkish culture. The three-factor structure of the Turkish version of SMFS has satisfactory psychometric properties in both internal and external validity. In addition, the Turkish version of SMFS was found to be valid for measuring social media fatigue. The Turkish version of SMFS has acceptable psychometric properties regarding internal consistency, concurrent validity, and discriminant validity. Accordingly, it can be considered a valid and reliable measurement tool for assessing social media fatigue in future research. The Turkish version of SMFS provides a general framework for comparative analysis of results from different studies.

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1. Introduction

The number and importance of social media platforms have increased rapidly during the last decade due to the widespread use of the internet and mobile devices. According to the Digital 2024 Global Overview Report, 62% of the world's population (5 billion people) are social media users, while this rate is 67% in Türkiye (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure [MoTI], 2024). Social media is widely praised for enriching user interactions, helping individuals maintain relationships, and managing online impressions (Sheng et al., 2023). However, some problems have emerged due to overuse of social media (Gan et al., 2023). As a result of excessive and compulsive use, social media fatigue (SMF) may occur in social media users (Ravindran et al., 2014). SMF is a condition in which social media users experience mental fatigue after experiencing various technological, informational, and communicative overloads through participation and interaction on social media platforms (Dhir et al., 2018). As a concept, SMF refers to adverse emotional reactions (e.g., fatigue, exhaustion, burnout, frustration, etc.) to activities on social networking sites (Zheng & Ling, 2021). Individuals' exposure to too much information overload by social media services is shown as a risk factor for the emergence of SMF (Lo, 2019). Exposure to different stimulus intensities from many social media services predisposes individuals active in many social media services to experience SMF (Ravindran et al., 2014). It is seen that systematic analyses have been conducted to establish a general framework identifying the factors related to SMF and those that determine its occurrence. Sunil et al. (2022), a comprehensive analysis of recent articles, revealed that SMF was grouped around four framework factors: cognitive, personal and personality, environmental, and social factors. In a systematic review of 40 articles, Zheng and Lin (2021) categorized the drivers of SMF into three main categories. These are environmental-level drivers (media and message features), individual-level drivers (personal attributes, psychological stressors, and behavioral factors), and relational-level drivers. Based on these studies, it can be concluded that the antecedents of SMF are multidimensional and diverse.

The term SMF describes a range of negative emotional reactions to communication, such as indifference, exhaustion, fatigue, and frustration, resulting from activities on social networking platforms (Zheng & Ling, 2021). In recent studies, SMF is often synonymously with social media burnout (Ravindran et al., 2014). Key precursors of SMF include system overload, information overload, and social overload (Fu et al., 2020; Luqman et al., 2017; Yao & Cao, 2017; Zhang et al., 2021). Information overload on social media is a stressor in instant messaging apps, leading to SMF (Dhir et al., 2018). People often feel compelled to be more active on social media to gain acceptance on these platforms. Being active requires them to stay constantly vigilant and respond to notifications (Cao et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2019). Social overload refers to the negative emotions users experience when they feel pressured to keep up with their social media friends' demands and maintain relationships (Cao et al., 2020). SMF occurs when users engage in excessive social interactions and feel overwhelmed by meeting their friends' requests on social media (Cao & Sun, 2018). Excessive exposure to other users' requests on social networking sites has been reported to lead to feeling overwhelmed and fatigued (Harren et al., 2021; Shi et al., 2020). When users perceive that the functions and features provided by social media platforms are overly complex and beyond their needs, this is termed system feature overload (Zheng & Ling, 2021). The root causes of SMF have primarily been explored through the lens of the overload framework (Shin & Shin, 2016). One potential source of overload is social media addiction (Harren et al., 2021; Liu & Ma, 2020). Individuals who use social media excessively may face overwhelming posts, comments, and interaction demands, which can strain their cognitive processing abilities and lead to information overload. Research supports this view, showing that constant connectivity through smartphone-based social networks is linked to information overload, contributing to SMF (Zhang et al., 2016). Moreover, research has demonstrated a positive correlation between social media addiction and SMF (Dhir et al., 2018; Harren et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2021; Liu & Ma, 2020; Luqman et al., 2017). Liu and Ma (2020) found that problematic social media usage significantly contributes to SMF. It has also been highlighted that SMF can result in negative psychological outcomes, such as depression and anxiety, for users and may lead to a potential loss of users for social media platforms (Dhir et al., 2018; Liu & Ma, 2020; Zheng & Ling, 2021). Empirical research has consistently shown that frequent and intensive social media use increases the likelihood of experiencing SMF (Han, 2018; Lin et al., 2021; Luqman et al., 2017).

In the past decade, numerous studies have focused on measuring SMF. The Social Media Fatigue Scale, developed by Lee et al. (2014) for Facebook users, evaluates dimensions such as depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, risk of privacy exposure, and lack of personal accomplishment. This scale, specifically designed for Facebook, includes three items to measure social media fatigue (e.g., "I am frequently overwhelmed by the

amount of information available on FB") (Dhir et al., 2018). Another SMF scale by Maier et al. (2012) includes four constructs—"Social Overload, Satisfaction, Emotional Exhaustion, and Discontinuous Usage Intention"—also tailored to Facebook. Despite the central role of Facebook in these studies, social media landscapes are much broader, encompassing platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, TikTok, WeChat, and X. In Türkiye, Instagram is the most widely used platform, followed by TikTok (MoTI, 2024). Given this diversity, adapting the Social Media Fatigue Scale (SMFS) developed by Zhang et al. (2021) to Turkish culture was considered appropriate. Unlike previous scales, the SMFS evaluates social media fatigue in a more general and multidimensional way, without focusing on any specific platform. It is based on the Limited Capacity Model (LCM) (Zhang et al., 2021), which posits that humans are information processors who need cognitive resources to store, encode, and retrieve the information they receive (Lang, 2006).

The SMFS comprises three sub-dimensions (emotional, behavioral, and cognitive) and 15 items. The cognitive dimension is related to the fact that immersion in information consumes significant mental resources, leading to overload. If individuals remain in this state for an extended period, they may experience feelings of fatigue. The behavioral dimension explains that mental resources are insufficient for memory retrieval due to cognitive overload, leading to memory loss. Finally, the emotional dimension states that mental resources will also be insufficient to control mood due to information overload. As a result, users experiencing social media fatigue will experience negative emotions (Zhang et al., 2021). This study aims to adapt the Social Media Fatigue Scale (SMFS) developed by Zhang et al. (2021) to Turkish culture and evaluate its psychometric properties. Previous research has explored various measures of social media fatigue and burnout (Bright et al., 2015; Dhir et al., 2018; Han, 2018; Lee et al., 2014; Maier et al., 2012). Notably, Han's (2018) Social Media Burnout Scale has already been adapted to Turkish culture (Gündoğan, 2022; Üztemur & Dinç, 2022). The scale with four constructs related to social media fatigue, developed by Maier et al. (2012), was adapted to Turkish culture by Ünal (2019). Additionally, a Polish version of Zhang et al.'s (2021) Social Media Fatigue Scale (SMFS) was created by establishing its latent structure (Świątek et al., 2021). However, to the best of our knowledge, no study has evaluated the Turkish version of the SMFS developed by Zhang et al. (2021). Therefore, this study seeks to adapt the SMFS to Turkish culture, addressing this gap in the literature and providing a valuable tool for researchers to measure social media fatigue among users in Türkiye.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and Recruitment Procedures

The study was conducted on 409 pre-service teachers (48.7% women) studying at different universities in Türkiye. A convenience sampling technique was used to select the participants. Data was collected online via social networking sites (i.e., WhatsApp, Facebook) using Google Forms. All participants provided e-informed consent before taking the online survey (i.e., by pressing an icon indicating that they agreed to participate) and responded anonymously. There is no missing data, as all survey questions were made mandatory. No incentives were given to the participants. The instructions emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers and that each answer reflected the participant's views and beliefs. This research was approved by the Gaziantep University Ethics Committee's Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee's decision, Ethics Number: 517263, dated 05/08/2024. The data were collected in August 2024 after ethical approval was obtained. Information about the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' characteristics (N = 409)

	Mean or n	SD or %
Age	21.75	2.25
Gender		
Male	210	51.3%
Female	199	48.7%
Number of social media friends	333.03	176.95
Time on social media use (hours/day)	3.37	1.59

Note. SD = standard deviation

As seen in Table 1, the participants' mean age was M = 21.75 and SD = 2.25 (range = 18-26 years). The participants' mean daily social media usage time was M = 3.37 and SD = 1.59 (range = 1-8 hours/day). The participants' mean number of social media friends is M = 333 and SD = 176.95 (range = 28-800 friends).

2.2. Scale Adaptation Process

The SMFS developed by Zhang et al. (2021), which was adapted to Turkish culture, consists of three sub-dimensions (Cognitive Experiences [5 items], Behavioral Experiences [5 items], Emotional Experiences [5 items]) and 15 items (See Appendix Table 1). The scale's adaptation process was carried out per the principles proposed by Hambleton and Patsula (1999).

Firstly, permission to adapt the scale to Turkish culture was obtained from the scale owner via e-mail. Then, ethical approval was obtained from the Gaziantep University Social Sciences Ethics Committee. After the necessary permissions were obtained, the translation and language validity were tested. For the translation of the scale into Turkish, the English version was sent to three independent linguists who are proficient in both languages and knowledgeable in the field. The Turkish version of the scale was then finalized by adopting the translations that best reflected the true meaning of each item, as determined by a fourth language expert. The original seven-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 [strongly disagree] to 7 [strongly agree]) was retained. Lastly, the scale's construct validity, criterion validity, and reliability were analyzed over 409 participants.

2.3. Measures

Two external criterion measures, which will be introduced in the following section, were used to examine the SMFS's concurrent validity.

2.3.1. Social Network Sites Continuance Intention Scale

The Social Network Sites (SNS) Continuance Intention Scale, developed by Han (2014, 2018), consists of four items rated on a 7-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Higher scores on the scale indicate a stronger intention to continue using SNS. The current study assessed the internal consistency reliability, with Cronbach's α and McDonald's ω coefficients reported as 0.77 and 0.78, respectively.

2.3.2. Privacy Concern Scale

The 3-item Privacy Concern Scale (Bright et al., 2015) measured the participants' privacy concern levels. High scores on the scale represent a high level of privacy concern. In the present study, Cronbach's α and McDonald's ω internal consistency coefficients were 0.60 and 0.61, respectively.

2.4. Data Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to verify whether the original factor structure of the Social Media Fatigue Scale (SMFS) was maintained in the Turkish version. Following this, the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio method was employed to assess the discriminant validity of the SMFS. Additionally, tests for internal consistency, concurrent validity with external criterion measures, and gender differences were conducted. The CFA, HTMT ratio, and internal consistency analyses were carried out using Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP) version 0.18.3, while IBM SPSS version 25.0 was utilized for the rest of the analyses.

The SMFS with all its sub-dimensions was analyzed for internal consistency using Cronbach's α and McDonald's ω. According to George and Mallery (2019), values between $0.60 \leq \alpha$ and $\omega < 0.80$ in Cronbach's α or McDonald's ω indicate acceptable internal consistency. The following fit indices calculated from CFA were used to describe whether the factor structure of the original scale was confirmed: Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) > 0.9, comparative fit index (CFI) > 0.9, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) < 0.08, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) < 0.08 (Byrne, 2016). The factor loadings derived from the CFA for the SMFS were then used for the HTMT method, and discriminant validity is supported when an HTMT ratio is lower than 0.85 (Kline, 2023). The SMFS, with all its sub-dimensions, was examined for concurrent validity with relevant measures (i.e., the external criterion measures of the SNS Continuance Intention Scale and Privacy Concern Scale). Pearson correlations (r) were used for concurrent validity. According to Cohen (1998), Pearson correlation coefficients $r < 0.30$ indicate that low correlations are expected, while coefficients $r > 0.30$ indicate that moderate or more vigorous correlations are expected. Lastly, the entire SMFS with its sub-dimensions were examined to see if their scores significantly differed in gender groups (i.e., female vs. male). Independent samples t-test was used to compare the differences between males and females.

3. Results

Table 2 presents the CFA results for the SMFS. The three-factor structure of the SMFS was confirmed by the acceptable fit obtained from the CFA fit indices obtained from the sample (i.e., N = 409). The HTMT analysis was applied for discriminant validity. Because the HTMT ratio of factor loadings was less than 0.85, discriminant validity was supported. In addition, the internal consistency of the entire SMFS and all sub-dimensions was calculated and presented in Table 2. The entire SMFS and its sub-dimensions were found to be reliable.

Table 2. Scale properties of the Social Media Fatigue Scale (SMFS)

	SMFS	Cognitive Experiences	Behavioral Experiences	Emotional Experiences
Cronbach's α	.82	.61	.73	.67
McDonald's ω	.83	.62	.73	.68
CFA				
χ^2 (df)	168.81 (83)	--	--	--
p-value	< .001	--	--	--
CFI	.93	--	--	--
TLI	.91	--	--	--
RMSEA	.05	--	--	--
SRMR	.04	--	--	--
HTMT method				
Cognitive Experiences	--	1.00		
Behavioral Experiences	--	.78	1.00	
Emotional Experiences	--	.78	.60	1.00

Note. CFA=confirmatory factor analysis; CFI=comparative fit index; TLI=Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA=root mean square error of approximation; SRMR=standardized root mean square residual; HTMT= heterotrait-monotrait ratio.

Table 3 presents the correlations between the entire SMFS, its sub-dimensions, the SNS Continuance Intention Scale, and the Privacy Concern Scale. The cognitive and behavioral experiences of all SMFS positively correlate with privacy concerns. Emotional experiences and privacy concerns have a low positive correlation. However, a moderate negative correlation exists between the entire SMFS, behavioral experiences, and SNS continuance intention. Furthermore, a low negative correlation exists between cognitive experiences, emotional experiences, and SNS continuance intention.

Table 3. Concurrent validity of the SMFS

	Pearson correlation with an external criterion measure	
	Privacy concern	**SNS continuance intention**
SMFS	.40	-.33
Cognitive Experiences	.43	-.27
Behavioral Experiences	.31	-.32
Emotional Experiences	.24	-.19

Note. All p <. 01, SNS = social network sites

Table 4 presents the differentiation of SMFS and its sub-dimensions according to gender. The mean scores obtained from SMFS and its sub-dimensions do not differ statistically significantly between genders (p > .05). This finding indicates that the social media fatigue levels of male and female participants are similar.

Table 4. Comparing the SMFS between gender

	Mean (SD) in gender		t (p)
	Male (n =210)	Female (n = 199)	
SMFS	3.64 (.92)	3.65 (.79)	-.07 (.94)
Cognitive Experiences	4.11 (.99)	4.16 (.92)	-.45 (.66)
Behavioral Experiences	2.93 (1.07)	3.05 (.93)	-1.16 (.25)
Emotional Experiences	3.11 (1.09)	2.97 (.99)	1.34 (.18)

Note. SD = Standard Deviation

4. Discussion

The present study conducted a validity and reliability examination of the Turkish version of SMFS. The Turkish version of SMFS consists of 15 items and three sub-dimensions, including cognitive experiences (5 items), behavioral experiences (5 items), and emotional experiences (5 items). This result indicated that the

original three-dimensional structure was harmonized with Turkish culture (See Appendix Table 2). The three-factor structure of the Turkish version of SMFS has satisfactory psychometric properties in both internal and external validity. In addition, the Turkish version of SMFS was found to be valid for measuring social media fatigue.

The overall Social Media Fatigue Scale (SMFS) and its various dimensions were positively correlated with privacy concerns, supporting findings from previous research. For instance, Bright et al. (2015) identified a positive relationship between privacy concerns and social media fatigue, noting that participants with more significant privacy concerns experienced higher levels of SMF. Similarly, Fan et al. (2021) reported that privacy concerns positively predicted SMF, with a coefficient of $\beta = 0.19$ ($p < .01$).

On the other hand, the SMFS and all its dimensions were negatively correlated to continue SNS. This relationship indicates that as participants' social media fatigue increases, their SNS continuance intentions will decrease. It has been observed that users' excessive social, hedonic, and cognitive use of social media causes social media fatigue, which leads to the intention to quit or reduce social media use (Luqman et al., 2017). Research has shown a positive relationship between SMF and excessive social media use (Lian et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2020). The literature underlines that the factors associated with social media fatigue are multifaceted; environmental (media features and message features) and incredibly individual (personal attributes, psychological stressors, as well as attitudes and behaviors) level factors play an essential role in directing social media fatigue (Zheng & Ling, 2021).

In addition, it was examined whether the construct obtained from the Turkish version of SMFS showed a significant difference according to gender. There was no significant difference between the groups according to gender in the SMFS and its sub-dimensions. In the literature, studies are showing that social media fatigue is positively correlated with gender (Al-Shatti et al., 2022); women are more likely than men to become emotionally exhausted due to social media overload, and men are more likely than women to engage in information withholding behavior in case of emotional exhaustion (Wu & Zheng, 2023). In addition, it has been observed that social media fatigue positively affects the intention to discontinue use, which is significantly stronger among female users (Gan et al., 2023).

As in every research, this research also has limitations. Firstly, Cronbach's α and McDonald's ω internal consistency coefficients were examined in the reliability calculations of the Turkish version of SMFS. Therefore, test-retest reliability assessments should be conducted to determine the short and long-term consistency of the Turkish version of SMFS. Second, the scale was administered to pre-service teachers aged between 18-26 years. The reliability and validity values of the scale can be examined for different ages and groups (e.g., adolescents, middle adults, and seniors).

As a result, the Turkish version of SMFS has acceptable psychometric properties regarding internal consistency, concurrent validity, and discriminant validity. Accordingly, it can be considered a valid and reliable measurement tool for assessing social media fatigue in future research. The Turkish version of SMFS provides a general framework that can be used for comparative analysis of results from different studies.

Statement of Researchers

Researchers' contribution rate statement:

Conceptualization: AG, C-WF, YI, I-HC; Data curation: AG, C-WF; Formal analysis: AG, C-WF, YI, I-HC; Investigation: AG, C-WF, YI; Methodology: AG, C-WF, YI, I-HC; Resources: AG, YI; Software: AG, C-WF, YI, I-HC; Supervision: AG, C-WF; Validation: AG, C-WF, YI, I-HC; Visualization: AG, C-WF, YI, I-HC; Writing- original draft: AG, C-WF, YI, I-HC; Writing- editing & review: AG, C-WF, YI, I-HC.

Conflict statement:

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement:

The data supporting this study's findings are available on request from the corresponding author. However, the data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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Ethical Considerations:

"All procedures followed were by the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation (institutional and national) and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2000. Informed consent was obtained from all participants for being included in the study." This research was approved by the Gaziantep University Ethics Committee's Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee's decision, Ethics Number 517263, dated 05/08/2024.

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