JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
E-ISSN: 2980-0676

RESEARCH ARTICLE

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15699020

Journal of Social and Educational Research, 2025, 4(1), 97-105

Serial Mediating Role of Mindfulness and Difficulty in Emotion Regulation between Social Media Addiction and Subjective Well-Being

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine whether mindfulness and emotion regulation difficulties have a mediating role in the relationship between adolescents' subjective well-being and social media addiction levels. Relational screening model was used in the research. Students from two public high schools participated in the research. A total of 318 high school students, 88 boys and 230 girls, aged 13-18, took part in the study. Subjective Well-Being Scale for Adolescents, Mindfulness Scale-Adolescent Form, Emotion Regulation Difficulty Scale-8, Social Media Addiction Scale for Adolescents were used as data collection tools. Structural equation modeling, two-stage SEM and bootstrapping were performed to determine the mediating role of mindfulness and emotion regulation difficulties in the relationship between subjective well-being and social media addiction levels. In the findings obtained from the research, it was found that the indirect effect of mindfulness and emotional regulation between subjective well-being and social media addiction was significant. In other words, the research reveals that mindfulness and difficulty in emotion regulation have a full mediating role between social media addiction and subjective well-being. As a result, the increase in adolescents' social media addiction reduces their mindfulness, which in turn reduces their subjective well-being levels. On the other hand, the increase in adolescents' social social media addiction increases their difficulty in regulating their emotions, which reduces their subjective well-being levels.

Keywords: Mindfulness, social media addiction, well-being, difficult in emotion regulation

INTRODUCTION

The concept of happiness has been discussed in many studies for many years. Starting from Aristotle until today, the subject of how people become happy has always aroused curiosity (Eryılmaz, 2009). In psychology, happiness has been tried to be explained with the concept of subjective well-being (Atak & Eryılmaz, 2011). Deiner (2001) defines subjective well-being as the subjective state of life satisfaction and positive mental health consisting of cognitive and emotional elements (Eryılmaz, 2009). Subjective well-being consists of three different dimensions: life satisfaction, positive emotions, and negative emotions (Atak & Eryılmaz, 2011). Negative emotions include feelings such as hatred, disappointment, anger, and sadness; positive emotions express emotions such as interest, excitement, and joy (Deiner, 2001). Life satisfaction defines the cognitive aspect of subjective well-being (Eryılmaz, 2009). In order to have a lasting state of well-being, a person must have some skills, and one of the tools used to maintain well-being is mindfulness (Cenkseven Önder, 2015; Özen, 2010). Upon examination of the studies, it was determined that mindfulness had a positive correlation with positive emotions and life satisfaction, as well as a negative correlation with negative emotions (Deniz et al., 2017). Other studies have found that well-being and mindfulness are highly correlated (Baer et al., 2008; Brown & Ryan, 2003). Colle et al. (2010) implemented a mindfulness-based stress reduction program that yielded substantial enhancements in the well-being of participants. Similarly, with the mindfulness-based cognitive therapy application by Collard et al. (2008), their life satisfaction and mindfulness increased. A significant relationship was found between mindfulness and subjective well-being.

The concept of mindfulness has its roots in Buddhism. It is based on meditation practices that enable us to question ourselves and how we perceive the universe and our place in it (Demir & Gündoğan, 2018). The concept of mindfulness is the individual's attention to what is happening at that moment, what is happening within himself and the outside

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Received : 9 January 2025
Accepted : 6 March 2025
Online Published : 20 June 2025

2025 JSER, Available online at https://www.journalser.com

Cite this article as: Akyıl, Y., Kökçe, E., Yavuz, İ. (2025). Serial mediating role of mindfulness and difficulty in emotion regulation between social media addiction and subjective well-being. *Journal of Social and Educational Research, 4*(1), 97-105. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15699020

world by accepting it as it is without judging it (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007). In the literature, mindfulness is discussed in two aspects: it comes with temperament and can be learned as a skill (Brown et al., 2003; Rau et al., 2016). People who are aware of their own mental processes, can direct their attention, and are successful in focusing and regulating their attention have high mindfulness, so mindfulness can include both staying in the moment and controlling emotions and thoughts (Karabacak & Demir, 2016). The positive approaches, awareness, compassion, and acceptance of individuals with high mindfulness towards their emotions and thoughts indicate that they have high emotion regulation skills. Uygur (2019) suggests that emotion regulation skills shape people's mindfulness levels. In the study conducted by Vujanov et al. (2010) on young adults, a significant negative relationship was found between mindfulness and difficulty in emotion regulation.

In general terms, emotion regulation refers to the various strategies that a person uses to control his emotions (Gross, 1998; Gross & John, 2003). On the contrary, emotion regulation difficulty means having difficulty recognizing, understanding, and accepting emotions. It is defined as difficulty in exhibiting goal-oriented behavior during negative emotions, a lack of mindfulness of one's emotions, and difficulty in using emotion regulation strategies (Gratz & Roumer, 2004). Difficulty in emotion regulation causes individuals to have difficulty coping and turn to unhealthy coping methods when they experience problems, and thus the person's social relationships, work life, and productivity are damaged, which negatively affects the person's well-being (Gratz et al., 2006; Şahan, 2023). Can et al. (2022) found that reappraisal, one of the sub-dimensions of emotion regulation, predicts subjective well-being. Some studies have shown that individuals with emotion regulation difficulties may develop various addictive behaviors in order to get rid of negative thoughts and feelings or to avoid depressive moods (Aldao et al., 2010; Ricketts & Macaskill, 2003; Tice et al., 2001). Young and Rodgers (1998) said that people turn to internet connections to get rid of negative emotions and increase positive emotions. Yu et al. (2013) found a strong relationship between difficulty in emotion regulation and problematic internet use in a study conducted with 525 high school students.

With the development of technology day by day, the emergence of new technological tools, and the easier access of individuals to technological tools, internet use is increasing day by day (Baz, 2018). In the household survey conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) in 2023, it was found that internet usage among those aged 16–74 increased from 85.0% to 87.1%. According to a study conducted by TÜİK (2016), social media use is among the purposes of internet use at 82.4%. Adolescents who were born in a digital world and are part of this generation are very enthusiastic about using social media (Allen et al., 2014). Social media addiction can be defined as spending excessive time on social media, an intense desire to be constantly active on social media, and the resulting impairment of a person's functionality in real life (Andreassen et al., 2014). Adolescents' internet usage levels are increasing day by day, and they spend more time and share more online than adults (O'Keeffe et al., 2011; Valkenburg & Peter, 2009). Deniz and Gürültü (2018) found that 473 high school students had a moderate addiction to social media in their study. Wood and Scott (2016) found that excessive internet use decreased adolescents' sleep quality, increased their anxiety and depression levels, and decreased their self-esteem. In a study conducted by Peker and Yıldız (2021), it was found that adolescents who used reappraisal in their emotional regulation skills had less social media addiction. It was concluded that those who used suppression had a higher level of social media addiction. Another study reveals that mindfulness has a protective and therapeutic role for problematic internet use and various behavioral addictions (Shonin et al., 2014). Yıldırım (2018) found a strong negative relationship between subjective well-being and smartphone addiction in their study with high school students in Sakarya.

The prevalent utilization of social media has elicited apprehensions regarding maladaptive social media engagement, particularly among adolescents. Consequently, it is crucial to comprehend the mechanisms elucidating the psychological effects of social media addiction (Keles, McCrae & Grealish, 2020). Prior studies have demonstrated an inverse correlation between social media addiction and subjective well-being (Hou et al., 2019). Nonetheless, the cognitive and emotional mechanisms underpinning this relationship have not been adequately investigated. Mindfulness serves as a protective mechanism against the adverse effects of excessive social media usage and aids individuals in more effectively regulating their emotions (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Difficulties in emotion regulation may increase individuals' susceptibility to addictive behaviors, particularly problematic social media usage (Elhai et al., 2017). Nonetheless, research concurrently examining the serial mediating function of these two variables in the association between social media addiction and subjective well-being is notably scarce.

When the literature in our country is examined, it is observed that no research has been conducted on the mediating role of these concepts in their relations with each other, and the literature is incomplete in this section. For this reason, we tried to find answers to the following questions in order to better understand the relationships between social media addiction, difficulty in emotional regulation, mindfulness, and subjective well-being in adolescents in our country.

H1. There is a negative relationship between social media addiction and subjective well-being.

*H2.*Mindfulness has a mediating role between social media addiction and subjective well-being.

*H3.*Difficulty in emotion regulation has a mediating role between social media addiction and subjective well-being.

*H4.*Mindfulness and emotion regulation difficulties have a serial mediating role between social media addiction and subjective well-being

METHOD

Research model

The relational screening model, which is one of the general screening models, was implemented by the researchers. The relational screening model is one of the general screening models that aims to determine the extent to which two or more variables change (Karasar, 2010; Becman, 2022).

Participants and procedure

A total of 318 high school students, 88 boys and 230 girls, between the ages of 13-18, participated in the research. Participants voluntarily filled out the participation consent form. Participants included in the research were reached through social media and online using the easy sampling method. Announcements were made on the social media pages of social clubs of different schools. Participation was achieved with permission from the students' parents. Participants were asked to approve the consent form to complete the questionnaire. They were informed that they could interrupt the questionnaire.

Measures

Mindfulness Scale Adolescent Form. Brown et al. (2011) created the adolescent mindfulness form. A total of fourteen items comprise this six-point Likert scale designed to assess the awareness levels of adolescents. The score range for scale items is from 1 (virtually never) to 6 (virtually never). The scale allows for the attainment of a maximum score of 84 and a minimum score of 14. Elevated scores acquired from the assessment denote a heightened degree of mindfulness. Turkish translation by Turan (2020). The internal consistency reliability coefficient of Cronbach's alpha was computed to be 0.78. In light of this investigation, the reliability coefficient was determined to be 0.873.

Social Media Addiction Scale for Adolescents. On the basis of APA DSM-5 criteria, Ozgenel et al. (2019) created the social media addiction scale for adolescents. The Likert scale is of the 5-point variety and comprises nine items: never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), and always (5). Individuals are capable of attaining a minimum of 9 points and a maximum of 45 points on the scale. Elevated scores are indicative of a severe social media addiction, while diminished scores suggest a moderate level of social media addiction. As determined by the CFA, $\chi^2/df = 2.694$, GFI =.925, CFI =.950, RMR =.068, and SRMR =.041 were the obtained values. It was determined that the Cronbach-Alpha-Alphanal consistency coefficient was 0.904. In the context of this study, the reliability coefficient was determined to be 0.862.

Emotion Regulation Difficulty Scale. The Turkish version of the scale created by Penner et al. (2022) was translated by Ekşi and Erik (2023). The scale consists of eight items and is of the following type: five (91-100%); one-tenth (0%); approximately half the time (36-65%); four times (66-90%); and five times (1%–10%). Respondents to the scale indicate the period of time during which they encounter challenges in maintaining emotional regulation. The scale comprises the following: rejection of emotional responses, restricted availability of efficacious approaches, and adverse consequences encountered. The scale is composed of eight items, with a total of eight sub-dimensions: impulse, goals, and two items per sub-dimension. From eight to forty are the minimum and maximum possible scores on the scale. Elevating one's score on the scale corresponds to an increased degree of challenge in the regulation of emotions. The fit index values obtained from the confirmatory factor analysis were as follows: $\chi 2/df = 3.05$, NFI =.964, CFI =.976, TLI =.951, and RMSEA =.075. The overall reliability value for the scale was established as 0.87 for the internal consistency coefficient, whereas the values for the sub-dimensions exhibit a range of 0.68 to 0.77. As determined by this investigation, the reliability coefficient was 0.843.

Adolescent Subjective Well-Being Scale. Eryılmaz (2009) devised the instrument with the purpose of assessing the subjective well-being of adolescents. The Likert scale is a 4-point scale and includes 15 items: (1: I strongly disagree; 4: I strongly agree). In total, the scale comprises four subscales. The sub-dimensions are designated as "Satisfaction in Family Relationships, Satisfaction in Relationships with Significant Others, Life Satisfaction, and Positive Emotions." . The scale ranges from a minimum score of 15 to a maximum score of 60. Elevated scores are indicative of heightened subjective well-being. The scale's reliability coefficient was determined to be 0.86%. Regarding its sub-dimensions, satisfaction in positive emotions (0.66%), life satisfaction (0.81%), and satisfaction in significant others (0.73%) were measured. Researchers determined the reliability to be 0.897 in this study.

Data analysis process

The analysis phase of the research was conducted using SPSS 26, JASP, and AMOS programs. First of all, normality analyses and descriptive statistics of social media addiction, mindfulness, difficulty in emotional regulation and subjective well-being variables were examined in the SPSS program. Then, reliability analysis was performed in the JASP program. We performed correlation analysis using the SPSS program to examine the relationships between variables. Based on the significant results between the variables, we initiated structural equation modeling within the framework. SEM offers powerful quantitative analysis because it analyzes based on multiple parameters (Kline, 2011).

The study process utilized a two-stage Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach, following the suggestions of Kline (2011). During the initial phase, the measurement model underwent testing to validate its accuracy. This involved establishing the latent variables of the observed data and examining the correlations between these latent variables. Following the verification of the measurement model, the subsequent phase of testing the structural model commenced. We assessed the goodness of fit indices using the results obtained from the structural equation modeling (SEM) and the measured data, following the recommendation of Hu and Bentler (1999). We computed the chi-square ($\chi 2$) statistic, degrees of freedom, CFI, GFI, IFI, RFI, NFI, TLI, SRMR, and

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and reliabilities for the study variables

	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3	4
1-Mindfulness	318	53.70	14.34	-.070	-.459	-			
2- Difficulty in emotion regulation	318	19.41	7.19	.464	-.361	-.42**	-		
3- Social media addiction	318	19.97	7.67	.706	-.041	-.32**	.52**	-	
4- Subjective well-being	318	45.91	9.17	-.505	-.455	.37**	-.48**	-.36**	-

** p <.001

RMSEA values within this framework. The researchers determined that the ratio of x2 to degrees of freedom for critical values must be below 5. In addition, the SRMR and RMSEA values ought to be below.08, whereas the CFI, GFI, IFI, RFI, NFI, and TLI values ought to be above.90 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Tabachnick, 1999; Fidell, 2001). Subsequently, the AIC and ECVI values were assessed, together with the chi-square difference test, to ascertain the optimal model in SEM. The model with the smallest AIC and ECVI values is deemed the best model (Akaike 1987; Browne & Cudeck 1993).

In the structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis, the item parceling method was used due to the unidimensional nature of the measurement instruments used to assess social media addiction and mindfulness. According to Nasser-Abu Alhija and Wisenbaker (2006), the use of the parceling method in the context of personality traits serves to reduce the number of observed variables, increase reliability, and facilitate the emergence of a normal distribution in the scales. Three dimensions were created for parceling, social media addiction, and mindfulness.

The mediation test's significance was bolstered by the bootstrapping process, which was employed to ensure the study's strength and support (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The confidence interval was established using the boostrap value, and the number of samples was increased to 5000 through the bootstrapping process. The mediation is significant, as evidenced by the absence of zero in this confidence interval.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis are included in this section. The results of the structural model and measurement model are subsequently presented. Finally, the results of the bootstrapping process are announced.

According to Finney and DiStefano (2006), the variables' normality assumption must satisfy the criteria of ±2 for skewness and ±7 for kurtosis. Skewedness is between (-.505 and.706) and Kurtosis is between (-.459 and -.041). Table-1 illustrates a normal distribution.

Looking at the relationships between variables in table-1, social media addiction and mindfulness (r = -.41 p <.001), social media addiction and subjective well-being (r = -.36 p <.001), mindfulness and emotional regulation. difficulty (r = -.42 p <.001), shows a negatively significant result between emotion regulation difficulty and subjective well-being (r = -.48 p <.001). There are positive significant relationships between social media addiction and difficulty in emotional regulation (r = .52 p <.001), and between mindfulness and subjective well-being (r = .37 p <.001).

Looking at the measurement model, there are 4 latent variables and 14 observed variables consisting of social media addiction, mindfulness, difficulty in emotion regulation and subjective well-being. According to the measurement results, it is suitable according to the fit indices as χ2/SD= 1.81, GFI= .947, CFI= .972, NFI= .940, TLI= .964, RFI= .923, IFI= .972, SRMR= .037, RMSA= .051. Factor loadings vary between .60 and .89.

In the post-measurement structural model, firstly, the model in which mindfulness and difficulty in emotion regulation was a partial mediator between high school students' social media addiction and subjective well-being levels was tested. In the partial mediation model, there is a direct path between the independent variable, social media addiction, and the dependent variable, subjective well-being. Additionally, the prediction of mindfulness and emotion regulation difficulties is examined. However, as a result of the analysis, AIC, ECVI and chi-square difference test parts were not emphasized in the partial mediation model because p > 0.05 between the independent and dependent variables. When we look at the other model, the fully mediated model, there is no direct path between the independent variable, social media addiction, and the dependent variable, subjective well-being. Considering the fit indices, the mediator values of mindfulness and emotion regulation difficulties are at an acceptable level (χ2/SD= 1.79, GFI= .947, CFI= .972, NFI= .940, TLI= .965, RFI= .924, IFI= .972, SRMR= .038, RMSA= .050). In line with all these results, a model has been determined in which mindfulness and emotion regulation difficulties have a full mediating role between social media addiction and subjective well-being levels of high school students. The path coefficients for this model are presented in Figure 1.

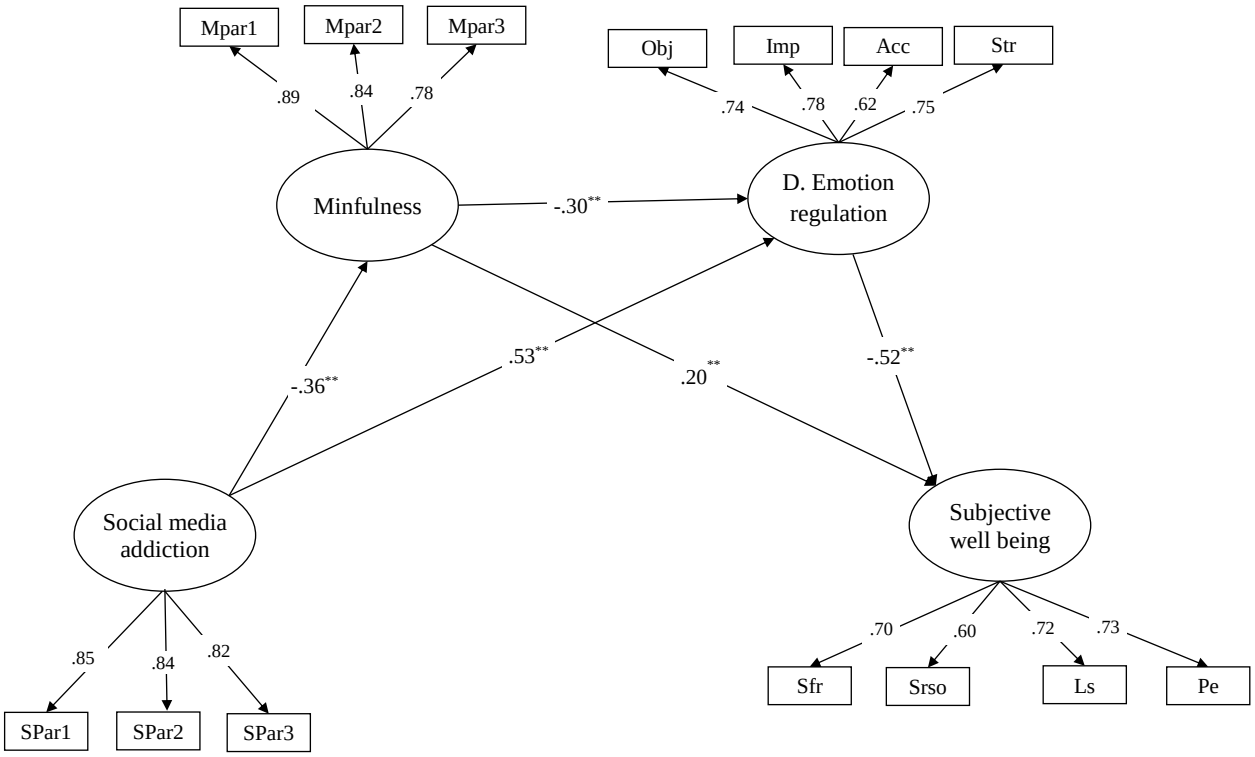

Figure 1. Standardized factor loading for the fully mediated structural model. *Note.* $N = 318$; ** $p < .001$; *MPar* parcels of mindfulness; *D. Emotion regulation*: difficulties in emotion regulation; *Obj*: objective; *Imp*: impulse; *Acc*: acceptance; *Str*: strategy; *SPar* parcels of social media addiction; *Sfr*: satisfaction in family relationships; Srso: satisfaction in the relationship with significant others; *Ls*: life satisfaction; *Pe*: Positive emotions

After the bootstrapping process, which was carried out to strengthen and support the research, it was seen that the direct path coefficients of social media addiction towards subjective well-being, as well as mindfulness and emotion regulation difficulties, were significant (boostrap: -.404, 95% confidence interval, lower limit- upper limit: -.496, -.317). Considering all these results, it can be said that high school students' levels of mindfulness and emotion regulation difficulties play a full mediator role between social media addiction and subjective well-being. In addition, according to the model, it can be stated that mindfulness and emotion regulation difficulties have a serial mediating role between social media addiction and subjective well-being.

DISCUSSION

For centuries, researchers have pursued inner peace and individual happiness and conducted research. While defining subjective well-being, it is expressed as individuals' evaluation of their own lives and making a judgment after this evaluation. (Eryilmaz, 2009). According to the results of the research, it can be stated that mindfulness and difficulty in emotion regulation have a direct mediating role between adolescents' social media addiction and subjective well-being. The established hypotheses are discussed below in the light of the literature.

Researchers initially identified a statistically significant negative correlation between addiction to social media and the subjective well-being of adolescents. In the research conducted in the literature, in the study on the subjective well-being of Facebook addiction, which is a social media area, it was concluded that as the addiction increases, loneliness and shame increases, and therefore subjective well-being decreases (Satıcı, 2019). Since the duration of social media use indicates addiction, longitudinal studies conducted between subjective well-being and social media use indicate that as social media use increases, well-being decreases (Course-Choi & Hammond, 2021; Marttila et al., 2021). With these results, our research is supported and our hypothesis is confirmed. Increasing subjective well-being may be difficult unless social media addiction is reduced.

Our other hypothesis isMindfulness has a mediating role between social media addiction and subjective well-being. As a resultIt has been observed that mindfulness has a mediating role between social media addiction and subjective well-being. Social media addiction reduces the level of mindfulness, which negatively affects the level of subjective well-being. The result of the research is similar to studies presenting the relationship between mindfulness and well-being (Şahin, 2019; Yüksekbilgili, 2020). Additionally, in the research conducted by Doğan and Turp (2023), it was stated that as social media addiction increases, mindfulness decreases. The hypothesis was confirmed as a result of the support of the literature and research. Social media addiction can affect conscious living and therefore cause a decrease in the level of well-being.

Another hypothesis A mediating role is played by difficulty regulating emotions between social media addiction and subjective well-being. Result of research: difficulty regulating

emotions also mediates the relationship between social media addiction and well-being, according to another finding. An association was observed between negative emotion propensity and high levels of social media addiction among those with difficulties regulating their emotions (Liang et al., 2021). Peker and Yıldız (2021) conducted a study involving adolescents and discovered that those who employed the reappraisal strategy, which is classified as one of the emotion regulation skills, exhibited a reduced degree of addiction to social media. Conversely, adolescents who utilized the suppression strategy demonstrated a heightened degree of addiction to social media. Additionally, it has been determined that as the difficulty of regulating emotions increases, subjective well-being also declines (Moradi Siahafshadi et al., 2018). Our results pertaining to the hypothesis we have formulated are consistent with previous studies documented in the literature. Addiction to social media worsens the capacity to control one's emotions and diminishes one's subjective well-being. Anxiety can be impacted by a disruption in emotional regulation brought about by an increase in addiction.

Main hypothesis of the researchMindfulness and emotion regulation difficulties have a serial mediating role between social media addiction and subjective well-being. The findings obtained as a result of the research confirm the hypothesis. Looking at the literature, increasing social media addiction causes a decrease in mindfulness (Doğan & Turp, 2023), a decrease in mindfulness decreases emotional regulation (Ma & Fang, 2019), and an increase in difficulty in emotion regulation decreases subjective well-being.(Moradi Siahafshadi et al., 2018)conclusion has been reached. Additionally, in a study conducted by Can et al. (2022), it was found that reappraisal, one of the sub-dimensions of emotion regulation, predicted subjective well-being. Therefore, the research findings are parallel to the literature. The main hypothesis was confirmed. Increasing social media addiction reduces the ability to act consciously and some difficulties may be experienced in emotional regulation. Therefore, this situation may negatively affect the subjective well-being of the adolescent.

Conclusion

Looking at the results, it is revealed that mindfulness and emotion regulation difficulties have a full mediating role between social media addiction and subjective well-being. This result tested the serial mediator role of mindfulness and emotion regulation difficulties between social media addiction and subjective well-being, and the hypothesis was confirmed. The relationships between these variables were investigated together for the first time. It is a quantitative model that explains the relationship between social media addiction, subjective well-being, mindfulness, and emotion regulation difficulties among Turkish high school students. Problematic social media use around the world not only prevents people from living an aware life, but also causes difficulties in regulating emotions. Therefore, adolescents' subjective well-being is negatively affected. In light of these results, it can be suggested that adolescents should be encouraged to increase their well-being and make their use of social media conscious and controlled. Considering a more aware life and a happy life, this study will make a significant contribution to the literature.

Limitations and future research

Although the research mindfulness and difficulty in emotion regulation in the relationship between social media addiction and subjective well-being. Although the mediating effect is examined, it should be noted that there are some limitations. First, the generalizability of the sample and sample size is limited. It consists only of Turkish high school students. Therefore, its generalizability can be increased in students from different cultures and different large samples. Second, mediating variablesdifficulty with mindfulness and emotional regulationIt could be a case of looking at different concepts other than the concepts. In researchbetween social media addiction and subjective well-beingIt is limited only to the mediating effect of the concepts mentioned. Thirdly, participants participated according to their own ideas regarding the collection of data. Different collection methods can be used. Finally, our research is a cross-sectional research. Cross-sectional studies are insufficient to establish causality. For this reason, longitudinal studies can focus on causality. As an additional suggestion, educational programs can be created about conscious social media use.

Ethical approval: The study was performed in accordance with the ethical standards laid down in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its following updates.

Consent to participate: Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. In addition, permission was obtained from their parents.

Availability of data: Data will be available on request.

Competing interests: No conflict of interest exists for this manuscript for any of the authors.

Funding: The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Authors' Contributions: The entire study was conducted by H. K. The conception of the research idea, data collection, analysis and interpretation processes, as well as the writing, revision, and final approval of the manuscript, were all solely carried out by H. K.

Acknowledgement: I thank the participant of this study and the developer of the measures used.

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