

## Research Article

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## Social Networking Websites and Family Relationships; Students' Perceptions

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines on the one hand whether the remembrance of perceived paternal and maternal rejection affects positively the search for social support on social networking websites and on the other hand to what extent the high quality of a friendship affects the search for social support on these websites. Data were collected from 200 Greek university students and were analyzed with binary logistic regression model which was used to predict the outcome "Search for social support on social networking websites". The scores of the following three questionnaires; (a) Perceived parental remembrance of the rejection was estimated via the Adult Parental Acceptance and Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) (24 items), (b) The friendship quality was evaluated with the Adult Friendship Questionnaire (AFQ) (27 items), (c) The need to seek support was measured with the questionnaire Attraction to Computer-Mediated Social Support (33 items), were included as predictive variables in this model. Enter method was also used. The final model was able to define 15.6% till 21.4% of the variance, while it was able to successfully predict in total 69.1% of the cases. It has been proved that the increase of friendship quality entails reduction of the possibilities of seeking social support through social networking sites (OR 0.965). Present study is thought to be important because to the best of our knowledge it is the first study that examines students' perceptions with regard to family relationships and social networking websites.

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**Received:** October 14, 2020; **Accepted:** October 20, 2020; **Published:** November 03, 2020

**Keywords:** Paternal Acceptance, Maternal Acceptance, Social Networking Websites, Social Support, Logistic Regression Analysis, Greek Students

### Introduction

The relationships between the peers and their family environment, in general, the way they are involved in the social situations has attracted the interest of many researchers in the last decades [1]. A great number of theoreticians and researchers have studied the multiple aspects of the above mentioned relationships, such as the approval or the rejection received by the parents and their friendships [2, 3]. Scientists have also been interested in the relationships created via the Internet. The research data, however, related with the creation of a complete portrayal considering the websites of social interaction are incomplete, as they are an issue which started to be of a recent interest for the researchers. At the same time, the researchers' interest in the specific websites is being increased. Specifically, the parental practices which concern the parents' approval or rejection of their children's involvement with the social nets have not yet been an issue of assessment of many researches [4]. The target group studied consists of adolescents, in the greatest part, while the internet in general and not the websites of social interaction is defined as the scope of addiction.

The aim of the present survey is to study the university students' perception concerning the internet and the intra-family relations

and more specifically, the intra-family approval or rejection relationships, the quality of the friendships, and the seeking of social support through the use of the social interaction websites. The main question which is posed by the present research is how the perceived approval or rejection during childhood and the memory of them during adolescence can influence the quality of friendship among university students as well as the pursuit of social support via the social interaction websites. The present research conducted by us focuses on the perceived, by the child, parental approval-rejection and the effort to establish quality friendships. According to the literature review, it comes out that, concerning the existing research data, the relationship of the human beings with their parents, which means the approval or rejection that they have received from them and, in general, the intra-family environment during the childhood as well as the adolescence period can be considered as prediction factors concerning the quality of the friendships which are/will be formed [5]. According to the existing research data the ability of adolescents to form deeper and better relationships with their close friends is directly dependent on the perceived affection and warmth as well as the approval expressed by their parents [6]. survey concludes that the ability human beings possess to form affectionate friendships with their peers is related to the warmth and the degree of the acceptance and warmth received by their parents [7]. The praise, the positive interaction, the expression of affection and warmth expressed by the parents are related to the positive social behavior

towards friends and the wide-ranging environment of a person [8]. Children who come from a supportive family, which offers acceptance and sentimental safety, have more possibilities to create friendships of improved quality [9, 8]. The positive communication between the parents and the children can upgrade positively the quality of the friendships created by these adolescents and the emotional bond developed between them and their friends [10]. A recent survey conducted on 312 children of pre-adolescence age, assured the correlation between the parental acceptance and the positive quality of friendships while the parental rejection was related with poor close friendships [4]. The warmth, the affection, the empathy which helps understand other people's feelings, the support received by the parents contribute to the enhancement of the quality of friendship [4]. The high quality of the family ties, therefore, relates directly to the expression of positive social behaviors and the fulfillment of the psychological needs in the interaction with the peers [11-13 & 5].

Concerning the perceived parental rejection we know that tough parental behavior results in difficulties in the relationships between their children and the children's peers [14] especially in times of crisis [15]. The persons who experience their relationships with their parents as an emotional disorder, particularly the children, might face more emotional and behavioral problems, such as difficulties in creating close relationships within the circle of their peers [4]. Prove that hard, condemnatory, hostile parental behavior towards their children result in the children's friendly relationships of low quality [16]. The relevance between the parental rejection and the low quality of frequent interaction between persons of the same age is ascertained by [17].

Findings of other researches focus on the connection between the perceived parental rejection and the quality of the individual's relationships with other individuals of the same age [18]. came up with the conclusion that the conflicts among parents and their offspring influence in a negative way the offspring's friendly connections. The more often and stressful the parental conflicts are, the less safe and intimate the friendly relationships are. In addition, the adolescents' relationships with their friends get more confrontational. In conclusion, researchers found a correspondence between the low levels of parental acceptance such as too many conflicts, insufficient parental support and positive emotional expression and their children's interaction with their friends. In the above mentioned cases the friendly interactions were negatively influenced, resulting in more conflicts and poorer relationships between the peers [19].

As far as it concerns the parental acceptance-rejection and the teenager's pursuit of support on the internet, the researchers have concluded that the preoccupation with the social nets correlates with high levels of negativism, control, inconsistency and lack of affection on the part of parents [20]. The perceived rejection, abandonment and indifference received by those considered as important – the parents belong to this category – are considered as prediction factors for the problematic usage of the internet [21, 22]. The wasteful extravagant usage of the interactive internet applications usually functions as a decongestion of the negative feelings which are created by a childhood filled with deprivation and the lack of sociability [23]. In conclusion, individuals who are addicted to the internet and the services offered by it, have a common characteristic: they experience the fear of non-acceptance [24]. This concept is enhanced by the findings of additional surveys [25]. This causal correlation can be explained by the findings of surveys. According to those surveys the addicted to the internet users, and especially the adolescents, seek more

emotional support compared to those who are not addicted [26]. The negative experience of the internet users between their parents and them is found within this framework [27]. However, the research findings are controversial, regarding the incorrect use of the services offered by the universal network and the seeking of emotional support by the users [28].

A recent research which included 2090 adolescents and persons in the regions of Attica and Korinthos leads to the verification of the above data [29]. More specifically, the problematic usage of the internet and, especially the troublesome usage of the social websites, seems to correlate with a higher degree of experiencing emotional estrangement and a lower degree of family stability, flexibility, communication, satisfaction and integrity that the individual receives from his/her family and its members. What should be reported in this recent research is that the self-confidence and self-respect felt by the individuals who took part in this research is a mediating factor between their emotional shutdown from the family and the addictive usage of the internet. The self-respect is associated with the perceived by the teenager rejection, abandonment and indifference from the worthwhile other members of the family [21,22]. The teenager's environment and mainly the members of his family who are considered significant become the innermost part of his/her heart and, in this way they compose a part of the constitution of his personality. The dissatisfaction, the rejection, the breach of relations, the cutting off and the non-acceptance by the others are represented in his/her identity in an equally important break and alienation between the fragments that constitute his personality [30]. The more isolated the teenager is from his parents and the family environment the lower his/her self-confidence is, resulting in a higher dangerous possibility to make excessive wrong use of the internet services. In conclusion, the emotional exclusion from other significant individuals in his/her environment bears down on the teenager's image for himself/herself and this fact leads him in the wrong and excessive usage of the internet.

Taking into account the above findings, the present study the following hypotheses were stated:

- a) The memory of the perceived fatherly rejection is expected to influence the teenager in a way that will seek support in the social interaction websites.
- b) The memory of the perceived motherly rejection is expected to influence the teenager in a way that will seek support in the social interaction support.
- c) The perception of a high quality friendship is expected to influence the teenager in a negative way concerning the seeking of support in the social websites.

## Method

### Participants

Participants in this study included two hundred university students, from among the largest city in Greece; Athens. The mean age was 24,34 years (SD= 4.82). Gender was balanced, with 108 males (54%) and 92 females (46%). Of them, 53% were undergraduate and 47% were postgraduate students. The students came from a variety of university faculties for representing as many population levels as possible. The collection of the sample was performed randomly by the existing population, in an attempt to ensure representativeness of the sample.

### Measures

Greek language versions of all measures were presented in the following sequence:

Personal Information Form (PIF). The PIF was used for the collection of demographic information. Through closed-ended

questions, students were asked for the following demographic factors: a) sex, b) age, c) level of studies, d) marital status, e) place of residence during studies, f) persons living with them during studies, g) brothers or sisters, h) professional status, i) parents education level, j) parents profession.

The Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ). The study employed the short form of the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire: Adult version (Adult PARQ: Mother version, Adult PARQ: Father version; [31]. The Adult PARQ short version is a self-report tool and encompasses 24 items tapping in to four dimensions/factors: Warmth/Affection, Hostility/Aggression, Indifference/Neglect, and Undifferentiated Rejection. This Acceptance/Rejection model is based on the theoretical approach of "The Warmth dimension of parenting" by Rohner [32]. The 24 items are statements about how adults remember their parents' accepting or rejecting behaviors in childhood when they were aged from seven to twelve years. Participants are asked to evaluate each statement on a Likert-type scale from 1 (almost never true) to 4 (almost always true). The scale is summed and keyed in the direction of perceived rejection. Scores from each scale are added together to produce the overall test score, which indicates the level of perceived acceptance-rejection from the parent [33,31]. A sample items Adult PARQ, Mother version is "My mother said nice things about me". A sample items of Adult PARQ, Father version is "My father made me feel wanted and needed". Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for Adult PARQ short reported by Lloyd, Ward and Blackwell-Young (2014) is .97, for both maternal and paternal versions.

The Adult Friendship Questionnaire (AFQ). The study used the form of the Adult Friendship Questionnaire [35]. The questionnaire consists of two parts. In the first part, information is requested about the sex, the friend's age, the frequency of communication, and the duration of the friendly relationship. The second part consists of 27 statements divided into 6 sub-scales, which evaluate 6 distinct qualitative frames of friendships. These sub-scales are as follows Fellowship, Conflict and Treason, Assistance and Betrayal, Conflict solving, Intimacy, Acceptance and Appreciation [36]. It includes statements such as "When I'm in trouble with something, I can ask my friend for help and advice", "My friend encourages me for the things I do." Participants are asked to evaluate each statement on a Likert-type scale from 0 (negative) to 4 (positive). A general overall score is not exported for the questionnaire, but a single score for each sub-scale. The range of each scale amounts from 0 to 25, with the highest values representing a more positive perception of the quality of a friendly relationship, while the negative proposals are reversed [36]. In a survey carried out in 2005 on a sample of 135 individuals, regarding the internal reliability of the questionnaire, the "a" coefficients of internal coherence for each sub-scale were: a = .73 for the fellowship sub-scale, a = .49 for the conflict sub-scale, a = .74 for the conflict

solving sub-scale, a = .80 for acceptance and appreciation and  $\alpha$  = .87 for intimacy [36].

The Questionnaire for Searching Social Support in Social Networking Sites (Attraction to Computer-Mediated Social Support). The questionnaire was created for investigating search for social support in social networking sites, and recommends an adaptation of the Attraction to Computer-Mediated Social Support questionnaire, created by Walther and Boyd in 1997[34, 37]. The questionnaire encompasses 33 items tapping into four dimensions/factors: Social distance, anonymity, access, interaction management, formulated once in a positive way and sometimes in a negative one. It includes statements such as "Online support is always there when I need it", "My online dating is less likely to judge me". Respondents are asked to state the extent to which the proposals respond to their own case based on the classification of a 5-grade Likert type scale, from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 5 (Totally Agree) [37]. In a survey conducted in 2015 on a sample of 500 people, in terms of its validity, it confirmed that the scale counts a single factor defined as "General Support Factor". The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the whole questionnaire was a = .92 while for each sub-scale was a = .87 for social distance, a = .76 for anonymity, a = .76 for access and a = .74 for interaction management [37].

#### Procedure

The research was conducted through the help of the university students. First, we informed students about the aim of the study. The next step was then to ask the students participating in the study to complete an informed consent form containing details about the aim, the procedure, the data protection issues, the right to withdraw from the research at any time, the person responsible for the research, and the contact details of the principal investigator. Data collection took place within the university place and lasted approximately 15 minutes. Participants were asked to complete first the demographic form and then the other three questionnaires. Questionnaires were administered between June 2017 and October 2017. For data research, the logistic regression technique was used, a technique that is designed to perform data analysis that involves the study and predictions of values of a categorical dependent variable. For this reason, it was selected in this study. In particular, as to the type of variable of the dependent size, because in our case the dependent variable is categorical, taking only two values, we used Binary Logistic Regression.

#### Results

Binary logistic regression analysis was employed in order to predict an outcome of Searching for Social Support on Social Networking Sites. The total cases were N = 200. Of them, 61 (30.5%) were missing values. In the analysis were included 139 cases (Table 1).

**Table 1**

Case Processing Summary			
Unweighted Cases <sup>a</sup>		N	Percent
Selected Cases	Included in Analysis	139	69.5
	Missing Cases	61	30.5
	Total	200	100.0
Unselected Cases		0	.0
Total		200	100.0

a. If weight is in effect, see classification table for the total number of cases.

Four important findings resulted through this endeavor:

1. The more every unit increases in FPARQ, the more the remembrance of perceived father rejection increases, as it is perceived by an adult respondent.
2. The more every unit increases in FPARQ, the more the remembrance of perceived mother rejection increases, as it is perceived by an adult respondent.
3. The more every unit increases in AFQ, the more the perceived positivity in a friendly relationship, to which the respondent refers, increases.
4. That is for every unit increase in ACMSS, the odds for Searching for Social Support on Social Networking Sites, increases.

At this point it is worth to mention that Not Searching for Social Support on Social Networking Sites is represented by a coding of 0 and Searching for Social Support on Social Networking Sites is represented by a coding of 1.

**Table 2: Iteration History**

Iteration History			
Iteration		-2 likelihood	Log Coefficients Constant
Step 0	1	182.732	.532
	2	182.726	.545
	3	182.726	.546

The above table indicates the log-likelihood (-2LL) of the baseline model, which we can compare to later.

**Table 3: Classification Table**

Classification Table					
	Observed		Predicted		
			Afq_Sum_Nom		Percentage Correct
			No	Yes	
Step 0	Afq_Sum_Nom	No	0	51	.0
		Yes	0	88	100.0
	Overall Percentage				63.3

Table 3 indicates how well the initial model predicts the outcome. In this case the model predicts that no one is Not Searching for Social Support in Social Networking Sites Since this occurs on 63.3% of occasions, this might seem quite good. However, the model misclassifies anyone who is Not Searching for Social Support in Social Networking Sites, thus correctly predicting 0%.

**Table 4**

Variables in the Equation							
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 0	Constant	.546	.176	9.608	1	.002	1.725

As shown in Table 4, only the constant has been included in this initial model. It represents the outcome without any predictor variables.

**Table 5: Variables not in the Equation**

Variables not in the Equation					
			Score	Df	Sig.
Step 0	Variables	FParq_Sum	10.633	1	.001
		MParq_Sum	12.890	1	.000
		Afq_Sum	11.893	1	.001
Overall Statistics			20.802	3	.000

Table 5 shows the predictor variables, none of which has been included in the initial model. The key outcome here is represented by the 'Overall Statistics' data. It is highly significant, which suggests that the regression model would be significantly improved with the addition of at least one of the listed predictors. Had that outcome been non-significant, the regression model would not improve; it would be no better than simply using the baseline model to predict outcome. We are also given a clue to which predictors might significantly contribute to the final regression model. All have significant outcomes, suggesting that they have the potential to explain Search for Social Support in Social Networking Sites.

**Table 6**

Iteration History <sup>a,b,c,d</sup>						
Iteration	-2 Log Coefficients					
		likelihood	Constant	FParq_Sum	MParq_Sum	Afq_Sum
Step 1	1	160.742	.564	.024	.024	-.026
	2	159.115	.664	.032	.031	-.035
	3	159.087	.657	.033	.033	-.036
	4	159.087	.657	.033	.033	-.036

a. Method: Enter, b. Constant is included in the model, c. Initial -2 Log Likelihood: 182.726 , d. Estimation terminated at iteration number 4 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

As shown in table 6, confirms that we used the Enter method. The final log-likelihood (-2LL) can be compared with the outcome in the baseline model. The term 'iteration' refers to the process whereby the analysis is repeated until the best solution is found. The aim is to 'reduce' the log-likelihood to as small a figure as possible. In theory, this could go on infinitely, but the process stops once the change is too minimal to make further analyses worthwhile. In our case, the iterative process went through 4 steps before announcing the 'best' solution. The final figure for -2LL is shown as 159.087. This is somewhat reduced from 182.726 seen in the baseline model. This suggests that the final model is better at predicting whether someone is Searching for Social Support in Social Networking Sites than the initial model.

**Table 7**

Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients				
		Chi-square	Df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	23.639	3	.000
	Block	23.639	3	.000
	Model	23.639	3	.000

Having established that the final model appears to be better than the baseline model, because the log-likelihood has been reduced, we need to verify how much better it is. The above Table helps us with that analysis. The chi-squared figure represents the difference between the two loglikelihood figures, allowing for minor rounding differences (182.726 - 159.087= 23.639). The outcome is compared with a chi-squared distribution for the relevant degrees of freedom (3). We can see that this is significant (p < .001), so we can be confident that the final model is significantly better at predicting outcome than the baseline model.

**Table 8**

Model Summary			
Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	159.087 <sup>a</sup>	.156	.214

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 4 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

Table 8 provides some information on how much variance has been explained by the final model. We use Cox and Snell's R<sup>2</sup> and Nagelkerke's R<sup>2</sup> to report variance. These two outcomes suggest that model explains between 15.6% and 21.4% of the variance.

**Table 9**

Hosmer and Lemeshow Test			
Step	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1	8.266	8	.408

We need to ensure that our model adequately ‘fits’ the data and this is supported if the observed and expected frequencies are similar. All we need to know is provided by the Hosmer and Lemeshow test. The above table reports this. This test examines whether there is a significant difference between the observed and expected frequencies. Because the outcome from the Hosmer and Lemeshow test is non-significant, we can be confident that we have adequate goodness of fit.

**Table 10**

Classification Table <sup>a</sup>					
	Observed		Predicted		
Step 1			Afq_Sum_Nom		Percentage Correct
	Afq_Sum_Nom	No	23	28	45.1
		Yes	15	73	83.0
	Overall Percentage				69.1

a. The cut value is .500

We can now revisit how well we are correctly predicting outcome in this final model. We saw that the baseline model correctly predicted overall outcome on 63.3% of occasions. The final model shows some overall improvement, correctly predicting 69.1%. However, the sensitivity to successfully predicting Not Searching for Social Support in Social Networking Sites is considerably improved from 0% to 45.1% .

**Table 11**

Variables in the Equation									
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
								Lower	Upper
Step 1 <sup>a</sup>	FParq_Sum	.033	.018	3.532	1	.060	1.034	.999	1.070
	MParq_Sum	.033	.021	2.487	1	.115	1.033	.992	1.076
	Afq_Sum	-.036	.017	4.400	1	.036	.965	.933	.998
	Constant	.657	1.797	.133	1	.715	1.928		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: FParq\_Sum, MParq\_Sum, Afq\_Sum.

The table shown above probably shows the most important outcomes of all. The B column indicates the regression coefficients for each predictor variable. Meanwhile, the Wald statistic and the respective significance indicate which of the predictor variables successfully predict Searching for Social Support in Social Networking Sites. AFQ\_Sum is significant ( $p < .05$ ), FPARQ\_Sum, MPARQ\_Sum are not ( $p > .05$ ). Since Table shows that the regression co-efficients are negative and the Exp(B) value is less than 1, increases in these scores represent decreasing likelihood for Searching for Social Support in Social Networking Sites. That is for every unit increase in Afq\_Sum, the odds for Searching for Social Support in Social Networking Sites decreases (OR .965; the 95% confidence intervals suggest that this is in the range of .933 to .998).

**Discussion**

The article sought to examine friendly relationships and search for social support on the web combined with family dimensions with a sample of 200 Greek undergraduate and postgraduate students from the municipality of Athens, Greece.

In this article, the aim is to explore for the first time in Greece all possible relationships between the perceived parental acceptance and rejection based on the recall of the adult respondent student,

the quality of friendly relations and search for social support in social networking sites. In addition, the importance of demographic factors in the above relationships, i.e. age, family and working status of students, level of education, parents’ professional status, as well as possible sex differences, were examined.

Taking into account the existing survey data, according to which the experience of family distance from the main carers contributes to the possible search for refuge and often problematic internet support, it was assumed that recall of perceived parental and maternal rejection is expected to positively affect search for social support in social networking sites [21, 22].

However, the results of the present study, according to which, the scores of FPARQ (FParq\_Sum) and MPARQ (MParq\_Sum) questionnaires, which measure parental and maternal acceptance / rejection respectively, are not statistically significant, reversing the above hypothesis. The existence of the relevant literature, according to which, the use of internet including social networking pages, in the majority of cases, takes place as incorrect, associated with higher rates of parental indifference, low levels of communication, satisfaction and family cohesion, is not confirmed by the results of this survey. Based on this sample, it appears that both parental and maternal rejection have no effect on either

increasing or reducing the chances of social support search in social networking sites [29].

With regard to the perceived high quality of a friendly relationship, in relation to the search for support in social networking pages, the existence of relevant literature, according to which the creation of intimacy environment, parental acceptance, perceived "warmth" and affection, contributes to better relations with close friends, and in a more general sense to a less likely use of internet, has assumed that it is expected to adversely affect social support in social networking sites. Indeed, survey findings have confirmed the existing literature, demonstrating that students, who regard the quality of their friendly relationship as high, are less likely to turn to social websites, seeking social support [38, 39 & 40]. More specifically, based on the sample of students examined, the increase in the AFQ questionnaire score, which assesses the quality of close friendship, has shown that it reduces the chances of social support search in social networking sites. This result of negative impact for a friendly relationship on the search for support on internet, agrees with the results of previous survey, according to which positive relationships with peers, particularly during teenage years, mitigate the effects of negative events in life, which could lead to relief from online environments [41, 42]. In addition, the above assumption is also confirmed by survey results showing that few friends involve more time spent on social networking sites and particularly the Facebook [43], and leads to online social needs [26]. The results of the correlation of the perceived quality of student friendship with the search for support in web sites are in line with other international data, according to which the lack of competent and quality friendly relations is linked to the use and misuse of internet and social networking websites [44-46]. The above findings, therefore, confirm the pre-existing literature, concluding that the existence of a quality friendly environment for the individual works supportively, preventing the search for further support in web sites.

Regarding the effect of demographic factors, it was stated that the available survey data examined the concepts of parental acceptance and rejection in children and adolescents, focusing mainly on sex, age and parents professional-social status. The results of the survey did not reveal any existence of demographic variables as significant in the effect of perceived parental acceptance-rejection, as the relationship between demographic factors and perceived rejection by the father and the mother did not appear to be statistically significant.

This fact is partially confirmed by international surveys for relationship between perceived parental acceptance and rejection in relation to sex and age, as it is generally argued that there are no particular differences in these two factors [46]. Investigations carried out in Greece partly agree with the findings of the current survey [3]. They point out the sex factor as non-definitive, as they state that both sexes collect acceptance by both parents [3]. However, the fact that girls seem to receive significantly more acceptance from boys, is not confirmed by the present survey, and is contrary to previous ones carried out in Greece [3, 47]. It is worth noting, however, with regard to the sex factor, and the existence of surveys, according to which boys more often referred to fathers' hostility than girls, which is not verified by the results of the present survey [4]. Also, the age of the sample studied was not evaluated as a statistically significant factor in the above-mentioned relationships. This result is explained by the fact that students are in the overwhelming majority of a certain age range. In the current study, the mean age was 24 years. However,

the selection of the sample of students whose perceptions were studied is considered to be particularly relevant, as according to international literature, students and especially young adults seek more support in social networking sites by interacting actively [48, 49, 50]. At the same time, with regards to the educational level and professional position of parents, a recent survey according to which parental acceptance is positively related to the high level of education, does not confirm the results of the survey conducted, because as already mentioned, the educational and professional level of the parents were not considered as statistically significant factors in the present sample [3].

The relation between the friendship quality of students and searching for social support in social networking sites does not seem to differ from the existence of demographic factors in the sample of students examined. The non-definitive existence of demographic variables, mainly of sex, contrasts with the results of existing surveys according to which men are more likely to seek help and support in web pages than women do [37]. This differentiation in relation to international literature is also evidenced by additional research studies claiming that men rely more on the internet, than relying on others for support [51-54].

Equally non-definitive was the factor of students' professional status, as the present study did not find a statistically significant relationship between the employees and the non-students in the search for social support in social networking sites. In particular, there was no correlation with the existing literature, which argues that the unemployed have higher rates of need for online support [37]. The existence of elements of the international literature the findings of which indicate that people who do not work seem to seek more support, because of the decrease in their social network, is incompatible, also with the non-statistical significance of the demographic factor of professional status, as revealed in the survey conducted [55].

This study is not without limitations. A possible limitation could be that the sample was drawn from one area of Greece that is not necessarily representative of the whole of Greece, but rather of a specific part of it. More specifically, the sample of the research was limited in terms of quantity and age, coming from a small portion of the population, specifically from the region of Athens. Further studies are needed for the expansion of the sample in a wider range in terms of quantity and age, which will be consisted from more areas in Greece. While such a limitation points to the need for broader based research, it does not diminish the soundness and importance of the results reported here. Therefore, and given the first interesting results yielded by this analysis, it is reasonable to suggest that it is worth expanding the research on the above mentioned measures. This study is an important first step toward contributing to the development of this strand of research in Greece [56].

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