EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF YOUTUBERS ON ADOLESCENTS IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION: AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Exploring the Influence of YouTubers on Adolescents' Identity Formation:

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- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
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Date 10.06.2020

ABSTRACT

Exploring the Influence of YouTubers on Adolescents' Identity Construction: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The present study investigated the influence of YouTubers on adolescents' identity construction as well as aiming at exploring what kind of interactions occur between YouTubers and adolescents. In this context, this study intended to understand the YouTubers' role in adolescents' lives in terms of mindset and daily practices. In this qualitative research, the data gathered from 10 adolescents, most of whom are living in Istanbul. The data was collected through interviews in order to get in-depth information about the identity experiences of adolescents. The results of the interviews were analyzed through the interpretative phenomenological analysis method. The results of the study revealed that YouTubers helped adolescents to become integrated into society by noticing the similar aspects of their identities such as feelings, thoughts, and beliefs. On the other hand, YouTubers have been found to assist adolescents to discover their individuality through their videos and comments of other viewers on these videos. Also, it has been observed that the exploration option and range of social interaction extended thanks to YouTubers. However, it has been revealed that adolescents sometimes overly identified themselves with YouTubers, imitate them and implement YouTubers' recommendation without questioning. Considering this fact, it has been observed that the awareness level of adolescents about how much they are affected by YouTubers is insufficient, so it is essential to empower adolescents' new media literacy. As a result, the practical implications for parents, counselors, and authorities are discussed.

ÖZET

Ergenlerin Kimlik İnşasında YouTuberların Etkisini Keşfetmek: Yorumlayıcı Fenomenolojik Analiz

Bu çalışmanın amacı ergenlerin kimlik inşasında YouTuberların etkisini araştırmak ve bu süreçte aralarında ne tür etkileşimler olduğunu keşfetmektir. Bu bağlamda, YouTuberların ergenlerin hayatındaki rolü, onların düşünce ve günlük pratiklerine etkilerini incelemektedir. Bu nitel çalışmada, ergenlerin kimlik deneyimleri hakkında derinlemesine bilgi toplamak için çoğunluğu İstanbul'da yaşayan 10 ergenle görüşme yapılarak veri toplanmıştır. Veriler, yorumlayıcı fenomenolojik analiz metodu kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonuçları YouTuberların ergenlere kimliklerinin duygu, düşünce ve inançlar gibi benzeşen yönlerini fark ettirerek topluma entegre olmalarına katkı sağladıklarını göstermiştir. Bunun yanı sıra, YouTuberlar hem kendi çektikleri videolar hem de bu videolara başkalarının yaptığı yorumlar aracılığıyla, ergenlerin bireyselliklerini fark etmelerinde yardımcı olmaktadırlar. Ayrıca, YouTuberlar sayesinde seçeneklerin araştırması imkanın ve sosyal etkileşim alanının oldukça genişlediği görülmüştür. Yine de, ergenlerin zaman zaman Youtuberlarla fazla özdeşim kurdukları, onlara özendikleri ve onların önerilerini sorgulamadan uyguladıkları ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu bağlamda, ergenlerin ne derece etkilendiklerine dair farkındalıklarının düşük olduğu ve yeni medya okuryazarlığı becerilerinin yetersiz olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Sonuç olarak, ebeveynler, danışmanlar ve yetkililer için de uygulamaya dönük çıkarımlar tartışılmıştır.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> Like bricolage, identity construction involves improvising, experimenting, and blending genres… to suit the context... For many young people, digital media (whichever ones are "at hand") provide tools and display possibilities that are well suited to bricolage. (Weber & Mitchell, 2008, p.43)

1.1 Background information

There are certain questions that each individual asks themselves in certain stages of life. Adolescence is a period of rapid growth and maturation, in which significant changes become biologically, socially, cognitively, and mentally apparent for individuals. Through these explicit and implicit transformations, individuals find themselves to be in a period where they cannot define themselves as a child, nor as an adult. Therefore, the most popular question that crosses adolescents' minds is, "Who am I?" (Erikson, 1968, p.314).

The most straightforward purpose of this question is to build a meaningful and socially acceptable identity for oneself, and this is one of the developmental phases that any adolescent should go through (Erikson, 1968). Considering the concept of identity, Kroger (1996) stated that it as "a balance between that which is taken to be self and that considered to be the other." (p.8). In other words, how we relate our existence with other people and distinguish ourselves from them is the core of identity (Adams & Marshall, 1996). It is a productive questioning for re-evaluating existing identifications and self-images in order to turn some of them into a unique form (Erikson, 1968).

During the identity formation process, one of the most basic characteristics is the individuals' struggle between two separate poles to form their unique identity

notion; namely, identity achievement and identity confusion. Those with a successful identity revise their previous identifications, replace some with new ones and integrate them into their lives smoothly. In this way, they can self-regulate with coherent knowledge of themselves, filter information, choose, and decide what is best for them (Adams & Marshall, 1996). On the other hand, those having identity crisis cannot make an internal investment in any alternatives, or they cannot integrate their identifications into their lives. Adolescents' struggle between two poles and the process of deciding which alternative to make an internal investment on can turn into a challenging process, which might cause possible conflicts and crisis (Erikson, 1968).

In the search of trying to find out an adequate answer, individuals re-examine events and phenomena around them, such as laws, cultures, beliefs, and everything that they are aware of. For this reason, the process of identity formation is affected by particular crucial factors in the social environment and interpersonal relationships in that environment (Adams & Marshall, 1996; Cote, 2009; Erikson, 1968). Social context (Adams & Marshall, 1996) and individuals within this context are the key actors in the construction of identity. It is developed and negotiated through the experiences derived from the primary social groups such as parents, school and neighborhood. Regarding this fact, the identity construction starts within the family context. Communication process and activities within family teach children how they can create their unique choices (individuality) and how they can become integrated to their family (connectedness). With the help of boundaries in family system adolescents learn to balance their autonomy and their limits. Therefore, parents are one of the critical role models for adolescents (Cooper, Grotevant, & Condon, 1983). Secondly, friends and peers are considered as the other prominent role models in the

identity formation process. This is because interactions with the peers bring along social exchange to children in various domains such as conversations, behaviors and dreams. Particularly certain activities such as cooperation, competition, fight or provocation among children involve reciprocal affections. Therefore, social and developmental contexts have a significant place in identity construction process (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006).

However, in recent times, the social context in which identity construction occurs and the range of social interaction has considerably widened through digital platforms such as social media platforms and websites (Buckingham, 2008). For many young people, especially in industrialized parts of the world, digital media is a significant model for adolescents who struggle to answer questions related to their identity (Weber & Mitchell, 2008). The effects of these new and gradually broadening contexts on the identity formation process of adolescents and its consequences have been a matter of interest (Buckingham, 2007).

To have a clear understanding of the effects of social media on identity formation, social platforms should be approached and discussed on an individual basis. Among social media platforms, YouTube (http://www.youtube.com) has become the second most preferred website following Google (http://www.google.com), the main reason being the critical change that YouTube has made in its structure (Alexa, 2020). Regarding the significant change in the YouTube system, individuals had the opportunity to create their own content on social media (Smith, 2009). The release of user-generated videos, enabling people to earn money, has led to a boom in the popularity of YouTube. Along with this flourishing, individuals who are called YouTubers have started to produce and broadcast their official videos and content (Gardner & Lenhert, 2016). With the

emergence of YouTubers, a certain group of audience has started to follow these YouTubers regularly. This translation has brought a new dimension to the traditional definition of celebrity and the relation of celebrities with their followers (Senft, 2013). In this new order, YouTubers take their place in the community as ordinary people who have gained visibility and fame through online platforms. Due to the fame and popularity they have gained, these people are also defined as micro-celebrities (Ando, 2016).

New generation of YouTubers have started with the format which is called video-blog, and they have started to share their everyday lives casually and naturally in front of the camera (Burgess & Green, 2009). In time, most vloggers have preferred to share genuine and private information about their own life and identity. Moreover, vloggers not only display their personal life, but they also read the comments made on their videos, respond to those comments, and take their followers' recommendations into account. Sharing private matters or things with the audience and trying to maintain interaction with followers create a powerful relationship (Berryman & Kavka, 2017). This strong communication with their followers means that YouTubers has become *influencer,* who have built a sizeable social network of people following them, in society, which also gives them credibility (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders., 2017, p. 798). In other words, YouTube has started to spread all over the world with its rapidly changing nature, and it has had a considerable part in our lives as one of the social media tools which has created new forms of social communication and connection.

The fact that YouTubers have substantial and widespread influence in society when considering adolescents from a developmental perspective cannot be neglected. Further, the reason why this current study focuses on the identity construction during

adolescence is that YouTubers are usually from the same generation as adolescents, and they have an ordinary life just as their teen followers. They have become role models for adolescents in many areas, such as social relationships, gender identity, vocational identity, and self-related concepts about their identity development (Westenberg, 2016). This situation has caused an acceleration of identification. Pérez-Torres, Pastor-Ruiz and Ben-Boubaker (2018) proposed in their studies that most adolescents take YouTubers as points of reference during their identity formation. YouTubers have the potential to affect the process of searching and learning during adolescence. Within the context of vocational identity, YouTubers tell their life story and how they built a career for themselves. In terms of gender identity development, YouTubers function as a guiding spirit in the exploration of gender orientation of adolescents. YouTubers tell adolescents how they find out and manage their gender orientation personally and publicly. In other words, YouTubers, who share the same generation with the majority of the YouTube audiences, present the information about themselves in various ways; therefore, they affect the lives of their followers in return.

Since the YouTubers constitute a growing movement in adolescents' life, the current study focuses on exploring YouTubers' influence on adolescents' identity construction and their interaction with the adolescents in order to attain scientific insight on this fact.

1.2. Significance of the study

With the appearance of micro-celebrities in social media, the position of traditional celebrities in society has started to change. Micro-celebrities gradually gain more visibility; hence, this concept draws more scholarly attention. YouTubers as micro-

celebrities are now able to earn millions in revenue by addressing a broad and global audience on the Internet (Deller & Murpy, 2019; Holland, 2017).

Being at the flourishing celebrity status in society, YouTubers have reached an extensive sphere of influence and earn millions of revenues from their videos and advertising. This situation inspires researchers to identify which population is affected by these micro-celebrities and their content the most. Previous research indicated that they have precious appeal and relevance for youth life and culture (Pereira, Moura & Fillol, 2018). According to the survey results published by Variety magazine, YouTube celebrities are found to be more popular among adolescents than traditional celebrities are (Defy media, 2015).

The most basic developmental stage of adolescence and youth is the process of identity construction. The most critical feature of this process is that the individual creates a meaningful and continuous identity perception (Erikson, 1968). Specifically, the ego and professional and social identities are shaped in this period. Throughout the process where such changes and transformations happen, YouTubers also play a role in identity construction, which is the essential feature of this period (Martínez, 2017). Nevertheless, when looking into the previous studies in the related field, it is observed that the number of studies conducted on the effects of YouTubers on identity building is insufficient.

A review of literature indicates that a limited number of studies have shown contradictory results. Vidales-Bolaños and Sádaba-Chalezquer (2017) have emphasized that this mediated communication has an impact on formation of adolescent identity because adolescents have become a part of a new society through these channels of communication. Furthermore, they have stated that this communication affects individuals' capacities in finding their own selves; in

particular, it lowers self-efficiency and self-confidence skills. On the other hand, some studies found that YouTubers are performing as role models in the process of identity formation, and they also have a stimulating effect in the context of self-concept, gender identity, professional identity and social relations (García-Rapp, 2016; Pérez-Torres et al., 2018; Westenberg, 2016).

Özkonuk's (2019) study, which is one of the latest studies in Turkey, examined being a YouTuber as children, who are 9-18 years old. According to the results obtained from this study, children have a significant effect on the YouTube market in terms of content production and economic mobility. They have earned money from their videos and become influencers, who have the potential to direct the consumption habits of their followers. In other words, this study proved the sociology of childhood paradigm by indicating the agency of the children in the construction of the social structures.

A related study is the comparative analysis of fandom practices on television and on YouTube to explain the fandom culture among children in the 10-14 age groups (Kesici, 2018). However, there is no study about how YouTubers affect adolescents who closely follow them and the impact on identity building in this process, what adolescents have brought out of this pursuit, what kind of experiences adolescents have, how adolescents YouTubers impact adolescents' lives, their daily practices, concrete behaviors, attitudes, decision-making processes, clothing styles, eating and socializing processes.

Other studies that have been conducted in Turkey mainly focus on the perceived resource reliability of YouTubers and their impacts on job expectations and purchasing behavior for graduating female subjects (Efe, 2018), the effect of

YouTube vloggers on consumers' buying behaviors (Tunçay, 2019), and the issue of professional privacy in the concept of YouTubers (Yurdigül & Elitaş, 2018).

All in all, previous studies in Turkey have explored the effects of YouTubers specifically on children, along with the impacts on purchasing behavior in the general population. In the review of literature, no study specifically targeting the adolescent population and searching for identity construction issues has been found. This present study will explore these experiences and practices by investigating the effects of YouTubers on identity building and adolescents' experiences in this period. It is important to understand the YouTubers from identity perspective since it is a self-determined struggle between life and death, rather than personal growth or playful experimentation, which is not a new issue for humanity. However, it has gained new forms with the advent of new media opportunities in todays' world (Buckingham, 2008). The current research will provide foresights in how YouTubers, as the popular element of the new media, evolve the identity building process during adolescence.

The outcomes of this present study are hoped to serve a helpful guide for psychological counselors, psychologists, therapists, adolescents' parents, teachers working in middle and high school groups, or working with adolescents in the field of mental health in understanding the world of adolescents. These people will have the opportunity to organize their discourses, interventions, instruction, or supports by taking recent conditions in which adolescents are trying to establish their identity into consideration. Furthermore, with the enhancement of the new media literacy skills, adolescents can reach to level of awareness where they are fully able to understand YouTubers' impact on their identity, behavior, and mindset. Based on new media literacy, this study will be a pioneer work in the context of YouTubers.

1.3. Purpose of the study

The present study aims to explore the experiences of adolescents who follow YouTubers in terms of their identity construction. In other words, this study intends to gain insights in the matter as to how adolescents experience their identity growth as a close follower of YouTubers. Identity experienced by individuals and the relationships between these identity domains are essential to understand how adolescents live in the world and how they perceive life (Hird, 1998). Specifically, this study allows adolescents to scrutinize and observe how YouTubers influence their mindset, daily practices, concrete behaviors, or attitudes. During the identity construction period, adolescents try to figure out who they are, why they are here and who they will become in the future; hence, they are considerably open to being affected by the social contexts, such as parents and peers. In our era, elements of new media have become a substantial part of individuals' social context, particularly for adolescents. This fact clearly manifests why the high inclusion of the new media elements into the social contexts of people sustains fundamental importance in youth for identity construction (Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005).

In terms of the engagement and participation in new media tools, traditional media approaches young people as individuals who need to be protected from the harms of the media (Zemmels, 2012). Within the social media platforms, particularly on YouTube, audiovisual materials, digital technologies, and innovations bring along new media studies. With the advent of this term, consumption, participation, and production capabilities of the young people have started to change the current understanding of young people engagements. That is why this study aims to understand the interactions more comprehensively to find out the needs of the current

implications in new media. Therefore, in order to serve the purpose, the present study takes qualitative research approach as its focus.

To reveal the purpose of the current study within all theoretical infrastructures, the following research questions have been formulated. These questions try to capture the nature of adolescents' interactions with YouTubers, the emerging behaviors, thoughts, emotions, and belongings that have emerged through various engagements with YouTubers. In order to examine the effects of YouTubers on adolescent identities, this research study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. How do YouTubers influence adolescents' identity construction processes?

a. What role do YouTubers play in adolescents' lives?

b. How do YouTubers influence the mindset of adolescents?

c. How do YouTubers influence the daily practices of adolescents?

2. What kind of interaction occurs between adolescents and YouTubers?

a. How do adolescents get engaged with YouTube videos/ video content?

b. How do these behaviors interact with the identity-formation processes of the adolescent?

1.4. Definition of Terms

1.4.1. Adolescence

The term adolescence is a distinct phase which begins during puberty. In this phase, body growth throughout hormonal, sexual, social, emotional, personal, and mental changes and developments is observed. For women, this period starts with the menstruation cycle and growth in the breasts. On the other hand, for men, the adolescence period starts with the growth of hairs on the face and thickening voice.

All these periods generally take place between the ages of 10-19 (UN, 2009). It is a physical, social, and cognitive transition and maturation period which starts from childhood and lasts until adulthood (Gander & Gandiner, 2004).

1.4.2. Identity

The term identity has the Latin root “idem,” which means “the same”. Although these terms root in the idea of sameness, the term identity refers to a notion that helps both differentiating from society and similitude with social contexts. From the differentiation part, it is interpreted as something unique for each individual. Contrary to this, identity demonstrates a connection with broader social groups through cultural, national, political affiliations. (James, 1980).

1.4.3 Identity Construction

The term identity construction refers a process of forming identity through a set of complex actions. It presumes that people actively create, produce and shape their identity in order to adapt social world and feel their uniqueness (Taylor, 2015).

1.4.4. New media

The term new media has become an inclusive term that is used to describe rapidly growing and evolving digital technologies with the development of the Internet, computer systems, and cell phones (Zemmels, 2012). New media refers to traditional media elements but updated with innovations on the digital scale. That is why Ito (2010) describes new media as an intersection of traditional media with digital media. On the other hand, remediation is another term to describe new media. According to remediation characteristics, new media allocates the techniques, forms,

and social importance of other media and tries to regain or renew those (Bolter & Grusin, 2000).

1.4.5. YouTuber

The term YouTuber refers to a certain group people who produce video-content on the YouTube platform and publish this content on their personal YouTube channel periodically. The videos, where people record their thoughts, ideas, or experiences in a systematic format and regularly publish on the Internet, are called vlogs. The word vlog comes from the combination of two separate words; “video” and “blog”. People who share these vlogs on their YouTube channels are called YouTubers or vloggers (Smith, 2017).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, former research studies on the concept of identity, YouTubers and new media literacy are presented in order to provide insight for the current study. In order to have a more organized presentation of previous studies, the following sections were examined in seven sub-titles.

2.1 Adolescence and identity formation

As a part of human body development, adolescence is a phase of transformation during which children turn into adults. It is quite an exciting period where individuals reach adulthood step by step through lots of visible and invisible changes (Buckingham, 2008). They go through some physical changes. The onset of sexuality, activation of reproduction, cognitive development, a realization of ethics, and socio-emotional development take place during puberty.

The most important step from adolescence to adulthood is that cognitive capacity fully develops by going through certain stages. Piaget (1950) suggests that children are not born with any knowledge or thoughts, but instead they construct their perception of the world by actively experimenting like a scientist. In Piaget's pre-occupational stage, from age two to seven, individuals develop their thinking and language skills so that they can develop ability for empathy in time. Between the ages of seven and eleven, children become more able to think in an organized manner and to make logical inferences from concrete cases and real objects. They become more aware of reciprocal relations, reversible situations and constancy of matters. By the end of age ten, Piaget's concrete operations stage comes to an end,

and the formal operations stage begins. In this stage, individuals start developing various advanced cognitive skills, such as making high-level inferences, looking for other probabilities and developing abstract thinking abilities, such as love and death. Thanks to having a continuous awareness of multiple potential consequences, their deductive reasoning capacity also improves. Adolescents become more inclined to develop an interest in philosophy, ethics, social and political sciences. Their problems regarding the present evolve into questioning thoughts about the past and the future (Gander & Gardiner, 2007). With the development of abstract thinking skills, adolescents become more reflective of themselves concerning their relationship to others.

Psychosocial development alongside the cognitive skills shows that adolescents are in a stage in which they are developing autonomy, forming an identity and planning their future life. The first step for the adolescent is to show an attempt to gain his or her autonomy. Zimmer-Gembeck and Collins (2003) indicate that all definitions of autonomy emphasize two dynamics in general, which are mature individual functioning and multiple dimensions of thought, action and emotions. While the behavioral dimension involves self-governance and self-organizational skills, the cognitive dimension involves self-determination skills, which suggests zero need of others' approval (Sessa & Steinberg, 1991).

The emotional dimension manifests that an individual can become more independent from their family. While the influence of one's friends on their life increases, the impact of the family decreases. Especially friends of the same gender are believed to play a very important role in adolescents' identity development, which can be clearly observed in their outfit choice, hairstyle and music taste (Sanders, 2013; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). Another developmental characteristic

of this stage is egocentrism. In other words, adolescents think that everyone is observing and monitoring them, so they are obsessed with how they are seen and interpreted by others. During middle adolescence phase, mixed gender groups of friends and love affairs with dense emotions show up, and the number of singular actions increases. In late adolescence, individuals start struggling to reach a certain status of adulthood and fulfill their responsibilities (Sander, 2013).

It is a phase where the identity development is at its peak since all those above-mentioned transformations emerge very fast, and the society's expectations from adolescents change, as well (Marcia, 2002). According to Erikson (1968), who is one of the pioneers in the field of developmental psychology, the essential function of this transformation is that it enables individuals to form a stable, socially accepted, and meaningful identity for themselves through various explorations and searching. His approach to personality development is based on Freud's (1949) psychosexual developmental theory which indicates three main components of personality structure; respectively, id, ego and superego but Erikson (1968) claims that development continues for lifelong. Regarding how Erikson developed his theory, the fundamental concepts of Freud's psychosexual developmental theory need to be examined. First concept is the id which acts in accordance with the principle of pleasure and it functions as the reserve of psychic energy. It has a primitive and impulsive character. On the other hand, the ego works with the principle of reality, and it balances the ideal id and the real world. Based on reason and logic, it delays pleasure and tries to meet the society's norms. Lastly, the superego uses the principle of ethics as its base. It is a component of personality which internalizes the social standards of what is right and what is wrong.

According to Freud (1949), id, which is the immature sexual urge, shapes the personality by going through a series of phases. He mentions a libidinal energy which is defined as a different erogenous zone in each phase. Each and every phase includes a unique conflict, and solutions to these conflicts eventually shape the personality. Freud supported the idea that personality develops considerably until the end of age five. That is why he analyzed the development of human beings in five stages; namely, oral, anal, phallic, latent, and adolescence. While Erikson (1968) based his theory on this hypothesis, his own theory differs from that of Freud's. According to Kroger (1996), "Erikson moved beyond classic psychoanalysis with its focus on the id and libidinal drivers of development to emphasize the ego and its adaptive capacities to the environment" (p.14). Erikson (1968) emphasizes that personality development is a lifetime process which continues even after the adolescence.

In addition, Erikson has focused on identity as the core dynamic for human life. Consequently, examination of this concept needs to be understood profoundly. In terms of the origins of identity, it has three literal meanings. First of them is one's capability to keep the uniformity in themselves even in unusual situations. It ensures individuals the sense of sameness and continuity from past to present and to the future. This explanation corresponds to Erikson's definition of identity, as the "sense of personal sameness and historical continuity" (1968, p.17). The second meaning is one's distinctive self that differentiates them from others, which is the uniqueness of the individual. In other words, it refers to the construction of a separate self from others.

The third and the last meaning of identity is the connection formed as a consequence of identification with a social group, which meets the need for

socialization and a sense of belonging to a broader context (“Identity”, 2019). In this phase, individuals often ask themselves some certain questions, such as “Who am I?”, “What is my existential purpose in this life?”, “What am I going to do after graduation?” and “Whom do I like?” (Erikson, 1968). As the definition suggests, identity requires one to manage the dynamics of similitude and differentiation in the scope of both individual and the social environment. This whole process takes place during puberty, and adolescents enter into a phase where they are seeking to find their unique selves.

These above mentioned transformations do not happen immediately since answering these questions is dependent on accomplishment of several physical, cognitive, and social developmental steps. This process is defined by the United Nations to happen between the ages of 10-19 (UN, 2009). Considering the significant features of this period, the World Health Organization divides adolescence into three parts as early (10-15 years), middle (14-17 years), and late adolescence (16-19 years) (WHO, 2006). Early adolescence begins with the biological growth in sex organs and secondary sexual characteristics, and it continues with brain development. Concrete thinking is present in the cognitive sense, and the ability to think about the future is not fully developed yet. Due to many physiological changes, adolescents spend time thinking about their physical appearance, which might create distinct feelings, such as excitement, anxiety or pride. In the middle adolescence, the body nearly reaches adult growth, abstract thinking abilities develop, arguments with authority figures appear, and strong peer relationships gain visibility in their life. In late adolescence, analytical and reflective thinking abilities improve, and plans for future come into prominence. While opinions of peer groups still hold more importance when

compared to parents, many adolescents gain more clarity about their identity, ideas, and choices.

As it is indicated above, the changes in body and mindset constitute uncertainties for individuals, and they should be able to cope with these kinds of uncertainties when necessary, and they should eventually reach their unique self by gaining self-realization of their strengths and weaknesses (Marcia, 1980). Since the need for arrangements in many areas of life makes it a very critical period, Hall (1904) defined this phase as the period of storm and stress. According to Erikson, individuals start an active process of exploration in this phase, so that they can synthesize their identities. However, other individuals fail to start an active process of exploration and thus fail to synthesize their identities due to various limitations. Consequently, these individuals experience identity confusion. However, those with identity crises do not necessarily spend the rest of their lives in that way. The situations they face and their experiences force them to reconsider their identities and eventually reach an identity synthesis (Erikson, 1968).

Although the emergence of identity notion starts with asking previously mentioned questions, one's complicated environmental relationships have a lot do with identity. When individuals struggle to find answers to their questions, they are affected by the thoughts, behaviors, and attitudes of their families and everyone in their environment (Ersanlı, 2012). For that reason, Adams and Marshall (1996, p.433) defined identity as a social-psychological construct that reflects social influences through imitation and identification processes and active self-construction in the creation of what is essential to the self and to the others. The active self-constructive aspects of identity are founded upon cognitive (or ego) operations which organize, structure, and (re)construct knowledge of the self. Identity, as a

psychological structure, is a self-regulatory system that functions to direct attention, filter or process information, manage impressions, and select appropriate behaviors. Adams and Marshall (1996) summarized the five essential functions of identity. First of all, identity provides the individual with a structure about who they are. Secondly, it helps the individual to gain meaning and direction through their targets. As a third function, identity arouses a feeling of free will by providing them a personal control space. Then, it enables the individual to form a harmony and compatibility between their values, beliefs, and loyalties. Last but not a least, it helps the individual realize their potential by considering the future, the alternatives, and the possibilities.

In the literature, there are numerous interpretations and explanations for identity. The developmental perspective approaches the process of identity formation as a dialectic process, which means that after individuals face a deficiency or inconsistency, they experience a completion and arrangement pursuit. This pursuit results in synthesis and resolution, which suggests that developing an identity requires an ongoing process. Sometimes, identity can change as a result of imitations, identifications, or sometimes in the situation of inconsistency between the true self and the ideal self (Adams & Marshall, 1996). Also, Hendry, Meyer, and Kloep (2007) define the identity concept as a story of a life which is socially constructed, constantly reconsidered, renewed, and also as a notion that helps to feel continuity.

According to Erikson (1968), there are personal and social dimensions of identity. The personal dimension includes the conception of continuity and uniformity based upon the past, future, and expectancies the individual holds. As for the social dimension, it is stated to be the conception of continuity and uniformity obtained within the social relationships of the individual, which can be interpreted as the concept formed in other people's minds. Besides these two dimensions, Erikson

(1950) describes three identity areas that require adolescents to come up with successful and consistent decisions at the end of the various explorations; professional identity, ideological identity and interpersonal identity. The balance between individual and contextual factors needs to overcome the identity crisis of adolescence (Smith, Stewart & Winter, 2004).

Moreover, social contexts are also crucial factors affecting individuals in the identity formation process. Identity is not formed out of nowhere (Baumeister & Muraven, 1996). That is why one's personality development cannot be fully explained unless it is considered from that person's contextual perspective (Bosma & Kunnen 2001). The society individuals live in and the values of that society have a considerable effect on identity formation, as well. Identity emerges as a consequence of social interactions and takes a position within these interactions (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2007). Grotevant (1987) lists these contexts as family, peers, work and social environment, culture and society. Consequently, identity is affected by all contexts and communications each individual experiences in person. Besides, identity is evaluated under the influence of the social group which an individual belongs to and has a role in, and it is believed to be constructed in cultural and historical context (Gecas & Burke, 1995). Family, school, friends, interaction with the opposite sex and mass media which recently has a considerable amount of power are important factors affecting this process (Kır, 2011). While factors, such as politics, ideologies and economy, shape the identity in macro level, it is shaped by dialogues, conversations, gossips and discussions in micro level (Adams & Marshall, 1996).

As individuals differ from each other in society with their personal and narrative identities, they are integrated into society by creating collective, national, cultural, and social identities, too. When individuals differ from the society to a great

extent, isolation and alienation would be inevitable. On the other hand, over-integration kills individuality and self-autonomy (Adams & Marshall, 1996).

Although Erikson is a pioneer of developmental psychology, there are some limitations to his theory. Erikson (1968) has been said to be insufficient in explaining the effect of culture, gender, and diversity. These factors may change the notion of identity in different contexts and various groups of people (Cote & Levine, 1987). The valuable theory he introduced to psychology has been widened and re-approached with new dimensions by various researchers. The following paragraph mentions these new approaches developed by other scholars in the field.

The theory of identity statuses proposed by Marcia (1966) has conceptualized and functionalized Erikson's identity theory. Marcia (1980) has approached the identity as a constitution of the self. According to Marcia, exploration of options and inner commitments are two most important concepts concerning the identity formation process (Marcia 1989, 1994). Exploration of options means the process through which each individual is reconsidering and questioning their beliefs, thoughts, and experiences, and choosing one of the options to which they develop loyalty in turn. If individuals come up with inner commitments through an active exploration phase, they are supposed to reach to a successful identity status (Marcia, 1966). At the end of this process, individuals are expected to overcome the identity crisis.

On the other hand, some individuals go through the explorations actively and eagerly search for the options. However, they fail to decide on a particular option and to make inner commitments. The identity status of these individuals is defined as a moratorium, which means that it is suspended. This status is often associated with the necessity of crucial decision making in the case of an abundance of alternatives

(Berman, Schwartz, Kurtines, & Berman, 2001). These individuals generally become open-minded (Schwartz, 2001).

Nevertheless, not all identity statuses emerge from a conscious exploration of self. Sometimes, individuals make inner commitments, but they do not investigate that option. They usually make choices generally based on the expectancies of other people around them, or the options on which they have made inner commitments. This type of identity is called identity foreclosure. Contrary to moratorium status, individuals in this status are believed to be close-minded (Marcia, 1980). Some individuals prefer neither to make exploration nor to make inner commitments on an option. This type of identity status is called identity diffusion. This identity status can be further divided into two dimensions. In the first dimension, there are isolated individuals who avoid interactions. In the second dimension, on the other hand, some adolescents tend to communicate excessively (Marcia 1994). Both of them are considered to have the risk of not successfully adapting to life (Berzonsky, 1985).

Adolescents go through these phases respectively. They start with the status on which their parents made inner commitments, which is called identity foreclosure. Secondly, they step into the suspended identity status and start exploring the possible options. At the end of this process, some adolescents make inner commitments on the options which belong to them, and they reach to a point where they form a successful identity status (Marcia, 2002). Even though Marcia's conceptualization is considered to be crucial for identity, the theory does not have enough room to explain the effect of the social environment on identity development (Coté & Levine, 1988).

Berzonsky's (1990) approach provides another perspective to the identity theory. Since Marcia's identity theory is outcome oriented, Berzonsky (1990) has approached the identity by including more process orientation and proposed that

identity is a self-theorizing. “Self-theorizing” refers to the style of identity (Berzonsky, 1997, p.348). Bezonsky has approached identity by considering socio-cognitive processes. He proposed three styles of identity; information-oriented, norm-oriented, and avoidance-oriented (Berzonsky, 1989; 1990; 1992; 1994).

Information-oriented individuals correspond with those who have suspended identity and who are successful at identity status in Marcia’s theory. A norm-oriented identity is the one where individuals form the values and expectations through their families or social environments. That is why they avoid outer information due to the possible damage these values and expectations might have. This identity style corresponds with that of Marcia’s identity foreclosure. Avoidance-oriented individuals always abstain from making a decision and commitment, which corresponds with the identity diffusion of Marcia’s (Berzonsky, 1992; 1999). Although the studies of Berzonsky (1992; 1999) have had an essential place in the related literature, some scholars have recently proposed that identity could be understood more clearly if the process and context of puberty are included in these models (Bosma & Kunnen, 2008).

Luyckx and colleagues (2005; 2006; and 2008) have focused on the process, and thus developed a five-dimensional identity development model based on the existing studies. Two dimensions in Marcia’s theory, which are inner commitments and exploring the options, have been expanded to five. The dimension of identification with commitment has been added to Marcia’s inner commitment dimension, considering that it is also essential to know how this commitment is made. Besides, the process of exploration has been included in the dimension of exploring the options, and three more dimensions have been proposed, which are an exploration in breadth, exploration in-depth and ruminative exploration (Luyckx et

al., 2008). It is a matter of the fact that ruminative exploration has the most significant contribution to the literature (Morsünbül & Çok, 2013).

In addition to the approaches explained in this section so far, some other researchers pay attention to the domains of the identity and relationships between them to understand how individuals live in the world and how they perceive the world (Hird, 1998). Certain areas in life, such as political affiliations, intimate relations, or occupational choices were taken into consideration to successfully construct the identity. In the first place, Marcia determined three identity domains; namely, occupation, religion, and politics in the Identity Status Interview. Later on, Marcia's domains were further developed to eight domains, as occupation, religion, politics and philosophical lifestyle, friendship, dating, sex roles, and recreation. Grotevant et al. (1982) indicated that identity is composed of both interpersonal and ideological dimensions. As a domain, occupation, religion, politics, and philosophical life-style belong to the ideological dimension of the identity; whereas friendship, dating, sex roles, and recreation address the interpersonal dimension of identity. In the interpersonal dimension, parents, peers, and romantic relationships have a considerable impact on determining the domains. On the other side, current or past political situations, spiritual values, and occupation are highly determinative in ideological dimensions of the identity.

In addition to those above-mentioned approaches, researchers examine the gender influence on identity development also. As a pioneer, Erikson maintained the idea that the same developmental processes are followed in the identity development of men and women. Nevertheless, it is emphasized in the literature that gender does create a difference in identity development (Gilligan 1982; Miler, 1991; Surrey, 1991). Gilligan (1982) found that relatedness to others and being in close connection

with others are important components of identity for women, while separateness and autonomy are dominant factors for men who act mainly in the presence of reason and rules. While men find forming an independent identity very important, women care for being in a relationship and commitment.

Gender differences in achieving identity status have also been discussed in some studies. Meuss (1996) suggests that girls develop successful identity status more often than boys do. In the same way, Lacombe and Gay (1998) indicate that girls have more awareness in decision making process regarding identity when compared to boys. On the other hand, Tükbay, Özcan Doruk and Sekmen (2005) found that girls in Turkey experience more identity confusion and more problems in gradual identity formation than boys do. However, there is evidence in the related literature that suggests the exact opposite. Some studies indicate that men and women experience a similar identity development process, regardless of their gender. In a study conducted in Turkey, Köker (1997) and Varan (1992) imply that there is no gender related difference in identity related problems.

In order to provide a comprehensive summary about this section, it could be stated that adolescence is the most critical period in gaining a sense of identity because it has become a social necessity for adolescents to join the adult world, to choose a path and direction for themselves. Therefore, many theories and models have been developed to fully understand identity development. As stated above, different formulations in the search of identifying identity development started with Erikson's theory, and other researchers continued to expand it. Marcia (1980) focused on the outcome, and defined identity statuses according to the presence or the absence of exploration and commitment. However, Berzonsky (1992) prioritized the process and proposed identity styles by considering the importance of cognitive

elements in this process. As a conclusion, it can be said that all of the theories try to explain how the person answers the question of "Who am I?" Luyckx and colleagues (2005) combined Marcia's two statuses with Berzonksy's process approach, and they developed a five-dimensional model to explain the issue more deeply. Additionally, Grotevant et al (1982) define identity domains and Gilligan (1982) emphasizes the effect of gender on the notion of identity. All of these studies assisted our understanding of adolescents' identity experiences.

2.2. User generated contents

It is an undeniable fact that the Internet provides opportunities in the modern world as changes and transformations have gained too much speed to keep up with. Especially with web 2.0 there has been a breaking point, and web 3.0 has brought a new dimension to this breaking point. As a consequence, the power of the Internet has increased, which has led to the opening of a new field in social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The most significant innovation which Web 2.0 has presented to the digital platforms is that it has led the way to design and use web applications, which provides an opportunity for user-oriented design, information sharing, and cooperation (Waldron, 2013). The most important innovation brought by this lead is that it provides ordinary users the opportunity to create and share their own content. As a result of these changes and improvements in the field, user-driven technologies pave the way for a revolution (Smith, 2009).

The concept of User Generated Content (UGC) includes digital platforms, such as social networks, podcasting, and digital video websites which allow action on one's own behalf (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). Nowadays, people are able to share the content they create with the world while sitting in the comfort of their home

or traveling on a bus. Furthermore, people are able to freely present their food, their purchase, their comments about their purchases, their view of the world, the places they have been to, and even their way of having fun. To sum up, the Internet has brought individuals to a more independent and reachable position and it has cleared the way for a more democratic lifestyle.

In addition to the changes that Internet brought to human life, another contribution of virtual platforms is that they not only increase the interaction between societies and different groups of people, but also provide an opportunity for people to express themselves more effectively and openly (Strangelove, 2010). This opportunity can be defined as "the architecture of participation," because individuals, with their thoughts and actions, are now able to take over the leadership position in society (O'Reilly, 2007). Social media platforms are booming thanks to the opportunities they have provided during this period. In addition to above mentioned renovations, further purposes of the inclusion of social media can be mentioned. Through integrating written messages and various images, social media offers people a virtual platform in which they can reflect their identities by framing their own memories in their own style. Hence, one of the primary purposes of using social media has become expressing the self. In this way, users bear witness to their experiences by screening little parts of those (Wilcox-Ugurlu, 2011). The other three aims can be listed as having fun, socializing and consuming (cited from Aran-Ramspott, Fedele & Tarragó, 2018). As specified, it is safe to state that as a consequence of the improvements, social media offers tremendous communication opportunities.

In conclusion, user-generated content allows more frequent and free participation in the social media landscape, which stimulates the impulse to express,

share, and participate in something in society. It has been regarded as a new form of democracy and freedom of thought and expression.

2.3 YouTube platform as UGC

There are many popular social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, but YouTube has lately taken an outstanding place among other similar platforms with its rapidly increasing usage and domain. Having been founded by three PayPal employees in 2005, YouTube has become the most popular multimedia archive, video sharing, and a social network platform today (Burgess & Green, 2009).

The mission of YouTube is declared on its website as to give everyone a voice and show them the world. The fundamental idea behind this statement is explained by the following components; giving everyone a voice and showing everyone the world. Additionally, the core values of YouTube are identified with four essential freedom versions, namely, freedom of expression, freedom of information, freedom of opportunity and freedom to belong. (YouTube, 2019)

There are several functions of YouTube coming along with the properties it provides and the features it has. YouTube includes a wide range of communication and information functions, and it aggregates these functions into five main properties. The essential function is that it is a media archive in which every audiovisual material is preserved. Within seconds, any particular video can be found easily. This paves the way for a third function that YouTube is used as an information database. The other function is social networking by enabling users to share, comment, to vote, to subscribe to a channel, to indicate liking or disliking to a video. The last but the primary function is online streaming, which enables content

managers to produce and distribute their content to the world. Concerning the dissemination of contents, channels, and themes, it resembles to the TV. The fact that these two platforms share similarities has some merit on the surface. However, YouTube is more individualized when compared to the TV (Simonsen, 2012).

In addition to these functions and properties of YouTube, when the literature is examined, it has been found out that there are some other definitions and conceptualizations of it, which could provide various insights. Tolson (2010) defines the YouTube platform as "post television" (p.285). Television acts as a representative that searches and investigates on behalf of individuals, and it does not provide space for its users to make their own choices. YouTube helps its users shape their experiences by providing them with the opportunity to make their contacts. According to Gider Işıkman (2016), it is an opportunity for remarkably fast intercultural shifts. Therefore, she defines YouTube by utilizing Foucault's "heterotopia" concept. Heterotopia is a term that signifies the simultaneous coexistence of numerous alternatives, lives, spaces, and organizations in our cultures without excluding each other (Faucault, 2011, p. 291-302). With this variation and a multitude of alternatives, YouTube embraces too many people. It has reached a higher number of people than local and traditional media agents have done lately; that is why it is also defined as a kind of Internet nation-state (Herrman, 2017).

The latest statistics show that www.youtube.com is the second most preferred website following www.google.com. YouTube provides people the opportunity to create their channels, share any video they want, and rank the videos based on whether they "like" or "dislike" them. In addition, the users are categorized into certain groups, such as active users and passive users. (Pérez-Torres et al., 2018). Those who actively use their channel and share content about many different topics

on that channel are called active users, while passive users are the ones who only watch videos, comment on them, and state whether they like or dislike them. YouTube is a popular platform in which many users sit in front of the camera and express themselves in the form of a monologue. That is why one of YouTube's mottos is "Broadcast Yourself" (Burgess, 2015).

It can be stated that with these sophisticated properties, YouTube has got ahead of not only traditional television and but also other social media platforms by attracting a vast number of people's attention. As indicated previously, putting freedom at the center of the ideological base of YouTube makes it a highly popular platform in the social media landscape.

2.4 YouTubers as newcomers

The concept of YouTubers refers to people who produce content, and then promote, share, and advertise this content through their YouTube channels by making videos. These people actively produce authentic, creative, and genuine content on behalf of their hobby or profession, and they eventually gain fame or they start earning money. This term is very similar to the term video blogger (vlogger), but a vlogger is a person who often shoots video by wandering outside, doing social experiments, or interviewing. Vlog is a video capture of a person on a daily selected topic. Additionally, vlogs can be published in any platform. They are not necessarily shared on YouTube. Until recently, YouTuber has been the most widely used term, but after vlogging became more popular than YouTuber, many YouTubers has begun to call themselves vloggers (Smith, 2017).

Lately, these content producers or YouTubers have made a significant contribution to the process of making YouTube a useful platform in terms of media

ecology, which requires these content producers to be approached as research subjects since these people not only post videos on YouTube but also create and present their individuality (Scolari & Fraticelli, 2017).

YouTubers are individuals coming from various social environments and backgrounds (Illera & Benito, 2018). They are individuals, some are amateurs and some others are professionals, who share videos and become known by a number of people even though they are not famous in society. These people may rapidly reach large groups of followers just by a video they post and gain lots of money by advertising products in those videos. Marvick (2013) claimed that one of the most critical factors that have carried YouTubers into this position is the marketing strategy, which is called self-branding. This technique has recently been a trend that is popular among celebrities, which ultimately brings success (Fita, 2019). Marwick has defined self-branding as "the strategic creation of an identity to be promoted and sold" (Marwick, 2013, p.192), and as "thinking of oneself as a brand and promoting it" (2013, p.15–6). This concept has started to rise with the opportunity provided by Web 2.0 version, which enables individuals to form, change, and control their identities strategically and consciously.

The first phase of self-branding is enterprising self, which means to take a step for reconstructing and presenting one's identity. The second phase is goal setting; in other words, dream-lining. In this phase, individuals follow a strategic plan to reach the target they set (Marwick, 2013). Garcia-Rapp (2016) exemplified YouTubers' self-branding techniques as inviting people to their channel, suggesting subscribing and liking, writing textile descriptions for the videos, and offering them to follow their other social media accounts, such as Twitter and Instagram. In addition, giving away some products to followers as samples is another technique of

self-branding. YouTubers feed and maintain their followers by highly benefiting from this technique. In sum, YouTubers have their own ways of operating and surviving in several aspects.

2.4.1 YouTubers as micro-celebrities

The position of YouTubers has brought a new meaning to being famous, and they have become micro-celebrities. This concept addresses to the group of people who have a particular number of followers and audience whom they obtained by using their skills and dynamics, which makes YouTubers feel like a real celebrity. This is a relatively new concept which has come to our lives in these past few years, but it challenges most of the elements of traditional media (Jerslev, 2016; Marwick, 2013).

YouTubers' strong social bonds and communication with their followers are counted as most significant important factors that feed the concept of micro-celebrity. On their periodically featured videos, YouTubers express their ideas genuinely, share their own stories of life, make recommendations on various products or ideas, and usually use an uncensored language (Pérez-Torres et al., 2018). The intimate relationship they develop with their followers in this creative and genuine communication period eventually helps them have their own *fans*. The fact that followers find YouTubers more honest than traditional media agents makes these people social influencers.

2.4.2 YouTubers and authenticity

Despite their ordinary lives, YouTubers can be considered as uber-authentic individuals. Authenticity means that something is worth approving and based on the truth, and is also original. In other words, it is not imitation or fake. This concept has

been defined in the field of psychology multiple times. While Maslow (2001) has defined it as someone having the qualities of freedom, honesty, not pretending, and having no excuses, it has also been considered as someone realizing and displaying their true potential (Dökmen, 2009). To deeply understand this concept, self-understanding, clarity, actions, and interpersonal relationships are the fundamental factors (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Authenticity requires one to realize their inner dynamics and continue their lives accordingly without being affected by any exogenous factors and following any tendencies.

Assessing the authentic identity within the concept of famousness, Tolson (2001) has defined the authentic identity as "being yourself…is a type of public performance" (Ibid, p. 445). When it comes to authenticity of YouTubers, the most apparent factor points out the intimate relationship that YouTubers develop with their followers because they invite their followers to comment on videos, like them, and make suggestions or requests. To ensure authenticity, they also take the comments into consideration, give answers to them, and perform according to those comments (Frobenius, 2014). One of the essential qualities that make YouTube users different than those who use other platforms is that the videos created by YouTubers have a powerful emotional function because their speech is based on the narrative style. The gestures and facial expressions they use during this process allow their followers and audience to understand what they mean and how they feel (Scolari & Fraticelli, 2017). For instance, the YouTuber called Felix Arvid Ulf Kjellberg or PewDiePie has been the most followed person on YouTube since 2013. He shares all his personal matters with his followers, the places he has been to, and his relationships genuinely. Being friendly and warm with his followers, this YouTuber calls his audience his bros, which leads them to embrace him (Marss, 2015). He has been

selected as one of one the most influential people by Times Magazine in 2016 (Time, 2016). To give another example, Missy Lynn is a 24 years old famous beauty YouTuber, and her statements about herself is a follows; “I like to be as real as possible. I would like my followers to feel like I am their sister or cousin. They see us as celebrities, but that is not the way I want to go” (Lieber, 2014). As all these examples suggest, being a professional and seeking for perfection are considered to discredit YouTubers because followers would like to identify themselves with YouTubers (Fred, 2015). As the followers do not like egoistic behaviors in a YouTuber, they want YouTubers to remember that they have reached fame even though they were once ordinary people (Kahraman, 2016).

Besides, it is a surprising fact that YouTubers tend to pretend as Hollywood celebrities. They spend a significant amount of time thinking about their significant others, such as a boyfriend, girlfriend, or pets in their videos, which resembles the acts of celebrities. YouTubers have lately developed some new formats, such as teasing each other, dating each other, and inviting each other to their channels to make videos together. Despite all of these, YouTubers find it annoying to be called celebrities (Giles, 2018). They defend themselves by stating that they are quite ordinary and normal people. This is their most important quality which their fans find most interesting. The fans state that it feels important to realize how similar they are to YouTubers and that they like the idea of going through the same phases in life as they do.

Along with these feelings, followers identify themselves through YouTubers (Berryman & Kavka, 2017). They see themselves as friends with YouTubers when they have the opportunity to be involved in their lives closely (Livingston, 2012). Ultimately, being able to identify themselves with YouTubers is considered as one of

the most important reasons for fans and followers to trust the suggestions that YouTubers make (Giles, 2018).

Similarly, many researchers state that the sense of deep connection YouTubers make with their followers is caused by sharing their daily lives dynamically. Marwick (2013) has defined this as lifestreaming. According to him, "lifestreaming" is the ongoing sharing of personal information to a networked audience, and the creation of a digital portrait of one's actions and thoughts (Marwick, 2013, p.208). Several researchers have named some similar concepts, such as "life-blogging" (Burgess & Green 2008, p.6) and "life-casting" (Strangelove, 2010, p.188).

YouTubers share sincere posts about their private lives, such as their relationships or bedrooms, and even their confessions of mistakes, crimes, and sins, which enables them to display their inner truth, which in turn keeps them at a closer distance to their audience (Jerslev, 2016). What makes YouTubers adorable and watchable is that the practice of lifestreaming provides the opportunity to get to know YouTubers better and make a stronger connection, thus arousing the sense of closeness among the followers and the YouTubers. This fact explains the reason why Lange (2009) has named these videos as "videos of affinity" (p.71). Nardi (2005), on the other hand, has defined affinity as a sense of connection. The most important effect of lifestreaming on YouTubers' world is that it provides them the opportunity to have a close and meaningful connection with their followers whom they do not know at all (Garcia-Rapp, 2016).

Another characteristic which make YouTubers authentic is that unlike traditional media, YouTubers give place to bloopers or many slips, which are considered as moments of transparency. The underlying idea is to make sure that the

audience is aware that the video they watch is not a fiction or a product of imagination; on the contrary, it is part of the real-life (Bevan, 2017).

All in all, the most important feature of YouTubers is thought to be their authenticity. They build their authentic existence through their original content creations, the way they present their life, their unique personality traits, having a genuine relationship with their followers, and using uncensored language in their videos. A combination of all these characteristics makes people feel close to content creators and have the feeling of trust toward YouTubers.

2.4.3 Commercial power of youtubers

The strong interaction YouTubers has recently prompted various producers and companies, which has created a new area of advertisement. Research in the field has proved that YouTubers have four times more revenue and impact on the purchase behavior of consumers than celebrities do (Forbes, 2016). Data from Defy Media, a digital media company behind YouTube, have revealed that YouTubers are much more effective than the traditional TV celebrities when the sale of the same product is considered. In the study, results revealed that 63% of participants responded they would try a product proposed by YouTubers; however, only 48% said they would try the same product when advertised by a traditional celebrity. According to Google commissioned study results, 60 % of YouTube subscribers state that YouTubers' recommendations are more remarkable than the advice of their favorite TV stars (O'Neil-Hart & Blumenstein, 2016).

It is a well-known fact that the most valuable knowledge in our era is what is gained through personal thoughts and experiences (Chua & Banerjee, 2015). When consumers do not consider the quality of the brands, almost 90% of them care about

other consumers' thoughts (Diaz, 2017, as cited in Illera & Benito 2018). Brands are fully aware of this fact and thus act accordingly. Therefore, they run their advertisement campaigns over influencers. It is necessary that influential YouTubers are involved in the process of advertising the brand or the products so that companies receive a recompense for their products, time, and effort. Companies decide on the efficiency of a YouTuber by evaluating several aspects, such as authenticity, reliability, honesty, legitimacy, capability, and specialty (Lisichkova & Othman, 2017). Nowadays, most of the people search for a product online, check YouTubers' comments, and follow the comments made by other users when purchasing a product. Consequently, this process supports the commercial power YouTubers have in the marketing field.

2.4.4 Threats to the authenticity of youtubers

The commercial power of the YouTubers has also been interpreted as a threat to the authenticity of YouTubers. Adding advertisements to their content and making contracts with various companies play an essential role in their money-making, which causes people to question YouTubers' sincerity and authenticity in their videos (Jerslev, 2016). To keep their credibility and honesty with society, some YouTubers hashtag the sponsored videos, and clearly show that it is a product of a sponsorship. As a rule of advertising, using hashtags is compulsory in some countries to let the audience know the fact that the products in the video are recommended by advertisement (The Guardian, 2014). A study conducted by Fred (2015) concerning the effects of YouTubers' credibility and expertness on the watching rate and the revenue has shown that YouTubers who are not supported by any brands bear much more credibility and expertness.

Another reason to question the authenticity of videos is the issue of censoring. YouTubers hold the idea that one of the most important ways to display their emotions and clearly express themselves is to use obscene language, curse, and display vulgarism. Hence, in most of the videos, especially in the ones aiming comedy, daily language and its qualities draw attention, which plays a vital role in the intimate relationship YouTubers have with their audience (Giles, 2018). For instance, PewDiePie is one of the YouTubers with the highest number of followers, and he draws attention of the audience by communicating with them in an abusive manner. Fägersten (2016) concluded that the superior status of PewDiePie is supported by his way of starting an easy conversation, preventing social distances effectively, and creating an illusion of closeness by displaying abusive behavior. It can be concluded that swearing is beyond being solely an element of attention for PewDiePie; it is the most significant factor of his success. Even though it is the usage of abusive language that has made PewDiePie famous, the acceptability of this matter has been a controversial issue in the field. As it can be seen in the scope of PewDiePie example, through such discourses and deliberate use of swear words, YouTubers build a very close and intimate environment which is highly appreciated by adolescents.

Despite the arguments regarding the moral aspect of the issue, freedom of speech given to people by social media makes it quite accusable in terms of ethical principles, which creates a dilemma (Turner, 2014). The abusive language has been a matter of worry for many parents. In this regard, the videos discussing Minecraft game specifically include too much profanity and swear words. These videos, mostly followed by middle school children, set a negative example to children by normalizing the use of this type of language. Numerous parents are continuously

seeking for a solution to this problem. To serve that purpose, some platforms make top-10 lists of YouTubers who have made child-friendly and non-abusive Minecraft videos (Westenberg, 2016).

Although authenticity has been perceived as one of the greatest qualities of YouTubers, their commercial acts, and suggestions about brands or products have led people to question their authenticity. Beyond this, the use of swear words has caused people to question the appropriateness of moral and ethical codes, parents in particular.

2.4.5 Genres of youtubers videos

Most of the YouTubers, who are also called as social influencers, shoot videos in different categories. Each YouTuber creates contents based on some certain formats, such as beauty and care, online games, tutorials, and lifestyle (Giles, 2018). Shooting a tutorial is one of the most commonly used formats. These videos are the ones in which YouTubers impersonate experts and inform their followers on how to apply make-up, how to form a dressing style, how to play the guitar or how to cook. To illustrate, Zoe Sugg, who is also known as Zoella, ranks among the most successful YouTubers in the United Kingdom with 11 million followers. Zoella has become a famous and popular person with her tutorials on fashion, forming styles, beauty, and make-up. Zoella defines herself as an expert of beauty and self-care (Berryman & Kavka, 2017).

Zoella has claimed herself to be the big sister of the youngster. Although they pretend to be experts while shooting a video, communicating with their followers does not affect YouTubers' intimate relationships and the sense of being an ordinary person (Giles, 2018). Even though it may seem ironic, YouTubers integrate daily

conversations and the tone of chat into their expertise. They keep staying in our lives as ordinary experts by developing some hybrid conversation style (Tolson, 2010). For example, Zoella invites her followers to her life genuinely, and she shows her capability and interest in her products as a natural part of her life (Berryman & Kavka, 2017). Tolson (2010) exemplifies that hybrid conversation in the video of Nickel. “In this video he Nickel said that I’m going to talk today on what personal style is and how you can find your own personal style” (p.282).

Another trending theme in YouTube videos is lifestyles. YouTubers include topics related to real life, health, sexuality, and spirituality in their lifestyle videos. They inform their followers on these topics and the lives of various sub-groups. For example, Ingrid Nilsen, who currently has 3.7 million followers, and Connor Franta, who has 5.35 million followers, are homosexual YouTubers with the highest number of followers. They aim to be role models for young people with different sexual orientations by sharing their lifestyles, including controversial subjects, such as contemporary gay life and gay sexuality, in their videos (Lovelock, 2016).

Playing games, talking about games and watching people playing games are other themes seen in YouTube videos. In the game videos, YouTubers bring a new dimension to classic gaming by playing the game and integrating it with their speech, comments, music, or images at the same time. These videos are called Let’s Play videos (Newman, 2016). The powerful effect of these videos goes beyond game review. The sales and even the design of games are affected by these videos (Maiberg, 2015). For example, Minecraft is a game that has a pixelled view and allows players to build various constructions by placing blocks. Minecraft is mostly preferred by teenagers; therefore, YouTubers take this fact into consideration and upload videos on YouTube related to the game in order to attract the target group of

audience (Plunkett, 2011). The underlying reason for Minecraft to be popular is that it enables the players a vast space for design. This quality is valued as much as comedy, and the combination of these two brings success (Major, 2015). YouTubers make these videos not to show or prove their talents as players; on the other hand, to give their followers a lot of fun time. That is why this kind of video is called improvisational comedic (Maloney, Roberts & Caruso, 2017).

2.4.6 YouTubers in the context of Turkey

Turkish people from the generation Y, born between 1980-2000, mostly prefer YouTube due to the availability of all kinds of contents, easy access, suggestions about similar contents and easy usage. Furthermore, generation Y's use of YouTube is divided into five headings; experiencing different experiences, interacting, following popular videos, learning, and having fun. First of all, people get a chance to observe others' hobbies, lifestyles, vocations, and interests that they have never experienced before. When the purpose is interaction, people encounter with positive or negative ideas, reactions, experiences, or exchange of views. The third intention of watching YouTube is to follow famous people, topics, contents, and to have information about them. Beyond these functions, many people watch YouTube videos to learn and to be enlightened. That is why they choose videos which contribute to their personal development, curiosity, and needs in everyday life. Last but not least, having fun can be counted as another factor causing people to watch YouTube videos because many people want to move away from the adversity of daily life and make use of their leisure time (Arklan & Kartal, 2018).

According to the results obtained from Turkey YouTube User Profile Survey, 72% of people aged 16-24, 63% of people aged 25-34, and 48% of those aged 45-55

watch videos on YouTube (Ferah, 2016). This statistic indicated that the videos of music, comedy, how to do, food and education are the most consumed contents. The latest social media use statistics Digital 2019 in Turkey is published by the company We Are Social, and Hootsuite, indicates that there are a total of 52 million social media users, and in Turkey, 92% of these users prefer YouTube. It is found to be the most dynamic platform in Turkey. Top YouTube Search queries rank the top twenty most-watched channels, and Enes Batur, who is a popular figure as a YouTuber in Turkey, ranks sixth on the list as the only YouTuber (Kemp, 2019).

A research study on Turkish children has found that the age of children following YouTubers goes down to two years. One of the reasons that children love YouTubers that much is their need for socialization, playing games, discovering new things, having unique hobbies, and being able to establish healthy connections with their closest families. It is an inevitable consequence that children whose social needs are not met would try to resolve this problem by showing interest on YouTubers (Özkonuk, 2019). That is why it is crucial to determine the validity of this situation for adolescents. Additionally, specifying what kinds of social needs adolescents meet by watching and following YouTubers in the context of Turkey is another essential aim of this study.

2.4.7 Adolescents' relations with youtubers

In this section, the relationship between adolescents and YouTubers is presented by referring to various research outcomes. According to the data gathered by Defy Media, 96% of users are 13 to 24 years old. Even though YouTubers are followed mostly by adolescents, their effects are global and too significant to ignore (Giles, 2018). They have an emotional bond with teens (Meseguer, 2016). According to a

research carried out in Canada, according to the children's statements, YouTube is in the first place for them among ten other social media platforms. Moreover, for Spanish students aged 14 to 17, Facebook is the most preferred social media platform, while YouTube takes the second place (Pérez-Torres et al., 2018).

According to Turkey's YouTube user profile research in 2016, 72% of users aged 16 to 24 spend their time watching videos on YouTube. Video watching has become the most time-consuming activity following work and sleep for adolescents. Internet usage statistics in Turkey in 2018 have shown that YouTube is the most effective social media platform with a share of 55% (Ferah, 2016).

Chau (2010) proposed that there are several underlying reasons for adolescents to prefer YouTube, and they can be analyzed in five dimension. The first dimension is the fact that there are relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement in YouTube. YouTube offers teens a field where they can investigate their identities, connect with their friends, and have fun at the same time. In addition, there is not an obligation to follow or sign in to YouTube. Users may create an account for free and join the platform easily. Minimum conditions for creating an account make adolescents feel safe.

The second dimension is related to strong support in the process of creating and sharing one's project. Since YouTube is designed to be a content-sharing site, instructional videos about how to use it most conveniently are presented. The interface of YouTube is straightforward and intuitive facilitate the use. YouTube homepage is also specifically designed to make it easier for users to access the most popular content in a very short period of time (Chau, 2010).

The third dimension is the belief that there is a contribution to the community. Especially teens enjoy other functions in YouTube, such as ranking the

videos they like and sharing their own content, which helps them keep in touch with the outside world and have the feeling of contributing to it (Chau, 2010).

The fourth dimension is the informal mentorship presented by YouTube. A significant pool of information on what to do or how to do something is shared on YouTube. Beyond that, YouTubers share an extensive coverage of their life stories, hobbies, success, and failures in their videos (Chau, 2010). This situation helps people gain a perspective of life, such as relationships, style, and design for adolescents who are stepping into life (Westenberg, 2016). It is safe to state that beyond entertainment, YouTube acts as a source of information for adolescents (Tolson, 2010).

According to Chau (2010), the fifth dimension is the sense of social connection which YouTube offers. YouTube is not a website designed to allow users to collaborate and communicate in a synchronized way. It is a place where users can personalize their profiles and subscriptions, which means that there is not enough space for social networking. However, young users have found new methods to communicate with each other. For example, the owners of the account *FiveAwesomeGuys* on YouTube acquainted with each other through their videos and then decided to become a group.

The other reason why adolescents highly prefer YouTube platform is that adolescents regard YouTube users or YouTubers as their peers and fellows because most of the YouTubers are contemporaries of adolescents. It helps them consider those YouTubers as the kids of the same generation and as the social learning theory suggests, they take YouTubers as reference people for themselves, and therefore they may imitate their actions, and identify themselves with them (Bentley, Earls & O'Brien, 2011).

According to research conducted by Google, 60% of adolescents think that YouTubers are better people than their friends (O'Neil-Hart & Blumenstein, 2016). Teens do not equate themselves by taking Hollywood stars as examples, so they do not compare their own lives with theirs. However, it does apply with YouTubers. Unlike big stars, YouTubers are ordinary people with ordinary life stories, and they might be just anyone in our lives (Westenberg, 2016). Therefore, YouTubers have quickly become one of those role models for them. However, another crucial point here is that imitating and identifying is not the same thing. Any behavior can be imitated, but a behavior adopted by others is defined as identification, which is different from solely imitating someone (Mcleod, 2016).

Research has shown that adolescents are profoundly affected by YouTubers, and they imitate their behaviors. For instance, they buy the products suggested by YouTubers and change or adapt their behaviors in the way they are affected by YouTubers, such as their way of dressing, their make-up styles, the language they use, and their sense of humor. The most striking fact in this process is that adolescents are not aware that they are under the influence of YouTubers (Westenberg, 2016). That is because the underlying reasons of unawareness can be the fact that adolescents are not able to distinguish between the advertisements and authentic moves in the videos they watch. Since handling disappointing results effectively requires thorough awareness on social media.

Based on these reasons and features, it would be meaningful and appropriate to discuss that social media platforms provide substantive virtual space for the identity development of adolescents. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube offer adolescents a virtual area during the process of their identity development. Although many teens join YouTube as passive users, they take

YouTubers as a reference to their identity formation (Pérez-Torres et al., 2018). According to the latest research conducted on Spanish adolescents, these people value the characteristics of YouTubers whom they take as reference points for themselves. When answering the questions about the criteria they use to determine which YouTuber to like, adolescents stated that it is very effective when YouTubers have a better ethnical and gender past or when there is diversity of subjects. Therefore, it is found to be more effective when a YouTuber is easy going and likes to share his or her experiences with peers, or when the YouTuber looks attractive or sounds intelligent. It is an undeniable fact that YouTubers are the actors and actresses of adolescents' digital and social media lives. However, research has shown that most of the adolescents still consider being a YouTuber as a hobby in the future, not as a career (Pérez-Torres et al., 2018).

2.4.8 Awareness of youtubers' effect

YouTubers closely affect adolescents' identity experiences and their identity formation processes. This interaction creates many opportunities for adolescents in terms of learning, engaging, and having fun (Pereira, Moura & Fillol, 2018). Nevertheless, lack of awareness about the effects of a close relationship with YouTubers on adolescents' behaviors, experiments, thoughts, and preferences has been interpreted as a risk factor.

Even though adolescents claim that they are able to realize possible risks, research in the field has found out that adolescents are not fully aware of how YouTubers affect them. According to the literature, most of the adolescents have stated that they are aware of the advertised and sponsored products. However, they

ignored the questions about the purpose of the promotions and sponsorships YouTubers get (Westenberg, 2016).

Although users are aware of the advertisements, they believe that celebrities are not likely to abuse their position of power and fame and would not want to damage their reputation by discrediting criticism. This situation indicates that the financial gain of celebrities from YouTube advertisements does not affect the willingness and buying behavior of the participants (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Approvals by peer influencers will be more reliable and authentic to adolescents than the standard commercial messages of advertising companies. Therefore, children are less likely to be skeptic about vlogs than the more traditional forms of advertising (Folkvord, Bevelander, Rozendaal, & Hermans., 2019). The vlog environment can further enhance identification with the vloggers and increase the likelihood that the approved product will be seen more positively.

Although adolescents notice advertisements and sponsorships received by YouTubers from various companies, the Office of Communications (Ofcom) reported that according to the 2017 report on the media use of children and families, this level of awareness is not sufficient. Based on the statistics, 38% of young people between the ages of 12-15 do not know that vloggers take money from the companies for the products they show or use in their YouTube videos. Adolescents can be convinced more quickly if they do not understand the product is advertised, which supports the idea that adolescents are vulnerable to YouTubers' effects on their attitudes (De Jans, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2019).

Folkvord et al. (2019) explored children's awareness of branding or product placement on vlogs and the potential persuasive effects of these vlogs. According to the results of the study, sharing intimate feeling and personal experiences causes the

development of strong ties between followers and YouTubers. Specifically, when YouTubers demonstrate residential places in videos, there is a high possibility that identification with them might increase, which gives rise to consider the product positively. Another study conducted with Dutch children who are 9-12-year-olds demonstrated that children interpret product reviews as hints and tips about products; therefore, they are not critical for them. This situation shows that they are not capable of discriminating hidden advertisements (Martinez & Olsson, 2018). Due to the growing commercial power of YouTube, adolescents' ignorance toward ingenious commercial initiatives (cited from Schwemmer & Ziewiecki**,** 2018; Döring, 2014) highlights the need for media literacy

Consequently, the relationship between individuals and the outside world established through new media technology has become alarming. In particular, it has become clear that adolescents need to be aware of the effects of YouTubers' behaviors, tendencies, thoughts, and identities on their personality. This kind of awareness requires certain amount of media literacy. Therefore, new media literacy should be considered as an important issue today.

2.5 Social media and identity

According to Erikson (1968), social concepts, technologic qualities, and historical matters affect the process of identity formation. Thanks to the opportunities provided by today's technology, adolescents pursue explorations related to their identities, with or without realizing it. Many people share information about themselves and their daily lives. Adolescents' interactive use of the Internet and social platforms enable them to take active users of the social media as role models (Buckingham, 2008). A consequence of globalization, in this regard identity development becomes

more challenging than in the past. The reason behind this is that people in today's era, especially adolescents, develop bipolar identity due to high exposure to both local culture and global culture. Individuals are not limited to local structures to be taken as leading factors in identity development. Therefore, globalization seems to offer an excellent opportunity to expand people's identity, but it causes a pervasive experience of uncertainty in many areas of identity (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007).

There are two different explanations of identity formation and the effects of social media platforms on it (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). The first explanation focuses on the self-concept unity hypothesis. Specialists suggest that social media provides users an opportunity to gain knowledge and to integrate into the world. The supporters of this idea maintain that adolescents who are not involved in this process cannot obtain those skills (Jenkins, 2006). Research has proven that social media platforms have an undeniable influence on adolescents' social implementations and they provide space for them to develop their identities. Through online communication, friendship quality during these ages and feeling of closeness toward friends have improved, which is mediated with the high levels of adolescents' self-concept clarity (Matsuba, 2006; Valkenburg & Peter, 2011).

Besides, social media platforms have been proved to help adolescents acknowledge certain matters, share experiences, and learn new things (Ito et al., 2009). Early research on the subject suggests that social media enables individuals to obtain the so-called social capital, which is information, friendship, and social skills (Portes, 1998). According to a study in the field, among high school adolescents those who use social media platforms have more social capital than those who do not (Ahn, 2010). Recent research has proven positive results supporting these findings. It has been found out that adolescents' social interactions with their friends help them

develop a sense of belonging and get more feedback about their identities (Davis, 2012). Wilcox-Ugurlu's studies (2011) have shown that social media arouse the sense of approval for individuals. Valkenburg and Peter (2011) have claimed that when there is the sense of self-validation and the opportunity to express one's self, self-concept clarity improves and empowers.

Another group of researchers proposed the self-fragmentation hypothesis. In today's rapidly changing post-modern society, it is considered impossible for an individual to reach a sense of consistency and uniformity due to the high interference of inter-cultural connectivity and diverse life trajectories. It is suggested that today's individuals face a chaotic environment because the Internet allows individuals to have limitless interaction space with a diverse group of people. Encountering many different notions might give rise to the adoption of different personalities and to complicate the process of building the self, which causes multi-identities (Turkle, 1995). Switching between multiple identities is not feasible in a rapidly changing contemporary era, for adolescents in particular (Gergen, 2000). Adolescents are at the beginning of the identity construction process; therefore, it is a big deal for them to switch among identities. (Turkle, 1995). While it was expected from pre-modern era individuals to form their identities based on the qualities and values of the society, the identities of the post-modern individuals are formed through the development of consumer culture, the constitution of an image, tendency to others, and racing with others. Based on these facts, the moratorium identity is seen more often than the others among the individuals of post-modern societies (Cote, 2002; Morsünbül, 2011).

Despite all these facts, Ahn (2010) supposes that the social, cognitive, and emotional effects of social media on adolescents should be deeply analyzed. Social

media platforms provide adolescents with ample space to figure out, search and express their identities. (Davis, 2012). Being a rapidly rising trend, YouTube has become one of the platforms that cannot be ignored. Adolescents expand their social environment by participating in video groups through YouTube, which shows them multiple ways in making friends (Lenhart et al., 2015). New paths open for them to express themselves in different ways (Eftekhar, Fullwood & Norris, 2014), and a new dimension of sociability emerge in their lives. YouTube has also become a "global forum" to which people from all geographies and cultures can access. Taking all these facts into account, YouTube has been considered as a way to "get closer" to different cultures (Jiménez, García & Ayala, 2016, p.70).

The enormous number of videos available in YouTube from around the world with their unique themes, discourses, and formats enlarge the social circle of adolescents. This fact permits exposure to new concepts and ideas among young people in an international level, which impacts the process of identity formation for adolescents in the areas of sexuality, moral values, language, diet, media, and so forth. (Jensen, Arnett, & McKenzie, 2011). Hence, following YouTubers from different cultures, regions, religions, or nationalities and having deep feelings for them might have many impacts on an individual during adolescence. This explains the reason why the effects of multicultural life on the development, behaviors, and identities of adolescents must be a subject of research.

2.6 YouTubers and identity formation of adolescents

Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, provide teenagers an ample space in the identity formation process. Although lots of teenagers use YouTube passively by only watching the videos, they take YouTubers

as role models during identity formation (Pérez-Torres et al., 2018). According to a study conducted with Spanish adolescents, participants were found to value the characteristics of YouTubers whom they take as references. Besides, adolescents have responded that a better ethnical and gender-related past and the theme diversity of YouTubers are essential elements when they were asked how they decide which YouTubers to like. The level of coolness, sharing things with peers, and the identification of followers with YouTubers are more effective than the appearance and cleverness of YouTubers.

In a content analysis study on YouTubers' video contents', Pérez-Torres et al. (2018) have discussed doubts of adolescents about the identity formation process. Through their contents and the suggestions, they make, YouTubers help adolescents to learn about what kind of difficulties adolescents face and how they integrate their previous self-concepts into present self-concepts in the formation of vocational and gender identity. YouTubers offer teenagers scenarios concerning their identity formation. While sharing these scenarios, they encourage teenagers to explore their own identities and experience their personal self. Especially in the matter of gender identity and orientation, teenagers are able to get some answers to questions by following the videos on YouTubers' channels who are in LBGTQ, such as how they have realized it, whom they have shared it with or whom they have got support from. Besides, teenagers can ask YouTubers some questions concerning their experiences, which initiates an interaction.

According to a study by Lovelock (2016) on YouTube celebrities and their gay or lesbian identities, famous gay YouTubers, such as Franta and Nilsen, define themselves as role models for young gay and lesbians in their videos. They give recommendations for teens on videos or interviews. For instance, Connor Franca,

who has 5.3 million followers, was asked a question during an interview in 2015. The question was as follows: “Your coming out has inspired millions of viewers. Do you have any advice for gay teens who are afraid to come out?’ He answered the question by saying; “Move at your own pace, do not be afraid – and know that it is going to be okay’ and he remained as a role model for many others feeling the same (Barker, 2015; Lovelock, 2016). According to Lovelock (2016), the considerable success of Connor Franta as a YouTuber is because of his non-normative sexual-orientation, and he overcomes the difficulties by his capability of being a role model for young gays, and with his fame and money which are also the consequence of his sexual-orientation. He has also stated that young gays and lesbians identify themselves with those YouTubers without a doubt.

A study by Ando (2016) conducted with Italian teens and vloggers has explored the effect of female YouTubers on the sexual and gender identity formation of female teenagers. The study has revealed that “YouTube allows teenagers to keep track of tales of identity by writing in the margins, commenting, accepting or criticizing performances; thus, they are continually rewriting the girlhood models represented” (p.135).

According to the results of the study by Westenberg (2016), teenagers take YouTubers as role models and respect them. It is an undeniable fact that YouTubers are the actors and actresses of teenagers in digital and social media platforms. However, the research revealed that most teenagers want to become a YouTuber, but only as a hobby instead of an occupation. Despite that, Aran-Ramspott et al. (2018) have stated that even though teenagers are not planning to be YouTubers as a professional and they claim that they are not affected by them in this way, they clearly cannot stop imitating YouTubers’ expressions and languages.

In essence, YouTubers influence the identity construction process of adolescents due to their position as reference people. As it is evident from the research in the same field of inquiry so far, it has become a fact that YouTubers do affect adolescents in various domains of identity, such as vocational, gender, or ego identity. However, this topic needs to be elaborated more comprehensively.

2.7 New media literacy

In recent years, experts and academic studies have referred to *media literacy* as a broader term, involving media awareness. It was a common term and was defined as "the ability of a citizen to access, analyze, and produce information for specific outcomes on media" by the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy held in the United States in 1992 (Aufderheide, 1993, p.6). In today's world, with several rapid changes in the field of technology, the concept of media literacy has transformed into new media literacy. The term new media is used for all socio-cultural platforms in which everyone can participate, produce, and disseminate their messages in a digitally coded manner. That is why the most critical features that differentiate new media from traditional media are digital interactivity, creative and collective participation, networkability, data manipulation, modularity, hybridity, and virtuality (Chen, Wu, & Wang, 2011).

One of the essential features of this transformation is based on the creation of user-generated content by Web 2.0 tools. With the help of proactive promotion and contribution matters, individuals have become not only consumers but at the same time also producers, which led the way to the introduction of the new concept, the prosumer. Consequently, new media literacy involves essential processing skills, including accessing, analyzing, evaluating, criticizing, producing, and active

participation in media content (Lee, Chen, Li, & Lin, 2015, p.87). On the other hand, the promotion of participation raises voices on particular issues, such as participatory culture and democratization of communication.

Chen, et al. (2011) defined four concepts related to new media literacy in an analytical plane, arguing that New Media Literacy should be understood as a conceptual framework. These concepts are named as functional consuming, functional prosuming, critical consuming, and critical prosuming. Functional consuming literacy is the ability to understand and gain access to what is being transmitted on new media. Understanding and consuming skills are the two main criteria for realizing it. Critical consuming literacy refers to the ability of media consumers to examine the social, economic, political, and cultural contexts of media content and to make judgment about that media content. Accordingly, evaluation, analysis, and synthesis are three essential skills for critical consuming activity. On the other hand, functional prosuming literacy focuses on participation and creation skills with media content. Lastly, critically prosuming literacy is the contextual interpretation of media content during individuals' media participation activities. In this way, individuals recognize their position and identity and can manage various dynamics to be efficient while using media messages. (Lee, Chen, Li, & Lin, 2015).

As it is indicated above, media literacy pays attention to both critical reading and active participation in the community by means of production. One of the new media theorists, Henry Jenkins (2009), evaluates the new media in the context of this participatory activity. He sees new media literacy as a kind of social skill. This skill consists of being able to communicate with a large group of people and having individualized skills that help people to express themselves in a broader context. This knowledge and skill, created within the 21st-century new media literacy framework,

should be integrated into the school culture. In this integration, Jenkins defines twelve necessary media literacy skills because the pre-existing media literacy skills are not sufficient. These skills can be listed as (p. xiv):

- Play (the capacity to experiment with one's surroundings in the form of problem-solving),
- Performance (the ability to adopt alternative identities for improvisation),
- Simulation (the ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes),
- Appropriation (the ability to meaningfully sample and remix media content),
- Multitasking (the ability to scan one's environment and shift focus as needed to salient details),
- Distributed cognition (the ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities),
- Collective intelligence (the ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others toward a common goal),
- Judgment (the ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources),
- Transmedia navigation (the ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities),
- Networking (the ability to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information),
- Negotiation (the ability to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms),

- Visualization (the ability to create and understand visual representations of information)

The central theme of all of these skills is to allow people to engage and participate in the media culture rather than skill acquisition (Tripp, 2011). In addition to these skills, Hobbs (2010), who is one of the new media literacy theorists, has pointed out that five consecutive qualifications are required for the new media literacy. The cycle begins with an *access* stage, which ensures the ability to access, find, select, and use appropriate media and share relevant information with others. The following step is the ability to *analyze and evaluate*, which enables users to understand the purpose of the creator's intent, to determine possible effects and results, to test accuracy and reliability of the content by doing critical evaluation. The third step is named *to create* a stage where the user is aware of image, sound, and techniques, including new digital technologies in the creation. The next step is the *reflect* stage, which indicates the ability to conduct one's own identity, experiences and communication behaviors in line with ethical principles. At the end of the stages, *the act* has become prominent for the new media culture. It is the ability to work cooperatively in sharing information and solving problems as a member of the community at local, regional, national, or international levels (2010, s. 19).

At present, new media and digital technologies have penetrated the depths of everyday life, which not only shapes people's attitudes, behaviors and values, but also affects lifelong lifestyles. Considering the long-term health and awareness of society, individuals need empowerment and provision about new media skills. This can be achieved by raising awareness concerning potential hazards, enabling individuals to remain in a digital space, learning to get personal, social, and cultural

benefits, increasing their participation and expression ingeniously. Hence, Jenkins (2009) proposes that schools and after-school programs should pay more attention to promoting new media literacy and developing socio-cultural skills that young people will use in the new media ecology.

2.7.1 Studies on new media literacy

In this section, the existing studies conducted by governmental and non-governmental organizations on the new media literacy were examined in order to provide a comprehensive viewpoint, respectively. Due to the cross-cultural differences in the policies, these studies and organizations were reviewed in a national and international basis separately. At the beginning, the United Nations Educational Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO) was explained as international organization. Following this, the organizations that seek to increase new media literacy in Turkey were presented.

2.7.1.1 UNESCO as an international organization

UNESCO has led many studies on media literacy in the world. Information literacy and media literacy were integrated into the work of UNESCO, and it has prepared the book names as *Pedagogies of Media and Information Literacies* as a useful tool to equip teacher training and facilitate media and information literacy education both in pre-service and in-service teacher education and in schools. The critical emphasis has been placed on how media is useful in the identity building process of youth and how media celebrities affect young people psychologically and emotionally (Grizzle et al., 2013). In this sense, although it does not address YouTubers in a direct way, it is a resource that can give young people and teachers the primary awareness, which

also serves to the purpose this study aims to reach. It is enriched with various classroom activities and shows how to handle this process.

2.7.1.2 National organizations working on new media literacy

In this part, national organizations working on new media literacy and their projects were presented in a detailed way. As official governmental agencies, ministry of national education of Turkey (MEB), the supreme board of radio and television (RTÜK) were included. Additionally, the association of Media Literacy, Habitat association and the association of Alternative Informatics were involved as actors of nongovernmental organizations in Turkey.

2.7.1.2.1 Ministry of national education of Turkey (MEB)

Recognition of the need for media literacy in the context of schools in Turkey dates back to 2006. The Ministry included courses in the related field to the curriculum as an elective media literacy course first in the primary education institutions, claiming that school and family have an essential role in the protection of the possible adverse effects of the media. This step was taken in order to make effective use of communication tool in the field of media literacy and to develop conscious usage methods during early ages. In the 2007-2008 academic year, it also became an elective course for secondary education institutions.

Among the skills that the course introduces, the most important skill requires students to have a critical point of view. By utilizing these courses, students can examine the media to filter, scrutinize, evaluate from a critical point of view, and to create their thoughts or media messages. (MEB & RTÜK, 2006)

2.7.1.2.2 The supreme board of radio and television (RTÜK)

The primary emphasis of RTÜK on media literacy was in 2006 in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education when adding the media literacy course as an elective course. In 2012, the Media Literacy Workshop decided that the media literacy course should be more in line with the structure of new media elements. In other words, the content of these courses were planned to prioritize the focus on media analysis, production, and consumption. In addition to this decision, it was enlarged by adding literacy planning for students, families, and teachers, considering that there should be lifelong media literacy. Another critical decision was to carry out a process with all stakeholders. Thus, non-governmental organizations and other media organizations were asked to involve in this process (RTÜK, 2016). In the implementation of these decisions, media literacy aims to the use of materials prepared on the official website.

2.7.1.2.3 The association of media literacy

The Association of Media Literacy aims to strengthen the education and awareness activities throughout the country by transferring the concept of *media literacy* from academia to family and teachers. The most critical issue related to the association process is conducting a study about awareness of individuals who have played the role of *consumers* for the content produced through written and visual media for many years, becoming *a producer* with the concept of new media. The formation of an awareness environment through training programs, seminars, and practical studies plays an essential role in the realization of this aim. This association organizes online and one-on-one training on media literacy, digital literacy, cyberbullying, hate

speech and digital citizenship for children and youth (Association of Media Literacy, 2019).

2.7.1.2.4 Habitat association

Habitat Association is an international non-governmental organization which develops projects and campaigns aiming at increasing the knowledge and awareness of the society on digital rights through training. The trainings are designed to improve participants' digital skills by expanding the use of information access channels in a changing and developing the world. In social media, it offers instructor training for social media literacy in order to ensure that users become active and conscious social media users (Habitat Association, 2019).

2.7.1.2.5 Association of alternative informatics

Alternative Informatics Association is a nationwide community in Turkey in Istanbul that produces campaigns, narratives, directives, publications, and various digital projects that advocate the free use of information and communication technologies. In addition to production, it brings together people from all professions and interests that produce, reproduce, or use information and communication technologies with the principle of freedom, independent of paid employment.

It primarily focuses on the possibilities, social impacts, and problems of New Media and tries to raise awareness. The association is also among the actors of media literacy education in international projects. One of the studies in these projects is *The New Media Literacy Curriculum Development* program handled by Ankara University Faculty of Management, which focuses on media literacy education and

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)-Turkey collaboration (Association of Alternative Informatics, 2019).

Nonetheless, there is no specific awareness and literacy training in Turkey that will increase awareness considering YouTubers' discourse, advertising, and suggestions since YouTubers have become important actors, whom many young people closely follow, take suggestions from, are influenced, feel close to, and dream being like one in the future. This study aims to understand YouTubers' impacts on young people's identity experiences, lifestyles, behaviors' and expressions. The present study also seeks to confirm the needs and shortcomings of adolescents in the sense of awareness of these effects, as found in the studies conducted in other countries.

To summarize this chapter of the study presented theories on, identity formation, features of YouTubers and new media literacy respectively. Therefore, it started with the developmental characteristics of adolescence in terms of cognitive, social and emotional changes and it was supported with the importance of identity formation in adolescence period. Particularly, this review focused on the definitions of identity as a psychological concept and it presented previous theories about how identity formation occurs with regard to process and outcome.

Secondly, the following parts introduced the fundamental features of YouTube as a social media platform. Then, it presented what made them YouTubers, and what commitments and traits they have. In order to provide an effective understanding about YouTubers, their power on social media, commercials, business market and adolescents were elaborated separately. Regarding their strong influence on adolescents, how do YouTubers influence adolescents' identity formation and how much do adolescents aware about YouTubers effects on them were discussed in

the light of previous researches examining the relationship between social media and identity.

Considering the potential threats that adolescents might encounter, new media literacy was presented as the third part of the literature review. The essential skills of new media literacy and the organizations trying to empower people on new media literacy were listed in order to be able to develop comprehensive implications. Since raising awareness might be possible through having information about this concept, existing studies in national and international level were presented.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, information regarding the participants of the study, the instruments employed in the data collection process, the research design, the identity of the researcher and data analysis are presented in a detailed way.

3.1 Participants

In this section, the participants of the current study are presented. The number of the participants, the demographic information about participants, sampling method, and selection criteria of the participants are described in a particular way.

The participants of the current study were 10 adolescents (five females and five males) between the ages of 14 and 18. All of the participants were high school students in Turkey. The distribution of gender was in balance, which helps equal representation for male and female. After conducting 10 interviews with participants, similar expressions and topics started to repeat. The researcher considered the saturation criteria and terminated the data collection process.

There were two selection criteria in the process of selecting participants for the study. The first selection criterion was related to the age of the participants. That is, participants have to be between the ages of 14 and 18, which refers to the late adolescence period. This is because early adolescence (10-14) period is determined by the physiological changes and body growth spurt. Therefore, cognitive, social and moral transformations appear in the later steps of adolescence. For the current study, adolescents who are in the high school were found to be suitable to participate in this study.

The second criterion was related to being a close follower of YouTubers in terms of spending at least 30 minutes to watch YouTubers' videos. In addition to this, being a regular follower of particular YouTubers' videos was preferable in the process of sampling. This criterion was set to reach adolescents who can provide detailed information about YouTubers and their fandom practices.

The participants were selected based on a snowball sampling method, which allowed recruiting defined groups in the research question. In the beginning, a participant meeting the selection criteria was reached. Secondly, the researcher asked the participant to invite her peers to be involved in the current study. It is said to be more appropriate to reach the participants through peers, not by superiors or subordinates, which helps to build the desired sense of equality in the interviews (Seidman, 2016).

Based on this sampling method, eight participants were living in Istanbul, and last two participants were living in two distinct cities, namely Gebze and Konya (see Table 1 for demographic information of the participants). In order to ensure confidentiality, participants are encoded with numbers.

Table 1. Demographic information form of participants

Participant	Age	Gender	City
P1	17	Female	İstanbul
P2	15	Male	İstanbul
P3	16	Female	İstanbul
P4	16	Female	İstanbul
P5	15	Male	İstanbul
P6	14	Male	İstanbul
P7	15	Female	İstanbul
P8	15	Male	Konya
P9	17	Male	İstanbul
P10	18	Female	Gebze

In the following paragraphs, information and details about the participants of the current study are presented.

Participant 1 is a 17 years old female, living in Istanbul. She is the youngest child of her family. She spends at least one hour per day watching YouTubers. Based on her claim, she previously used to watch more than one hour. She regularly follows "Danla Biliç", "Şeyda Erdoğan" "Burak Güngör", "Berkcan Güven" and "Linç Squad" as YouTube channels. Her family's monthly total income is 4500 Turkish liras.

Participant 2 is a 15 years old male, living in Istanbul. He is the oldest child of his family. He spends at least 50 minutes per day watching YouTubers. He regularly follows "Sheredded Brothers", "Ağır Sağlam" and "Ali Biçim" as YouTubers. His family's monthly total income is 5000 Turkish liras.

Participant 3 is female, and she is 16 years old. She is living in Istanbul. She is the youngest child of her family. She spends three or more hours per day by watching YouTubers. She regularly follows "Melis Özten" and "Damla Altun" as YouTubers. Her family's monthly total income is 4000 Turkish liras.

Participant 4 is female, and she is 16 years old. She is living in Istanbul; she is an only child of her family. She spends approximately 40 – 50 minutes per day watching YouTubers. She regularly follows "Study Tuber" and "Violin MD", "TwoSet Violin", "Vogue" as YouTubers. Her family's monthly total income is 15000 Turkish liras.

Participant 5 is a 15 years old male, living in Istanbul. He is the oldest child of his family. He watches maximum three or four videos from YouTubers per day. He regularly follows "Barış Özcan" and "Emre Kayır" as YouTubers. He used to watch "Enes Batur" during his childhood. His family's monthly total income is 10000 Turkish liras.

Participant 6 is male, and he is 14 years old. He is living in Istanbul. He is the last child of his family. He spends at least one hour each day watching YouTubers. He regularly follows “Oyun Fatihi”, “Batuhan Büyükak” and “YBJ” as YouTubers. His family’s monthly total income is between 5500 and 6000 Turkish liras.

Participant 7 is female, and she is 15 years old. She is living in Istanbul. She is the youngest child of her family. She often watches YouTubers within a day and she spends almost an hour per day watching YouTubers. She regularly follows “Hailey Eylül” as a YouTubers. She also loves following channels whose content focused on make-up and cooking. Her family’s monthly total income is 7000 Turkish liras.

Participant 8 is male, and he is 15 years old. He is living in Konya. He is the first child of his family. He spends half an hour per day watching YouTubers. He regularly follows “Mendebur Lemur” as a YouTuber. His family’s monthly total income is below 4000 Turkish liras.

Participant 9 is male, and he is 17 years old. He is living in Istanbul. He is the first child of his family. He spends half an hour per day watching YouTubers. He regularly follows “Easter Gamers”, “Barış Özcan” “Satranç Medya” “Satranç TV” “Chess Channel” and “Pinty Panda”. His family’s monthly total income is 8000 Turkish liras.

Participant 10 is an 18 years old female. She is living in Gebze. She is the oldest child of her family. She watches YouTubers and YouTube channels every day, particularly at nights. She follows many channels on YouTube, such as “Internet Historian”, “SciShow”, “Kurzgesagt”, “Emgo316”, “Playwarframe”, “Tierzoo”, “Lindsay Ellis”, “Linus Tech”, “Vox”, and “Philosophy Tube”. Her family’s monthly total income is 5000 Turkish liras.

3.2. Instruments

Following participant selection process, individual interviews were held with the participants. Two data collection instruments were utilized by the researcher, namely the demographic information form and semi-structured interview protocol, which are explained in the following subheadings in a detailed way.

3.2.1 Demographic information form

The demographic information form was given to the participants before conducting the interviews. Throughout the form, questions targeted to collect the information about participants' age, gender, city and province they live in, the number of family members, birth-order, parents' graduation degree and income (see Appendix A for English version of demographic information form and Appendix B for Turkish version of demographic information form).

3.2.2 Semi-structured interview form

During data collection, in-depth interviews are used to explore the insights and to understand the nature of the participants' experiences and thoughts. Therefore, a semi-structured interview protocol was prepared by the researcher after conducting the literature review about identity development during adolescence and the impacts of YouTubers. Additionally, the interview questions derived and selected from previous researches (Holbolm, 2015; Westenberg, 2016) also were shaped with the help of both the researcher and the thesis advisor. In the light of the research questions some interview questions were constituted additionally. Apart from this, conducting the pilot study with a participant assisted to make certain adjustments for clarity and appropriateness of the questions.

In the interview protocol, fourteen questions, consisted of open-ended and close-ended types, were utilized to engage in a dialogue with the participants. The same questions were asked to the participants in order to ensure comparability of the data (Berg, 2007). These questions developed in Turkish language considering the participants' native language. Additionally, it was helpful to note ambiguous expressions about which the researcher wants to discuss. It was prepared in a way that it would not project questions that will suppress or limit the experiences expressed by the participant.

When the context of the questions is considered, the interview started with a question to explore how often and how long participants watch YouTubers' channels. This first question was formulated to find out the frequency of time participants spend watching YouTubers. The second question was set to find out what features participants find or care about in YouTubers. It was aimed to see the YouTubers through the eyes of the adolescents. Past literature review suggested some certain properties for the YouTubers' popularity among adolescents. With that fact in mind, it was aimed to check it from the Turkish adolescences' perspective. Congruently, the forth question was to see who their favorite or most-followed YouTubers are and the reason behind their choices. Although it was intended to find out quite similar answers to the previous question, it additionally asked for specific names of YouTubers and the reasons why they follow that particular YouTuber.

The third question focuses on whether they want to do what YouTubers do and what that would be. This question was formulated to understand how much adolescents identify themselves with YouTubers and to see whether there is any relationship between their following criteria and their role modeling capacity with YouTubers. The fifth question was about whether they have similar features with

their favorite YouTubers and what they are. It had a resemblance with the third question, but it did not aspire to learn identification and role modeling. It was asked to find out about the participants' current identity development, their perception about it and the relation to YouTubers' identity.

The questions in the sixth group were mainly about how participants make connection with YouTubers and how they communicate or stay in touch with them. These questions were developed to understand how adolescents make engagements with YouTubers. After these questions, the following questions, about the commenting behavior that literature mentions, were asked. These questions focus on finding out whether they read the comments made on the YouTubers' videos, and how they feel or what they think when they read these comments. The basic idea behind these questions was to see their reactions to the comments. Thus, adolescents' belongingness, identification with the YouTubers and differentiation from them could be observed.

In addition, there were questions aimed to understand adolescents' tendency on implementing YouTuber's suggestions and recommendations. That is why the following questions were prepared; "Have you ever followed the recommendations of YouTubers? If so, what is it?" and "According to what criteria would you implement YouTubers' suggestions into your life? As a result of this, how was your life affected and what has changed?" Additionally, there were questions intended to gather information about critical new media skills and awareness of adolescents as follows; "When YouTubers comment on a product or a service, do you think they share their honest opinions? If yes, why? If no, why not?" All of these questions were essential to examine adolescents' ability to criticize contents, their new media literacy skills, vulnerability level toward YouTubers' advice and awareness about

commercialization of YouTube (see Appendix C for English version of demographic information form and Appendix D for Turkish version of demographic information form).

These interviews were planned to be between one hour and a half. Seidman (2006) has asserted that an hour creates a time pressure on the participant, whereas two hours are too long for the interview; hence, he suggested that one and a half-hour is a suitable duration for an interview. All of the interviews were recorded by a voice recorder in order to transcribe and decode the data during the data analysis procedure later on. The most significant advantage of using a voice recorder is that it is possible to access a vast number and quality of information that cannot be kept in memory (Weiss, 1995).

3.3 Research design

In the current study, qualitative research techniques, methods, and analysis approaches were utilized. The objectives of the qualitative research are generally focused on three main aims; namely investigation, explanation, and definition, which is in line with the purpose of the current present study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). All of the research questions in the current research were intended to understand the nature of the identity experiences of adolescents who are close followers of the YouTubers. With these questions in mind, it was essential to allow participants to share their stories and to hear their voices. That is why qualitative research method was chosen because it provides a deep and holistic understanding of this particular phenomenon (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006). Moreover, this approach allowed the researcher to engage in the perceptions of others and to catch how people give meaning to specific issues in their daily lives (Berg & Lune, 2017).

Unlike quantitative researches, the researcher took an active part in analyzing collected information (Potter, 2013). Through interpretations of the researchers, the nature and context of the phenomenon was explored in depth. The whole process of interpretation could not be separated from the researcher's personal history, context, and personal experiences, which has not been evaluated as a weakness (Creswell, 2007) since it is part of the reality (McLeod, 2011). In qualitative research design, researchers follow a semi-structured and tailor-made spontaneous path instead of applying standard procedures (Willig, 2008). Qualitative methods allow both the researchers and participants to engage in the universal language of everyday experience and understanding, rather than in the often arbitrary, artificial, and constraining language of numbers. (Yanchar, Gantt, & Clay, 2005, p.31). Furthermore, considering participants, "it regards those whom we study as reflective, meaning-making and intentional actors" (Marecek, 2003, p.49).

In the data collection period, interviewing was used as the most employed and best-documented technique. In this technique, the interviewee has an opportunity to express the matters that are regarded necessary for the study. Also, the interview is suggested as the pre-eminent technique for the investigation of feelings, attitudes, intentions, and motivations of behaviors study (Silverman, 1985). Furthermore, a qualitative stance enables creativity and innovation in data (Marecek, 2003); therefore, qualitative research was the most appropriate method in the present study to investigate how adolescents experience their identities as close followers of YouTubers.

3.3.1 Phenomenology as qualitative method

The phenomenological approach was introduced by Edmund Husserl in the early twentieth century. It is a philosophical approach to the study of experience. According to Husserl, there is no independent existence of objects in the external world; therefore, the information about them is not reliable. The source of all knowledge comes from our experiences; hence, something could be only understood when people know how it is experienced (Husserl, 2012). In other words, identifying the core structures and features of certain phenomena requires careful examination of human experiences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin (2009), p.17).

Phenomenology is the most basic approach in qualitative research. This method provides an explanatory area about how individuals experience a particular situation (Sart, 2017). Making an elaborated examination on a subject and connecting with individuals in person are processes that require dynamics and interaction, and it enables the researcher to take an active role in the process. It is mainly used in areas of health and psychology to understand how individuals experience, feel, or attribute meanings to a particular situation that makes people uneasy (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

This research aimed to learn about the experiences of adolescents who follow YouTubers, the construction process, the content of these experiences, and its effects on their identity formation. In short, it was targeted to reach the consciousness level and experiences of teenagers. The meanings, senses, experiences, and emotions emerge into the lives of teenagers by following YouTubers in the identity formation process.

3.4 Procedure

The research process was initiated with the permission of the SOBETIK ethics committee. Before conducting the interview with the participants, the consent form was given to them. Since the participants did not reach the legal age to make their own decisions, consent forms were sent to their parents through the participants for permission. This form included the information about the purpose of the study and certain explanations about confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, data retention, data security, duration of the interviews and the recordings. Besides, the necessary ethical explanations about the rights and responsibilities of the participants are included in this form (see Appendix E for permission from SOBETIK ethics committee).

Adolescents volunteering to participate in the current study read and signed the consent form. Participation in the study required the approval of parents as well, so the parents read and signed the consent form, too. Before starting the interviews, brief information about the study was shared with the participants. Demographic information form was given to participants after signing the consent form. Upon completion of demographic information form, the individual interviews were conducted on the specified date and time. The interviews took approximately one hour to one hour and a half. In the process, voice recordings of the interviews were transcribed, and code numbers were placed in each transcript instead of writing the names of the participants. File encryption was performed on the computer. All the information was stored on computers. After the data analysis process is completed, these voice recordings were deleted (see Appendix F for English version of consent form and Appendix G for Turkish version of consent form).

3.5 Identity of the researcher

Qualitative research is a dialectical process, which means not only the participants, but also researchers have an impact on the steps and results of the research. In other words, the position of the researcher has a direct influence on the construction of the information, which is called reflexivity. As Probst and Berenson (2014) note, "reflexivity is generally understood as an awareness of the influence the researcher has on what is being studied and, simultaneously, of how the research process affects the researcher. It is both a state of mind and a set of actions" (p. 814). That is why the professional identity of the researcher is essential in terms of reflexivity. Therefore, the description of the researcher's identity is introduced in this section.

As a researcher, I have been a graduate student at Boğaziçi University Guidance Psychological Counseling Master Program for two years. During the last year of the program, I was an intern in two high schools in Istanbul. The locations and socio-economic backgrounds of the high schools are quite different from each other. One of the schools is in Kartal district, and the other one is in Beşiktaş district. In this internship process, I had a chance to work with high school students, parents, and teachers in many ways, such as individual counseling sessions, group counseling sessions, and workshops. After a while, I realized that most of the students are close followers of the YouTubers, and they admire them in many ways. Adolescents in schools were affected by YouTubers in numerous implicit and explicit ways. Some of them want to be famous like YouTubers, while some others trust YouTubers' advices in various domains, like clothing or shopping. The reason for selecting this research subject started with these experiences during my internships at schools.

In the workshops, most of the parents complained about the never-ending demands resulting from YouTubers' recommendations of their children. Hence, the

effects and awareness of media are one of the main concerns of the families in present times. They want to handle this issue efficiently, but they have no valid information about the YouTubers' effects. Most of the parents do not know how to deal with this issue. I chose to study this topic to get concrete and tangible information to help parents understand and solve their problems.

From the perspective of adolescents, during the individual sessions I noticed that adolescents are very confused about who they are and what they want to be in the future. They were trying to answer these questions by taking somebody from their family, peers, and figures in the social media as reference. Therefore, I am deeply interested in studying YouTubers in the context of the identity experiences of adolescents.

On the other hand, the topics *media use* and *media addiction* are two of the study areas of the school counselors in preventive guidance studies. However, there is not enough information about YouTubers and their effects on these study materials. Hence, I am motivated to investigate this topic and make a contribution to real-life settings by raising awareness on this topic.

3.6 Data analysis

In this study, interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to examine the data. After the data collection, all data was transcribed by taking all remarkable details into consideration. In this data analysis method, speech dynamics, pausing in speech, misunderstandings, apparent mistakes and body language of the participants were indicated (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008).

Interpretative phenomenological analysis requires four steps in data analysis. In the first step, the close reading and re-reading of the transcribed text occurred.

While reading the transcribed texts, the researcher can take notes about any thought or observation made (Smith et al., 1999). Additionally, throughout reading these texts, researcher practices 'bracketing' to avoid any presuppositions and judgments, which can have an impact on the analysis of the data (Husserl, 1927, p.80).

In the second step, meaning groups were formed through selecting the items that respond to research questions. In this procedure, researchers make individual discourse analysis and find units of meaning. In other words, researchers reveal how the expressions are understood by themselves and try to identify preliminary themes. In the third step, identified themes were placed into related clusters and concepts to provide the overall structure for the analysis. In the fourth step, the purpose is to tabulate themes in a summary table by developing a master list and table of themes (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). After all iterative steps, the essence of the identity experiences of the adolescents who are close followers of YouTubers is explored.

During the process, the data analysis was conducted by the researcher. The responded validation method was used to ensure the validity of the data analysis. Thereby, the researcher presents the results of the data to the participants to understand the convenience of the results (Merriam, 1995). Thus, the researcher has a chance to compare and reveal the consistency between responses that belong to her and participants.

Additionally, the researcher can control his subjectivity while potential methodological problems might also be revealed. Therefore, the data and analysis of the data were shared with the thesis advisor to reach a consensus on meanings, clusters, and concepts.

During data collection process, interviews and analysis were conducted in the Turkish language, which is the native language of the participants. At the end of the data analysis process, all materials were translated into English.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The findings of the data analysis of this research were presented in this chapter. After conducting semi-structured interviews with adolescents, the collected data were analyzed through interpretative phenomenological analysis method.

The analysis of the data in the current study led to the emergence of two main themes namely “the notion of identity” and “identity formation.”. These central themes were emerged while answering the research questions of “how do YouTubers influence adolescents’ identity construction” and “what kind of interaction occurs between adolescents and YouTubers.” Therefore, the following paragraphs of this section answered these two research questions under the two themes.

As Adams and Marshall (1996) proposed in the identity literature, the first central theme, “the notion of identity,” was examined in two perspectives to understand individuals in the context of “integration” and “differentiation.” On the other hand, the second heading, “identity formation”, was investigated into two categories as “enhancement of exploration” and “preparation for commitment”, which is in line with Marcia’s (1989) conceptualization of identity formation process.

In this chapter, several quotations from the data were included to justify the findings of the study in a tangible way. Participants were marked with code numbers throughout the section. The original version of the quotes was recorded in the Turkish language, and they are presented in the Appendix H. Moreover, the emerging themes and subthemes were presented in the following table with participants’ numbers (see Table 2 for the central and subthemes of the participants).

In the following sections below, these main themes and subthemes were elaborated both with quotes and explanations.

Table 2. Central and Subthemes of the Participants

Themes	Participants
Notion of Identity	
Integration	P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9
• Sense of belonging	P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9
• Social validation	P2, P3, P4, P7, P9
Differentiation	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10
Identity Formation	
Enhancement of Exploration in Identity Construction	
• Testing out various alternatives in life	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, P10
• Extension of existing forms of social interaction	P2, P3, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10
○ Feeling Connected	P2, P3, P7, P8, P9
○ Feeling Participated	P6, P9, P10
Preparation for Commitment to Identity Construction	
• Personal Growth	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10
○ Perspective Taking	P1, P2, P7, P9
○ Learning Information and Skills	P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10
○ Having a Personal Life Coaching	P2, P3, P4, P9
• Identification	P1, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9
• Lack of Awareness	P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9

4.1 The Notion of Identity

This theme emerged from interviews with adolescents and corresponded to the research question of "how do YouTubers influence adolescents' identity construction?" and "what role do YouTubers play in adolescents lives?". Regarding the former research question, one of the recurrent themes in the interviews with the participants revealed that adolescents practice their sense of identity in the context of YouTubers. In other words, the notion of identity as the central theme illustrated how adolescents identify themselves under the influence of YouTube and YouTubers. As it was stated formerly, identity is the central dynamic that allows individuals to

personally experience feelings of unity and continuity from past to present and to the future (Erikson, 1968). Therefore, it is an essential construct in individuals' lives. As a human being, the most prominent need of all individuals is to feel their uniqueness in their creation and to feel related to significant others. For this reason, identity has an integrative aspect that enables individuals to acquire the same characteristics as individuals in the society in which they live. It also has a differentiating element that allows individuals to differentiate themselves from others and reveal their uniqueness. The achievement of both abilities in a balanced way eventually forms the notion of identity.

In the light of this information, the latter research question of "what role do YouTubers play in adolescents' lives?" was answered in the context of identity notion. When the expressions of adolescents were examined, it was found that YouTubers play a role to facilitate the feeling two opposite sides of identity. The subthemes of this question were discussed below as "integration" and "differentiation."

4.1.1 Integration

Integration was one of the themes that most of the participants pointed out in the interviews. Accordingly, eight out of 10 participants indicated the fact that YouTubers assisted them in becoming integrated people in society. In particular, they were able to find their characteristics similar to YouTubers in a breeze. Moreover, they described YouTubers as ordinary individuals like themselves. Through videos and comments, they stated that they had an opportunity to realize that others share their thoughts and behaviors, as well. Realizing that they have similarities in terms of lifestyles, opinions, preferences, and perceptions enhances the feeling of social

approval by others. In other words, adolescents validated their position in society through their relationship with YouTubers. By supporting those people to acquire the same characteristics with others in the society, this results in many similarities between people. Thereby, they feel more connected with the community they live in. As it is stated above, this section shows how YouTubers lead adolescents to have a more integrated position within society. It appears in two sub-headings, as "social validation," and "sense of belonging."

4.1.1.1 Sense of belonging

As it was stated above, feeling belonging somewhere or someone is a prerequisite for the maintenance of human life. One aspect of identity consists of membership in a social group or groups and the collective value mechanisms that this membership brings along (Tajfel, 1982). Therefore, it is a core dynamic to become successfully integrated into society. The analyses of the present study revealed that the most frequently recurrent subtheme is "sense of belonging" to the same group. This concept was defined as "the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment" (Hagerty et al, 1992, p.173).

According to the description of sense of belonging, eight out of 10 adolescents emphasized the idea that YouTubers are ordinary people like themselves. They feel that they are in the same boat with the YouTubers. Hence, this subheading indicates how participants attach importance to think that they belong to the same group with significant others in their life. Sharing the same values, beliefs, thoughts, and behaviors with YouTubers or their fans allows the participants to feel the idea that both parties belong to the same social environment. To illustrate, Participant 4

mentioned certain behavioral similarities between herself and the YouTuber that she follows.

> For example, there is a doctor who has a vlog. He lives in Canada. I realize that many YouTubers are just like me. They like studying like me. For example, I would like to go to medical school. That is why I watch this doctor's vlogs. I can say that I am looking for people whom I share common things with. (Participant-4, Appendix H, 1)

This quotation showed that noticing commonality with YouTubers creates a special bond with them, which motivates them to be a close follower of that particular YouTuber. In addition to Participant 4, other participants also showed that they enjoy following YouTubers who share the same cultural, social, and spiritual values as themselves. For example, Participant 6 mentioned that having similar religious implications, such as performing pray, is essential for him to follow a certain YouTuber. He answered the question about commonalities between him and his favorite YouTuber as "performing prayer."

Regarding this theme, sometimes shared thoughts and behaviors become too crucial for adolescents to feel their belongingness to the same group. For instance, Participant 7 stated how she kept doing something that she did not like only because the YouTubers did and praised it a lot. For the reason that she had quite an explicit concern to become one of them, so she forced herself. She stated:

> Well, it is going to sound funny, but… Oat videos… In the beginning, YouTubers said that oat is sweet, and you can eat it at breakfast because it keeps you warm. Then I tried it, but it was not good. Actually, it sucked. I did not feel warm or full. But I kept eating it. In some mornings, I had the breakfast my mother made and ate the oat when I got back from school. I kept eating it, and after some time, it started to taste good. I watched so many videos that I started thinking that I was the weird one because it felt awful, but everyone else was saying that it feels very good with some cinnamon on it, and it keeps you warm, and it is nutritional. But I kept watching the videos, everyone liked it and suggested it. So, I kept trying it, and in the end, it started tasting very good.
> *So, you kept eating it even though you did not like it?*

> Yes, because there were so many videos and good comments on it that I felt really weird. Everyone liked it, and they even said that it is their favorite snack.
> *And you kept acting like?*
> Like I was one of them. Maybe I kept eating it because I did not want to feel weird. I do not know if it is a psychological effect or not, but after some time, it tasted good. I like it now. I do not always eat it because I do not need to eat it since my mother cooks for breakfast, but I eat it when I have free time. (Participant-7, Appendix H, 2)

These above quotations portrayed that seeking resemblance is notable for adolescents to sense their integration into society. It is crucial to understand what kind of dynamics support this need that adolescents have. According to the analyses of the data, the genuineness of YouTubers encourages adolescents to feel belonging to the same social group. Six out of 10 adolescents emphasized the importance of YouTubers' sincerity directly. That is why they were asked what they mean by sincerity during the interviews. Their definitions portrayed that in the context of YouTubers, being genuine means "feeling like talking one of their friends", "seeing them as brothers or sisters", "being natural", "being nice", "speaking with a smiling face" and "speaking the daily language". As it is observed, adolescents highly value the feeling that YouTubers are not utopic and different from ordinary people; on the other hand, they prefer YouTubers to be like one of them.

4.1.1.2 Social validation

This subheading refers to how YouTubers assist adolescents in meeting the need for taking consent from other members of the community to construct constant identity. It emphasizes the need to be valued by others in the context of YouTube. By looking at the data, five out of 10 participants expressed YouTubers' social validation function. However, the interviews revealed insights on how adolescents' social validation experiences through YouTubers change from one person to another. One

of the social validation issues for adolescents is about following particular YouTubers and having information about the YouTubers' videos because these YouTubers and their videos had become a form of communication, which creates certain communities and discourses among adolescents. The quotation taken from the interview conducted with Participant 4 illustrated to what extend adolescents focus on peer acceptance issues in their social life and how YouTubers work up this matter via creating a subculture in young people.

> They know about YouTubers, but I do not. When they are talking about these things in their social environment, and I do not know about it or do not follow that trend, I feel cast out. There is a YouTube channel called James Charles. I find it ridiculous, but my friends follow it. They make references to those videos during a conversation. I am sometimes left out because I do not know about the videos. That is, it.
> *How does it feel? How do you feel about it?*
> Actually, it irritates me because I have some interests or hobbies, and they don't include some things, but when the whole world focuses on those things, it feels like I am being judged for not following it. (Participant-4, Appendix H, 3)

When the expressions of Participant 4 were examined, it clearly pointed out how the participant felt excluded when her friends talked about specific YouTubers.

The second domain of social validation subtheme is derived from the need to feel a sense of harmony with others in the society in terms of values, beliefs, and thoughts. That is why adolescents not only watch the YouTubers' videos but also read the comments under the videos to engage more, which serves as a self-validation tool among peers. The data analyses indicated that all of the participants read the comments under the video they are watching. Hence, the purpose of reading the comments was asked to all participants. The answers showed that adolescents allocate a considerable amount of time to read comments to approve their own beliefs and thoughts. For example, Participant 3 told how reading comments helps to

know that everyone is in the same situation with her, which helps to normalize her reaction to her depressive feelings, behaviors, and struggles.

> I follow on Instagram… I just like posts. I don't usually comment. As to mention only memories, there was "Cansu Akın." She said on her vlog that she was going through a depressive period, and I am kind of like her these days. What she told was similar to mine, all those emotions, and everything, and I checked the comments and saw that actually everyone was experiencing a sort of same things as I do. (Participant-3, Appendix H, 4)

As it is stated by Participant 3, the comments under the YouTubers' videos act as a control mechanism to validate their ideas, feelings and behaviors among adolescents. By following the comments, they compare themselves with others and allow them to feel socially approved. Participant 9 stated that he read comments to compare reactions at specific moments to see if anyone could notice something like him.

> I mean, I sometimes read things I am curious about. Just to check how people react to something happening or to see whether people are thinking the same way I do. (Participant-9, Appendix H, 5)

In addition to Participant 3 and Participant 9, Participant 7 mentioned similar impulses for validating herself by looking for feedback that reassures her attention. Hence, she reads comments under the YouTubers' videos for reliving the fear of being strange.

> So there are specific points in the videos. All the people realized that point or something; I realized that I mostly see the same comments. Everyone sticks around at a point, for example. Everyone who has had a funny second in that video is talking about that second.
> *What do you feel, what do you think are always the same?*
> ….
> Everyone has watched this video; everyone is like me. (Participant-7, Appendix H, 6)

By closely examining what Participant 7 stated, it is safe to say that she reads all the comments to get knowledge about others' ideas. Thus, she tries to observe how much her responses are acceptable for society. As it is seen from all examples

under this subtheme, being socially validated is quite a powerful drive for adolescents in order to become integrated people in society.

4.1.2 Differentiation

Differentiation was one of the dominant themes that nine out of 10 participants point out in the interviews. Although identity requires a certain resemblance with others, it is also something unique for every individual because of personal biographies, interests, and motivations. These kinds of individuation result in differentiation from others. In the present study, this subtheme discusses that although adolescents need to be coherent with the society and norms, they also need to feel their uniqueness and autonomy in their life. In other words, the YouTube platform and YouTubers enable recognition of adolescents' various aspects of self and individuation. Merely, the ways of establishing individuality are diverse for everyone. It has appeared in the context of comments under the YouTubers' videos. For example, nine out of 10 participants reported that they are surprised when they see many followers give too much attention and love to the YouTubers. Mainly, Participant 9 reflected how he was puzzled realizing the other side of the Turkish people. This kind of confrontation helps adolescents to differentiate themselves from other people, which enhance their feeling of individuality.

> Unfortunately, it is a mirror showing the bad sides of the Turkish people. It shows our bad sides very clearly. I feel disappointed to see it. I find it unnecessary to break people's hearts for tiny little things. I also see another thing; I have just said that people are devoted to YouTubers, and I see that it affects people widely. For example, to me, they are only human beings, and so am I. I do not have to treat them divinely. I do not have to overvalue them. But some people… They are practically begging when they write comments such as "Bro, please come to this place and meet me, or just give me your address and let is hang out" I am surprised by this level of devotion. (Participant-9, Appendix H, 7)

Similar to Participant 9, Participant 10 also expressed how she felt her differentiation through comments. She not only reads the comments but also makes a classification according to her own mindset. She called the comments that are not coherent with her mentality as toxic. These kinds of sortation demonstrated her individuality.

> There are toxic comments. I try to ignore these toxic comments. I respond to the comments focusing on questions and answers and giving information mostly, or to those people have already replied to. (Participant-10, Appendix H, 8)

As it is mentioned in the integration section, adolescents read the comments to validate their thoughts and behaviors. However, analysis of the data indicated that adolescents might not always share the same reactions, feelings, and opinions, which appears as differentiation from others. For example, Participant 8 stated his discovery that people could think differently from him. He articulated this awareness very clearly in the interview.

> I can realize that people might have different thoughts than mine, that they can think differently. (Participant-8, Appendix H, 9)

In light of all these results, we can see the tremendous contribution of reading comments in sensing identity. In addition to this, it is also possible to address this phenomenon through individual selection criteria on YouTubers. The preference of YouTubers appears as one of the dynamics that create the individuality of adolescents. Participant 7 mentioned how she cares about specific criteria in YouTubers' videos. She chooses the YouTubers based on diction in speech, the background of the scene, and the music playing in the background.

> It is important to be able to express yourself. In the simplest term, I watch a cooking video, and the person uses the wrong vocabulary and stutters. I am stuttering right now, I cannot talk very well, but when it happens, I do not want to keep watching or listening. Fluency is essential to me. The effort to make that video is important. (Participant-7, Appendix H, 10)

Regarding having individual criteria, Participant 10 has a specific standard for the following any kind of advice of YouTubers, which means that she has personal decisions. She is able to eliminate some other things that she does not find suitable for herself.

> Generally, it is about hobbies. For example, I love collecting toys. For instance, someone answers the question asked which toy you advice. Unless that person answers the question of why, I don't follow that advice. (Participant-10, Appendix H, 11)

The sentences of participant 10 depicted how much she cares about the suggestions that involve the precise reasoning behind it. It is an individually determined criterion for her, which indicates that she can differentiate herself from others. Her establishment of the unique side of self was appeared in the context of YouTubers.

4.2 Identity formation

This central theme directly refers to the process of identity construction and how an adolescent experiences this process in their personal life. Therefore, the research questions of "how do YouTubers influence the mindset of adolescents?" and "how do YouTubers influence the daily practices of adolescents?" were answered in this section. These research questions aimed to underline the transformations of adolescents under the effect of YouTubers. Because of the fact that the previous literature indicated that there are numerous visible and invisible transformations in various domains of adolescents' development. Thus, it brings along questioning the current values, beliefs, and loyalties. The main reason for all this questioning is to situate themselves in a more consistent and stable position. From the perspective of identity formation in the literature, searching alternatives corresponds to the

exploration phase, and investment to a particular decision matches up to the commitment phase (Marcia,1989).

In the light of this information, the data analysis indicated that by offering various alternatives and wider social interaction opportunities with people from all over the world, YouTubers help increase the facilities for adolescents to search for their true identities. Therefore, this central theme involves two subthemes, as "enhancement of exploration in identity construction" and "preparation for commitment to identity construction".

4.2.1 Enhancement of exploration in identity construction

The present study focuses on how YouTubers assist adolescents in investigating opportunities in certain domains of identity because in the adolescence period, individuals begin to question the orientation of beliefs, thoughts, and values that they formed in their childhood. Therefore, they start a search to find other alternatives to live sincerely and consciously. This whole exploration process stated above develops with the help of social experiences, interactions, discussions with parents, peers and other people living within the adolescents' community. Recently, this kind of close communication is possible to form by means of engaging in YouTubers' world because they are present in the adolescents' home via their videos. Therefore, this section focused on how YouTubers expand adolescents' social interaction range.

4.2.1.1 Testing out various alternatives in life

The interviews with adolescents indicated that YouTubers shoot quite different kinds of videos illustrating their daily life, travels, purchased products, intellectual accumulation, leisure time, and many other things. With this wide variety of

contents, YouTubers demonstrate the paths they follow in their lives, lifestyles, and scenes to adolescents, which allows meeting with distinct situations, objects, and people. Nine out of 10 adolescents referred to the importance of confronting multiple alternatives when talking about their motivations to follow these people in social media.

Regarding the issues that adolescents have, there are many questions to answer considering their identity formation. One domain of this question is about future occupation; thus, adolescents are preoccupied with the question "What am I going to be in the future?" According to the present data, YouTubers facilitate the occupational exploration phase where adolescents are in a decision-making process. For example, Participant 2 and Participant 4 expressed how their favorite YouTubers help them get sight of their future occupations. The following sentences belong to Participant 4.

> Well, actually in "Violin MD," she is a doctor, and at the same time, she plays the violin. In this video, I see the dual aspect of life, enjoying two things at the same time. Or I see the things she does to cope with different aspects of life. Death, for instance. There was this video about patients dying. Normally, we only see the good things about doctors, but actually, there is the psychological aspect as well. (Participant-4, Appendix H, 12)

Regarding this quotation, she gained both insight and foresight towards her future vocational choice by closely monitoring the life of a YouTuber who has chosen the profession she wants. This is an excellent opportunity for her because she confronted with the distinct faces of being a doctor. Additionally, the expression of Participant 7 was similar to Participant 4, but she not only tested vocational alternatives, but she also examined every situation she saw in YouTubers to decide whether it is applicable to her life.

> Witnessing all those different lives helps me organize and direct my future. I ask myself: Do I want to have such a life? I do, or I do not. I change my actions accordingly. I can shape them. For example, I watch the videos of

> some YouTubers who have been abroad with the Erasmus project. And I tell myself that yeah, I should do it, too. Even though I cannot give an example now, there are some other YouTubers whose videos I watch and think that I should not be like them. In short, they help me with my future. (Participant-7, Appendix H, 13)

As it is portrayed in the quotes, through the presentation of personal life on videos, every YouTubers' life turns into a new future alternative for adolescents. Therefore, adolescents regard their life as a possible option for their future, and they tend to test all of the opportunities to find the best fitting one. Another mentioned contribution of YouTubers in considering various future alternatives is that they make it quite easy to meet a strange person or a group from all over the world. Thus, adolescents have an opportunity to see and follow peers living in another part of the world, which also shapes their identity formation. That is why YouTubers offer a tremendous opportunity for the new generation compared to the previous one in terms of the number and variety of people they can reach. Participant 7 also displayed how YouTubers assist them in confronting with distinct lives on all over the world for adolescents.

> Like I said, they live in the U.S., and they have a really different lifestyle. Their schools and lives are different. They also know about life in Turkey. It is not like a foreigner learning Turkish; they speak Turkish like a native. I mean, they have lived here too. They are familiar with the life here. The difference between these two lifestyles is impressive. I mean, the videos they share on these two channels are so different… I do not know; it really gets me.
> *Do you also follow the foreign one? I mean, you also follow Hailey's foreign channel.*
> Yes. They have some videos made in their schools. It is so different… They are actually living life in those Netflix shows. There is a world of difference between our high school and theirs. Education is different. Everything is different. (Participant-7, Appendix H, 14)

All of these quotations in this section illustrate that adolescents prefer to watch YouTubers intentionally to enrich decision-making tools, to test various possibilities for their current or future identity issues. Hence, YouTubers provides

significant opportunities to explore cultural, social and individual codes by offering new scenarios, which means YouTubers play an indispensable role in adolescent identity development.

4.2.1.2 The extension of existing forms of social interaction

Another recurrent subtheme in the enhancement of exploration in identity development is the enlargement of social interaction. This subtheme appeared while answering the research question of "what kind of interaction occurs between adolescents and YouTubers?" In the interviews, seven out of 10 adolescents mentioned expansion of social interaction. Hence, this subtheme signalizes how YouTubers provide social interaction for adolescents and the functions to satisfy the social needs of adolescents.

The findings of the present study show that YouTubers' videos provide adolescents to feel connected with others. While they are watching YouTubers' videos, they imagine that they are accompanied by one of their friends. In addition to this feeling, they have a chance to develop reciprocal relationships with YouTubers. Also, they believe in participation and contribution to the world. Within these findings, the fundamental motivation under social interaction is further divided into two categories, as "feeling connected" and "feeling participated."

4.2.1.2.1 Feeling connected

As it was mentioned before, adolescents desire to be connected with others and see that they share the same issues with them, which impels adolescents to read and write comments. Five out of 10 participants stated that this is a powerful urge for following YouTubers. The feeling of relatedness is supported by all social media platforms; it

is valid for YouTube, as well. Beyond the pleasure, adolescents watch YouTubers' videos in order to escape or cover unpleasant feelings they have. To give an example, Participant 7 explained how she deals with loneliness by watching YouTubers' videos in her daily life because pressing the video player button creates an atmosphere that there is one of her acquaintances at home.

> Unfortunately, I cannot contact them, but it feels like they are my friends. They sometimes advise their videos. Do it like this or that. I do not know; I see them as my friends. For example, there is this girl called Buket. This girl is always so clumsy, and she shares it in her stories. She says, "do not do this, or do not do that." It is kind of funny. It feels like a friend of mine is telling me something happened to her."
> *How does it make you feel?*
> It feels like I am not alone. For example, sometimes, no one texts me when I am alone at home, and my mother's also gone to the supermarket or something. I watch a video. The girl talks about things, and it feels like one of my friends is talking. (Participant-7, Appendix H, 15)

Moreover, YouTubers' responses to the comments under videos contribute to the feeling of connection in terms of two perspectives, one of which is the presence of social interaction in a virtual space. The second one is a translation of monologues into dialogues, which increases the feeling that YouTubers are real people, not a kind of software. In this context, Participant 3 explained this feeling quite definitively. This participant stated that receiving "likes" from a YouTuber makes her happy.

> I follow her on Instagram… I just like posts. I do not usually comment. As to mention just memories, there was "Cansu Akın". She said on her vlog that she was going through a depressive period, and I am kind of like her these days. What she told was similar to mine, all those emotions, and everything, and I checked the comments and saw that actually everyone was experiencing the sort of same things as I do. I wrote a comment, and she likes it very much. I kind of drew her attention. That is how I contacted her."
> *How did it make you feel?*
> It felt good. I mean, it felt good to know that I was not alone and that she saw the comment I wrote. After all, it felt like speaking to someone real.
> *Felt like keeping in touch.*
> Yeah, it felt like keeping in touch. (Participant-3, Appendix H, 16)

As understood from these sentences, the comments appeared as the areas where the feeling of connection is felt most intensely. There are two reasons as to

explain this power; the first is that the themes of videos and comments were highly related to the viewers' agenda. The second one is that the YouTuber responded to followers' comments with likes. Therefore, she experienced the feeling that they were in touch with her. As it is seen, experiencing the feeling of being connected is another matter for adolescents. When adolescents believe that they do not get enough sense of connection from a certain YouTuber, they become frustrated. To illustrate, Participant 9 explained his frustration in the absence of reciprocal relations with a YouTuber.

> *Well, do they respond to your comments?*
> Generally, some of them read the comments and those who care to respond. Some of them don't care at all. Those people... I mean, I think I don't have to care for those who don't care for me. That's why I stop talking to them. (Participant-9, Appendix H, 17)

These expressions of Participant 9 illustrated that being noticed by YouTubers was an essential motivation to follow them because when adolescents could not see any response, the feeling of being in connection was damaged. Although it is a virtual relationship, adolescents sense it as a real one; therefore, the impact on them becomes hard to tolerate. When adolescents realize that they overvalue YouTubers, they quit following them. Moreover, the feeling that YouTubers are real people is supported by voice, image, and personal spaces, thanks to video culture. That gives a sense of embodiment of the virtual stars. For instance, Participant 9 draws attention to how these features are essential to feel a connection.

> I think it is really important to use facecam. It is your face that is seen on the right bottom of the video when you are playing a game and speaking. I think it matters. For example, I do not want to watch the videos when I do not make eye contact or do not know who is talking. I do not want to watch the videos without the facecam. I just want to see the person, and I think this is an important factor for YouTubers to become popular. Both the audio and the image, playing the game and having a conversation, chatting, and when you see the person, it feels closer and warmer. That is why the book is very important in the relationship the writer has with their readers. I love reading books, and I think this is the reason for YouTubers to be loved so much to

> have so many fans. It is important to have a face to face communication. (Participant-9, Appendix H, 18)

With the visual and auditory presence of YouTubers, their daily activities, such as eating, playing, shopping, traveling and spending time with their friends or pets empower the feeling of the embodiment of YouTubers. It creates a strong bond between YouTubers and their followers, and it meets the needs of being connected with others, as Participant 9 mentioned above.

4.2.1.2.2 Feeling participated

One of the essential qualities of new media technologies is the participation opportunity for users and engagement in social networking, which means every user has a voice in the online arena. The YouTube platform and YouTubers are considered important according to the fact that the new features in this platform enables adolescents to master above mentioned skills. The present study revealed that six out of 10 adolescents participate in videos through comments, so it is a crucial element for feeling involved. Therefore, the goal of this section is to explore adolescents' participation patterns and motivations to comment on YouTubers' videos.

The analysis of the commenting behaviors of adolescents indicated that three out of 10 adolescents do not care about YouTubers' reaction to their presence; on the other hand, they only want to participate in broader community dialogue or decision-making process with their comments. For instance, Participant 6 mentioned this feeling saliently.

> *What do you aim when you give advice in your comments?*
> I want them to play better games. Maybe that's why. I regret it when I do not say it. It's like they will never know if I don't say. It feels better when I do, even if they see it or not. (Participant-6, Appendix H, 19)

In addition to Participant 6, Participant 9 touched on the idea of his comments that is related to the feeling of participating. He said that his remarks include statements, such as “You might be better off if you do this. It could be more comfortable.” Looking at the content of the comment, giving an insight to a YouTuber is a common motivation. For example, Participant 10 expressed the urge to reply with the following quotations.

> Just a second. For example, someone asked a question about computer parts to learn which processor I should use. I answered both of them because it is a big channel, so it is impossible to reply to all the right answers. That is why I said “I feel knowledgeable about this topic. I can answer this. (Participant-10, Appendix H, 20)

4.2.2 Preparation for commitment to identity construction

The above discussed theme presented the exploration of alternative paths that target finding a permanent role in life. Through resolving identity issues, adolescents can progress to early adulthood period and establish intimate relationships with others, which is the primary task of this developmental period (Erikson, 1968). By making commitments to selected alternatives, adolescents overcome uncertainty about who they are and what the essential components that construct their identity are (Marcia, 1989). That is, commitment refers to a psychological investment to the specific options for construction or reconstruction of identity, which brings along personal growth, learning, perspective-taking, awareness, and change in the individuals’ life. One of the effective mechanisms for this transformation is the identification and imitation of significant others (Sears, Maccoby, & Levin, 1957). Hence, this subtheme refers to how the enhancement in exploration facilities is reflected on the commitments that adolescents make.

This subtheme centers on the transformation of self in terms of personal growth, identification and awareness of adolescents.

4.2.2.1. Personal Growth

The concept of personal growth refers to the improvements in physical, emotional, intellectual, and social domains of life (Pachamama, n.d). In the present study, all adolescents mentioned how they experience growth in various fields of life through YouTuber. In other words, YouTubers assist adolescents in becoming more aware of themselves and the world. YouTubers empower adolescents by allowing perspective-taking in social or occupational issues, providing information, teaching skills and being life coaches for them. Therefore, this subtheme is divided into three categories, as “perspective-taking”, “learning information and skills,” and “having personal life coaching”.

4.2.2.1.1 Perspective taking

Interviews with adolescents demonstrated that YouTubers help them to obtain distinct perspectives toward life. Four out of 10 adolescents emphasized the importance of perspective-taking in their current and future social skills and behaviors. For example, Participant 1 made a point to explain the contribution of YouTubers to her perspective on life.

> Of course, it affects your perspective on life. They say something about your life, and when you start to apply it, you have a new viewpoint. You get to see how people think at one point. It expands your point of view, generally. (Participant-1, Appendix H, 21)

Participant 4 also added that she could get much more information about both the pleasant and unlikeable sides of her favorite occupation. Her favorite YouTuber enables her to get a distinct perspective toward a profession that she dreams of for the future.

> I am following a doctor called Violin MD. I am generally curious about her vlogs because even though YouTube sounds unimportant, I can decide if I would like to be a doctor in the future or not. I can see life better. It feels

> good. It is fun, actually. It is like I am doing my internship because she is shooting her life there. But I also see the bad sides. For example, I have seen her trying to cope with the death of her patients. Actually, that is what I like about it most. (Participant-4, Appendix H, 22)

Some participants highlighted that they like watching travel videos because they want to travel, but they do not have a financial resource. Moreover, they are not adults, which makes it harder for them to act independently from their families. These kinds of videos function as substitution tools for their desires.

From another perspective, by posting videos where YouTubers travel, they help adolescents have the chance to explore other countries, cultures, and dynamics, which is quite valuable for their personal growth.

4.2.2.1.2 Learning information and skills

YouTubers shoot informative and instructive videos about what they do and how they do it as an expert in certain matters. Tutorials about courses, make-up and playing a musical instrument are one of the most common formats (cited from Suing, Salazar, & Ortiz, 2018; Gewerc, Fraga & Rodés, 2017). In the present study, 7 out of 10 participants explained why they follow YouTubers as intellectual purposes. They prefer YouTubers' videos based on their educational needs, such as receiving private tutorial for school courses, developing skills in games or musical instruments, and taking advice on their hobbies. For example, Participant 5 pointed out that he learns many playing techniques to play videogames better, Participant 6 remarked tutoring functions of YouTube videos about his school subjects, and Participant 8 mentioned how he takes HDMI courses by watching YouTubers' videos. The sentences of Participant 9 depicted below show how he developed his English language skills by means of taking YouTubers as reference.

> Yes, referring to the previous example, the YouTuber called Barış Özcan had been reviewing English sources, and he started presenting them. After that, I started surfing on some English websites and doing my own research. It helped me improve myself not only in Turkish but also in English. Moreover, English sources provided me with easy access, which increased my self-confidence. Starting to do my research on my own definitely contributed a lot to me. (Participant-9, Appendix H, 23)

Additionally, he mentioned that he finds a chance to develop chess skills via YouTubers' videos.

> After Barış Özcan, there are several chess channels. Chess Media and Chess Channel. They analyze a newly played chess game and upload their video to YouTube. In this way, I can learn something from current games and add something to myself. (Participant-9, Appendix H, 24)

Participant 10 also gave insights about how she keeps being informed about all the latest developments on technology through the YouTube platform.

> This will be a very extreme example, but last month a technology company had prepared a presentation for a technology fair called CES. This coincided with three of the night; I watched it. They introduced a new processor and display card. (Participant-10, Appendix H, 25)

4.2.2.1.3 Having personal life coaching

Based on the analyses of interview data, it can be said that YouTubers also serve as free personal life coaches for many adolescents. They shoot several videos concerning how people perform their life better. They give advices about diet, sport, meditation, studying habits, make-up, or recipes. Four out of 10 adolescents expressed that they benefit from this feature of YouTubers. For instance, Participant 2 stated when he followed YouTubers' advice about sport, his body developed much more.

> I listened to Ağır Sağlam while doing sport. I think it accelerated my improvement because he advised on what to do before, during, and after sport. (Participant-2, Appendix H, 26)

Participants 4 shared that she had some kinds of trouble with studying habits; therefore, she had watched videos suggesting several studying methods for fruitful

outcomes. After this advice, she stated that she has improved her studying habits and there has been an increase in her success in school.

> It's actually positive. For instance, it took me a lot more time to study in middle school, and it was very ineffective. Now, I study less but more effectively. I am more successful now. (Participant-4, Appendix H, 27)

As a last example, Participant 9 shared how much he benefited from this coaching in his daily life. Actually, his statements portrayed an essence of this theme since he explained how YouTubers make life coaching for people in a virtual space and what kind of implications they have on someone far away.

> I used to be a very messy person. I was terrible at organizing all the photocopies that my teachers gave me. I do not remember where I heard it, but I heard that keeping your papers in German-style would be good. Then I started doing it; I kept my Physics papers in Physics file and the Chemistry papers in Chemistry file. It helped me a lot. Now I can keep my homework papers in an organized way. That is the contribution YouTube made to me. If I had not seen that video, maybe I would still have been living that messy life. There are many other positive effects like that. (Participant-9, Appendix H, 28)

4.2.2.2 Identification

Identity is a social-psychological construct; therefore, social influences play a crucial role in this process, which crystallizes through imitations and identifications. The term imitation means copying the behavior of another person, group, or object on purpose or not. On the other hand, the term identification refers to endeavoring to become like admired people, undertaking their roles, and caring for their values (Kroger, 1996).

According to Freud (2013), it starts in the early childhood stage as a primary identification with unconscious forces, but in the adolescence period, individuals become capable of selecting some figures considering their talents and interests intentionally. This process begins with taking same-sex parents as role models, and continues with teachers, peers, and others in a social context.

Based on to these descriptions, the current analysis in this study has shown that 7 out of 10 adolescents tend to take YouTubers as role models in their life. It appears in their daily activities, desires, and plans mostly. For instance, Participant 3 explained how she takes YouTubers as role models in her daily life activities. When her favorite YouTuber does anything, she feels like she has to do something similar. Based on her statements, it can be said that she certainly does something within her own means.

> Damla Altun, for example, is changing her house, you know, I can't change my house, but I can change my room. I'm buying something to my little library. Like, I put candles in my room, and I liked it. I've seen it in a video. I bought candles, scented candles. I'm going through these little changes in my life. (Participant-3, Appendix H, 29)

Moreover, Participant 8 said that when he dyed his hair blue, he was actually inspired by his favorite YouTuber. Considering identity status literature, in the actions of identification and imitation, sometimes people may avoid exploring possible alternatives; they simply choose to identify and imitate others (Marcia et al., 1993). As in the examples above, to what extend the participants identify themselves with YouTubers could be seen through their behaviors. In addition to this, another participant showed how much she identifies herself with YouTubers when employing her feelings and dreams. In the expression of Participant 7, she mentioned her desire to be like YouTubers. Her statements were very clear and obvious about her feelings and how much she admired the YouTubers.

> For example, they sing in the car. Or they have some kind of question-answer session while going somewhere. I do not know; I want to be like them. I keep thinking if I will ever have a car and drive it alone or if I will ever hang out with my friend in it. I envy them.
> *Is there anything else that you see and want to do?*
> Some of them shoot vlogs about their travel abroad. They say they got tired and go to some hotel to get rest. I would like to experience that weariness, for example. (Participant-7, Appendix H, 30)

In addition to Participants 7, Participant 9 makes identification with YouTubers by means of his dreams and wishes. Participant 9 mentioned about how YouTubers' income and ways of maintaining their profession encouraged him. He expressed how obsessively he wanted to be like one of them. When exploring participants' answers, it is safe to state that YouTubers have become significant role models for youth.

> I want to be a software developer, and I want to develop game software. I am planning to earn money by selling games. Even though it is on a small scale, it appears pleasant to me because the virtual world has an advantage. In real life, making a house requires bricks, cement, and a lot of people to work consistently. Still, in the virtual world, we can code something entirely ourselves, and after doing it, it can make a lot more money than real life. In real life, people who work in heavy jobs earn a lot of money, but in social media and the virtual world, it can be done with much less labor. I can say that I want to participate in this caravan.
> *So you plan to continue your life like the examples you mentioned?*
> What should I know? I don't want to do a normal job. I can say that I had the temptation to comfortably earn money online. (Participant-9, Appendix H, 31)

Similar to Participant 9, Participant 7 explained how her emotions and thoughts were affected by YouTubers.

> For example, some YouTubers share their perspectives on some topics. For example, I am affected by those points of view. There are very sensible ones.
> *An example?*
> One called Buket Senanur. There were many poets, but I forgot his name. He is a very famous poet. She attended a conference of him; she shot a video and asked him questions. According to what the man said and YouTuber's interpretation, my opinion changed too because it sounded very logical. I don't remember the subject, but I was impressed by their comments and their thoughts. (Participant-7, Appendix H, 32)

In the case of robust identifications, people tend to defend the norms of people and groups bouncingly, even though it is not beneficial for them all the time (Swann & Bosson, 2010). Participant 1 identified herself with the YouTubers when she encounters negative comments about YouTubers she likes. She stated that she could not make sense of those people's thoughts.

> I read. So. um. As I said, it doesn't affect me much. If a bad comment is made, of course, I will be sorry. Because if you do not like their videos, behaviors, and attitudes, then you have the option not to watch. You enter and watch them. You are wasting time in your life. So, I don't understand those who comment badly. But I'm not talking about criticism. For example, I am not talking about the comments saying; 'You can change the background, it was very tiring'. Some people are in direct hate and do not understand them very much. If you don't, you may as well not watch it. I see the good comments, of course, which makes me happy. (Participant-1, Appendix H, 33)

4.3 Lack of awareness

This theme indicates how self-awareness becomes part of the identity construction and reconstruction processes. Besides, this part aims to explore to what extend adolescents are aware of YouTubers' influences on their life.

One of the first questions, which aim to understand adolescents' critical evaluation abilities, is about YouTubers' honesty. Eight out of 10 participants remarked that both honest and dishonest YouTubers exist in this platform, and two out of 10 participants believe that they are absolutely unreliable. Although most of the adolescents accept the fact that YouTubers may mislead people, they keep watching them. This discrepancy between adolescents' thoughts and behaviors indicates a lack of awareness for them because they do not internalize the information in a real sense. For example, participant 1 thinks that she had never encountered a dishonest YouTuber yet.

> They are divided into two here. There are some people who share and some who do not. For example, Merve Özkaynak does share it. I think she is a very genuine person, and she speaks out her real thoughts. I think so because so many people say that they bought the product she suggested and they liked it after using it. Of course, there must be many others who suggest a product only for money, not because they tried and liked it. I just have not seen such people, yet. (Participant-1, Appendix H, 34)

In this regard, a further question was asked to adolescents, concerning how they measure whether YouTubers are honest and sincere. The underlying aim in asking this question was to find out about their awareness level by looking at

whether they have any criteria and what kind of tests they do to estimate the level of honesty. Two out of 10 participants are said to pay attention to the conversation styles of YouTubers, facial expressions, and the relevancy between the recommended product and their video content. If YouTubers include their emotions to a recommendation, adolescents regard this recommendation as a genuine one. For example, Participant 6 explained this with the following sentences.

> It becomes clear from his facial expression. While he is promoting a product, he says in low spirit. I don't want to watch it. If he likes, he says it with pleasure. He is happy, and he smiles. (Participant-6, Appendix H, 35)

Moreover, three out of 10 participants check whether they noticed the recommended product in previous videos of that YouTuber, and other three participants prefer to check the comments in different websites as well before believing in a YouTuber. Additionally, participant 8 said that he looks for both positive and negative effects of the promoted product to get a better insight. As it is revealed from the analyses, every adolescent has certain personal criteria to understand YouTubers' level of honesty, but there are no standard criteria enabling all adolescents watching YouTubers to distinguish the virtue accurately.

The next question mainly focuses on understanding adolescents' awareness level concerning YouTubers' influence on their thoughts and behaviors. At the beginning of the interview, Participant 8 stated how his favorite YouTubers' hair color has affected his behavior and made him change his hair color accordingly. Nevertheless, at the end of the interview, there was a question asking participants how they think YouTubers' recommendations and suggestions affect their thoughts and behavior. He answered this question by stating that he does not remember at the moment. Based on this observation, it can be maintained that there is a significant difference between the reality and adolescents' perception of it.

Furthermore, Participant 7 also mentioned how she has changed his eating behavior based on a YouTuber's suggestion even though she does not like it porridge. She stated that YouTubers suggest the delicious taste of oatmeal continuously; hence, she has forced herself to eat in order not to feel strange and excluded. However, at the end of the interview, she answered the last question by saying she does not notice anything in her behaviors. Likewise, Participant 6 thinks that YouTubers do not have any notable effect on him because he watches them for entertainment purposes. Yet, at the beginning of the interview, he mentioned how he applies and benefits from his favorite YouTubers' suggestions about studying or gaming. As it is understood from these examples, adolescents are affected from YouTubers in various ways, but they are not fully aware of the impact, yet.

Four out of 10 participants emphasized that they have a secure position toward the possible adverse impacts of YouTubers; however, there are many young people in danger outside. Participant 2 discussed that he mainly takes his parents as reference people; hence, YouTubers could not negatively affect him. Based on his statements, YouTubers can only contribute to what he already has as a basis, namely their family background.

> If I were small, I would change my mindset into their mindset. At first, if I am little, I can have a very different mindset if I get it from YouTubers without getting it from my father. But if I take it from my mother and come back and watch it from YouTubers, I would double the effect."
> *So, how are your situation and your age for now?*
> It's a good thing for my age because I may not be able to make some decisions alone; some people can help me. So, it's a good thing.
> *Good…*
> *What issues might you not decide? With what topics does it help you?*
> For example, when there is a social event, for instance, if I think of something different from my perspective, I am listening to his points of view and looking at it from that direction. I'm looking. How can I filter it again and decide? (Participant-2, Appendix H, 36)

Participant 2 suggested that he was completely protected from the downsides of YouTubers because his family has given him an excellent education from childhood up to present. Even when he applies what YouTubers say, this does not mean that they can change his mindset, but they only help him decide on some issues. Participant 5 also shared similar viewpoint with Participant 2, stating that he believes his purpose is only to entertain himself and get rid of his boredom. Considering other participants' expressions, it can be said that that is why he is not influenced by them, while others are poorly affected.

> I don't think they have an impact on me because I only watch them for fun. At least right now. It could happen when I was little, for example, in my brother's age. He can spoil when he watches too many videos. Iıı, he has started to see games in his dreams. (Participant-5, Appendix H, 37)

Additionally, Participant 4 asserted although her friends are hooked on adverse impact of YouTubers; she benefited from YouTubers' videos to a great extent.

> It actually affected me in some cases, positively. It is in my habit of studying, but they do not usually look at study tubers like me. The game even in the lesson. For example, there was a YouTube channel called "PewDiePie". I am not playing any video games; one of my friends is playing. Even in the lesson, he opens the thing from behind and watches his video games. For example, this kind of thing can reduce academic success, and I think it is very bad, which is penetrating all areas of life. I see it in all my friends if you look at it. I come across positive things, but I have many friends with whom I come across negative features.
> *Can you give an example? What do you see negatively?*
> For example, here is something that my friend said, "I started on the weekend. I started Friday. Until Sunday, I played a video game without leaving my room. I also watched PewDiePie." This is not good in any way. It is something that both lowers academic success, reduces physical and mental health, and I have seen it. I am always a witness to such things. (Participant-4, Appendix H, 38)

Considering all of these analyses, it can be concluded that adolescents are not aware of the impact of YouTubers on them, yet. They also continue to watch YouTubers' videos insistently. Although they know that YouTubers are not always honest with their audience, in order to eliminate deceptive suggestions, they try to

pay attention to certain things with the help of their cognitive operations. However, these specific criteria differ for each adolescent and remain highly subjective.

In summary, regarding the role that YouTubers play in adolescents lives, findings of the present study revealed that YouTubers have an influence on adolescents' identity development in two aspects; namely identity notion and identity formation. During identity construction, YouTubers assist adolescents to be integrated into society through enhancing adolescents' sense of belonging and social validation. Thus, YouTubers expand involvement in and connection to the society. In addition to the socialization function, YouTubers also promote adolescents' sense of self as being unique and individualized.

When it comes to how YouTubers affect identity formation process, it has been found that YouTubers enhance exploration options for adolescents by helping them notice and test out various alternatives and extend social interaction. Furthermore, it has been revealed that YouTubers empower adolescents in terms of the internal investments they make because they increase personal growth by allowing perspective taking skills, providing information in many fields of interest and acting like a personal life coach. In this process, it has been observed that YouTubers have become role models for adolescents' self-identification. However, during the interviews and analysis, it was found out that unconsciousness and over identification were embedded in the participants' thoughts, behaviors and beliefs. In spite of these results, adolescents claimed that they are not influenced by the YouTubers they follow. This indicated that lack of awareness is another outstanding result of the study. In the next chapter, these findings are discussed in the light of literature and recommendations for future research are presented.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In this section, the findings obtained from the present study and the findings of relevant previous studies in the field are discussed comparatively. Moreover, limitation of the study as well as implications for parents, counselors, and policy makers are presented. In addition, recommendations for further research and conclusion are presented.

5.1 Discussion

This research aims to explore how YouTubers affect identity formation of adolescents. This main research question was supported by three further sub-research questions. These questions to be answered in the research are about what kind of roles YouTubers play in adolescents' life, their mindset and daily actions. The second research question explored in the present research concerns adolescents' interaction with YouTubers. How this interaction happens and how it affects the identity formation are some of the questions to be answered. Concerning the nature of the study, it is important to answer these questions to understand how adolescents' identity formation process is affected and shaped, and to explore its consequences in multiple perspectives.

In the light of these research questions, this section provides thorough discussions based on the arguments and findings of the study. Accordingly, this current study was examined in three parts, namely identity notion, identity formation and new media awareness. It starts with the first argument that focus on how the notion of identity itself is affected and supported with the integration and separation

dynamics. It continues with the second argument regarding how identity formation process is affected in terms of enhancement of exploration options and ways of preparation for commitment in identity construction. Last but not a least, it evaluates how much adolescents are aware of the influence of YouTubers on their life. It also compares the findings of the present study in the light of previous research in each part.

5.1.1 Notion of identity

The first argument of the study emerged when answering the main research question of "how do YouTubers influence adolescents' identity construction?". This question was also supported by asking "what role do YouTubers play in adolescents lives?". Considering the former question, how the notion of identity is felt with the intervention of YouTubers in the process were presented under this section. Regarding the latter question, the results of the interviews revealed that there were two roles of YouTubers on the identity notion. They were recognized through the integration and differentiation capacity of individuals as Adams and Marshall (1996) and Kroger (1996) were revealed. These two functions were presented in the following paragraphs separately.

5.1.1.1 Integration

The results regarding the integration role of YouTubers indicated that people's interaction and relationship with the YouTubers whose videos they watch help them feel accepted, realize that they belong to a certain group and make others approve their existence. In this regard, it can be said that YouTubers play a constructive role

in creating an identity notion through supporting the sense of belonging to the same group.

According to the findings, the current study has revealed that the sense of belonging is built mostly by sincerity because it has been observed that adolescents have emphasized “the genuineness” of YouTubers frequently. When adolescents were asked to describe what they meant by this term, they emphasized certain features about YouTubers, such as “being ordinary”, “showing close attitudes to the audience”, “not having artificial attitudes”, “having friendly conversations”, and “being commoner”. As their answers revealed, it is important for adolescents when YouTubers behave as ordinary people, which helps to build the sense of genuineness. Moreover, it was revealed that YouTubers using daily spoken language and presenting daily activities of their lives from their own houses on their videos create a perception on adolescents that they are ordinary people who are very similar to them. Therefore, it can be stated that YouTubers convey to adolescents the message that they belong to the same social group by means of their sincere acts. This finding was consistent with the former research of Jerslev (2016), who presented that YouTubers have achieved micro-celebrity status by sense of intimacy, equality and authenticity.

As further analysis of sense of belonging, it has been found in the current study that adolescents tend to follow YouTubers who adopt the same values and belief systems as they do. In this way, they feel more accepted and more approved. It is a valuable finding of the current study because YouTubers serve as parents, peers or neighbors by feeding in-group favoritism of adolescents. It seems that YouTubers are supplemental sources to feel integrated to the society thanks to the shared norms. They have created an illusion for adolescents and they force them to believe that they

are in the same boat. In one of the studies in the field, Stald (2008) has found that social network is a crucial factor in forming a sense of belonging and recognizing one's harmony with society's notions.

This finding is also similar to the finding of Aukes (2017) who aimed to understand the influence taste in the context of beauty YouTubers. The study has revealed that individuals' similar tastes and other things in common with the YouTubers they follow motivate them to do so. It is actually caused by the need of feeling belonging to the same social group and level as the YouTubers they follow. Marshall (2006) named it as "narrowing of the gap between online celebrities and followers". This is particularly crucial to understand the main dynamics in YouTubers' popularity among adolescents. Without this kind of comprehension, it could be challenging to decide on any kind of policy to take necessary precautions.

The second result of this study in the integration theme is that social validation is an important need for adolescents to full develop their identity. When adolescents were asked why they read the comments under the videos of YouTubers, they mentioned the social validation purpose. In this study, social validation tendencies of adolescents were observed as the perception of positive social feedback from others, which verifies the appropriateness of behaviors, feelings, and experiences. Reading comments on YouTubers' videos was a primary operation that adolescents emphasized to feel accepted and valued by others. In other words, adolescents in the study have sought social approval at specific points in their life to be able to consider themselves normal in a group. Through collecting social validation cues, they try to become much more integrated to the society.

In this context, the current study revealed that YouTubers function as social validation tools for adolescents because adolescents try to estimate their position in

the society by taking the comments made on YouTube videos as their reference point. It was revealed in the interviews that the most repeated expression is; "Everyone has watched this video; everyone is like me." This expression was significant because it highlights how YouTubers function as social validation tools in assisting integration to the society. That is, the video comments make a significant amount of contribution to the construction of identity that provides relatability since adolescents feel a sense of resemblance to others who make similar comments to the videos as they do. For instance, when they find something funny, they can understand through the comments if other adolescents have also found it funny. Realizing that others also share their sense of humor makes them feel normal. In the same way, adolescents who are experiencing a depressive and sad phase in life can gain insight on what others feel by watching a YouTuber's video on a particular subject and become aware that the process they are going through is quite normal and acceptable. Along the same line, Fred (2015), Kahraman (2016) and Marss (2015) highlighted the wish that the followers would like to identify themselves with YouTubers and importance of how similar followers and YouTubers are. Their findings were supported with this current study.

As mentioned above, although identity is constructed on individual basis, it needs to be recognized and confirmed by others. Therefore, adolescents profoundly care to be validated in their social environment. They continuously try to get peer acceptance with their acting outs (Buckingham, 2008). For this reason, this finding is in line with Stern (2008), who explored the nature of the reward for young authors expressing themselves online, found that the sense of validation through comments is a strong motivation in online authorship because the adolescents are curious about how their thoughts correspond to others and they need feedback from site visitors. As

a result, YouTubers and YouTube as a platform have positive aspects of social media, which is in line with the studies that reveal the integrative aspect of social media's identity concept (Matsuba, 2006; Jenkins, 2006; Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). The crucial point concerning this finding is to discuss why adolescents seek social validation from social media platforms. This could result from the fact that they might not take enough social approval and acceptance from their real social environment, such as parents, peers or neighbors. Therefore, it is important for parents to track developmental needs of adolescents and to train themselves to successfully meet their children's social needs.

According to the second result of social validation function recurring in this research, YouTube videos have a second role in the social context; YouTubers create a whole different area and field of discourse in adolescents' worlds. It has been observed that watching popular YouTubers' videos and having a general understanding of their lives are very important factors for adolescents in being accepted by their social circle, feeling embraced and adopted in terms of discourse. It was revealed in the interviews in the form of the following expression; "When they are talking about these things in a social environment, and I do not know about it or do not follow that trend, I feel cast out." This statement documents how adolescents' feel rejected when they could not participate in their peers' discourse about a certain YouTuber. This result is crucial because it highlights YouTubers' social validation role. Regarding this issue, it can be concluded that it is crucial to empower adolescents to develop self-approval and self-supporting skills in order not to become frustrated in such cases. This might help adolescents to become more independent and autonomous people in their lifespan.

This result is similar to the findings of a research study by Pereira, Moura & Fillol (2018) who found that following the most trending YouTubers, getting their jokes and sharing them with others are considered as cool actions amongst the peer groups. However, this finding can be said to cause relatively more negative effects because it has been observed that adolescents who feel obliged to follow some popular YouTubers just to be accepted and approved by their social environment actually do not enjoy watching these people.

The third important finding concerning adolescents' need of social validation is that some adolescents have been observed to follow some YouTubers' advice just to feel like one of them while they are not comfortable with that advice. The example of an adolescent who starts eating oats just to feel like one of the YouTubers even though she hates oats shows that the need of being accepted and feeling the sense of belonging can sometimes cause de-individualization. During the interviews, the participant used the following expression; "I kept eating it because I did not want to feel weird." This result is considered to be significant because it especially underlines that adolescents need to appreciate their own thoughts and emotions. Additionally, this is a very delicate matter because it leaves adolescents vulnerable to manipulation and influence.

According to these results, it has been revealed that this finding of the study calls for attention to empower adolescents with new media literacy skills and awareness. Parents and mental health professionals shoulder a great responsibility for the care of adolescents at this point. This result is similar with those of Westenberg (2016) because she found that teenagers are not aware of the influence that YouTubers have on them. As it is indicated, the same concerns apply to YouTubers, as well. The questions with regards to what extent adolescents feel obliged the

watching these videos in order to get their friends' and the society' approval, and what can be done about it need to be discussed by authorities. The results of this study are noteworthy in terms of discovering what is missed in the development of adolescents from the integration perspective of identity.

5.1.1.2 Differentiation

Contrary to the integration role of YouTubers, one of the data revealed in this study is that in order to build identity notion thoroughly, adolescents realize what makes them distinctive and different from others. It can be stated that most of the adolescents watching YouTubers observe how and in which way they differ from those YouTubers, which gives them a general idea about which skills, gifts and perspectives they have different from others. That is, adolescents have the opportunity to discover that they have unique characteristics different from their peers or social environment.

Regarding the differentiation function that YouTubers have, this finding of the present study supports the fact that adolescents realize this distinction by reading the comments on YouTube videos and observing people's reactions. Hence, adolescents realize the existence of people who can think differently and who have different mindsets through reading the comments. The following expression appearing in the interviews sets a great example for this issue; "I can realize that people might have different thoughts than mine, that they can think differently." This statement is crucial because it enables the researcher to observe the YouTubers' differentiation function. In this context, it has been found out that almost every adolescent discovers the fact that there are many different people who are not like them and who have completely various thoughts on a subject. Particularly, when

adolescents encounter people who adore YouTubers, they become surprised and choose to disown the attitudes of these kinds of people. This is considered to be helpful for adolescents to realize their distinct and unique self.

Based upon these findings and the fact that adolescents' interaction with their social environment contributes to their identity formation process, YouTubers are thought to become an important part of their social environment and play an active role in this process. With regard to all these data, it has been concluded that adolescents use YouTubers as a means of reaching self-knowledge. This finding was in line with the findings of Valkenburg et. al (2005) who revealed that adolescents engage in internet-based activities in order to make identity experiment and self-exploration. Therefore, it is vital to consider why adolescents resort to social media platforms to get self-knowledge. This might as well serve as an inspiration for the development of certain counseling programs in schools to enhance self-knowledge of adolescents.

5.1.2 Identity formation

The main aim of the study was to find out how YouTubers influence adolescents' identity formation process. This aim was detailed by asking sub-research questions of "how do YouTubers influence the mindset of adolescents?" and "how do YouTubers influence the daily practices of adolescents?". Regarding this issue, the second main theme revealed from the analysis of the data is identity formation. Although there are many theories and models regarding identity formation, the focus of the present study is on the findings of its two main components; namely, exploration phase and commitment phase.

5.1.2.1 Enhancement of exploration in identity construction

When the findings of the study considered on how YouTubers assist to explore possibilities, this study found that YouTubers enhance exploration opportunities via providing to adolescents to test various alternatives around them. and to extend social interaction of adolescents through supporting the sense of connection and participation.

With regard to testing out various alternatives in life, it has been observed that YouTubers increase the fields of inquiry and expand the area of options for adolescents. Thanks to YouTubers, adolescents can now reach different examples of identities and lifestyles from all over the world with only one click in YouTube. For example, witnessing different lifestyles and coming across various people and objects enable them to explore a wide variety of alternatives and test whether they are suitable for them or not. In fact, as Marcia (1966) proposed under normal circumstances, adolescents explore the options in the context of their own social environment and the area within their access. However, YouTubers have changed the process. This is a crucial finding because it has been observed that adolescents are really impressed with the opportunities that YouTubers provide them. Also, this finding of the study is supported by Aukes' (2017) study because he has found out that beauty and lifestyle YouTubers provide their followers with the opportunity to explore current likes and dislikes. It is suggested in the literature that social media platforms, such as Myspace, are quite supportive for adolescents to discover their true selves in this period (boyd, 2006).

Regarding the motivational areas of exploration, it has been observed that forming an interaction beyond their physical access and other than their families and peer groups is one of the most compelling motivations leading them to follow

YouTubers. In fact, these motivational areas differ from one adolescent to another. Some adolescents were pleased with reaching various alternatives in the ideological or interpersonal domain of identity. For example, in the ideological domain of identity, it was found that following a YouTuber, who is engaged in their dream profession, enables them to get a general idea of the job they want and to recognize its positive and negatives sides. To illustrate, a participant who would like to become a doctor in the future emphasized that she shapes his or her decision on this career with the help of a YouTuber's videos, who is also a doctor. As these findings revealed, YouTubers are valuable resource for adolescents' job prospects. Many high school authorities invite people from certain occupational areas in order to help their students' career choices. However, they might not invite people from each work force and allocate enough time and resource for these activities. Hence, it could be stated that YouTubers from distinct occupational areas offer a precious opportunity for adolescents to make their career decisions without depending on authorities only. The finding that YouTubers extend occupational options was supported by Perrez-Torres et al. (2018) because their study has revealed that when YouTubers share insights of their own profession, it is an essential source for adolescents to form an occupational identity.

Beyond these, the results obtained from the interviews indicated that some adolescents wish to become YouTubers and do it as a profession, the underlying reason for which is explained as being tempted by easy money, the amount of traveling to make videos freely, and the sincerity of providing information to people. The following statement as; "I am tempted to earn money from the more comfortable nature of the Internet" summarizes the admiration of adolescents to become a YouTuber in the future. As exemplified in the interviews, YouTubers change the

current mindset of adolescents as to what having a job means. It is one of the crucial results of this study because it might signal that adolescents follow YouTubers rather than their own skills.

When this finding of the study is considered, it is in line with contributions of Holmbolm (2015) to the literature, who considers being a YouTuber as a luxury career option because according to him, it provides people with the opportunity and freedom of working at home, being the boss and escaping the unpleasant working hours, which most people cannot bear. Therefore, the findings of this study highlight that adolescents have added being a YouTuber into their occupational options. Authorities must take this fact seriously in order to help adolescents during the development of occupational identity because the most important matter is to be able to assist adolescents by taking their talents, desires and expectations into consideration.

In addition to the ideological perspective of identity, this study revealed that adolescents benefit from YouTubers while forming their identity in all these domains. For example, an adolescent in high school sets his or her future goals by watching college students' videos and having a general idea about their lives, friendships, speeches and fields of interest. Indeed, they include what they see on those videos in their identity exploration process by asking questions, such as 'Can I do that' or 'Is it something good for me?' Also, by watching the videos of their peers who live abroad, they find an opportunity to have an idea about life in other countries, as well. As these results revealed, YouTubers offer various opportunities for adolescents' life, which might eliminate limitations among adolescents coming from distinct social backgrounds, allowing them to be more open-minded and aware. It is a quite crucial finding for adolescents' development and it is similar to the

finding of Aukes (2017), who suggested that opportunities enabled by the interaction between individuals and YouTubers eliminate the class boundaries on them. As a result, YouTubers support equality and free access to many domains of identity, such as philosophical way of life, politics, religion, gender roles, occupation, friendship and leisure time activities.

The second finding was that YouTubers expand the social interaction opportunities for individuals on all social media platforms. Therefore, it can be stated that YouTubers are one of the most important mechanisms in exploring options for forming social interaction. The findings about the range of extension in social interaction were supported by feeling connectedness and feeling participated in the society. Accordingly, the research question of "what kind of interaction occurs between adolescents and YouTubers" were elaborated in the following paragraphs.

First of all, the current research findings revealed that adolescents interact with YouTubers via subscribing the YouTubers channel, commenting to the video and liking the video of YouTubers. These interaction ways enhance the feeling of connectedness because as any other social media platform, YouTube also enables adolescents to interact and keep in touch with people whom they follow and take as role models. When the reasons behind this finding were questioned, the demonstration of ordinary life and the mutual sense of sincerity on YouTube make adolescents feel like they are with a friend. As Livingston (2012) proposed, the current study indicated that adolescents regard themselves as friends of YouTubers due to their involvement into the lives of YouTubers.

In addition to this, it was observed that powerful visual and auditory qualities in YouTube videos keep adolescents connected because various activities in daily life shared through visuals have enabled virtual stars to become embodied. To give

an illustration concerning this issue, a participant mentioned that when they see the person in the video, it feels closer and warmer. This statement exemplifies how visual presentation of YouTubers and their sincere attitudes create an illusion that adolescents are together with YouTubers. Therefore, it can be stated that these features of YouTubers make it easier for them to feel emotionally bonded to the YouTubers. These findings are consistent with the previous research that is conducted by Jiménez et al. (2016), which emphasized the aspect of social media platforms to provide cultivation of emotional ties.

The third reason supporting this argument is that adolescents are able to watch any YouTuber's video at any time. It can be stated that accessibility is also another important element to feel connected. When the findings of the study are considered as a whole, it is clear that they are in line with those of Jerslev (2016) because she emphasized that connectedness, accessibility, and intimacy strategies exhibited by YouTubers are important factors for them to become famous on social media. That is why, as it was proposed by Meseguer (2016), YouTubers feed this digital platform thanks to their emotional connection to their followers Regarding these results, adolescents might be suffering from lack of emotional ties and feeling connected in their personal life, which might be caused by two reasons. First one might derive from general developmental patterns of adolescents because they move away from their family and seek other types of relations. The second reason might be resulted from parenting skills which fail to meet the emotional needs of children.

However, the second argument is supported by the interviews because it has been observed that adolescents watch YouTubers to get rid of the sense of loneliness, especially when they do not have anyone around them, when they are not satisfied with their interaction with their parents or friends, and when they do not have enough

connection to their environment. This finding was supported with the following expression explaining how watching YouTubers make adolescents feel; “It feels like I am not alone. For example, sometimes, no one texts me when I am alone at home, and my mother’s also gone to the supermarket or something. I watch a video.” As it was indicated with this quote, escaping from loneliness was a great motivation for watching YouTubers’ videos. Therefore, it can be said that YouTubers serve as emotional pacifier for adolescents because they have soothing function in the case of emotional uneasiness. This can be regarded as a unique contribution of this research to the literature.

This result is significant since it highlights one of the key functions of social media platforms because previous studies revealed that the behaviors of adolescents on social media correlated with their level of loneliness (Ledbetter, Mazer & DeGroot, 2011; Pelling & White, 2009). In addition to this, Song et al. (2014) suggested in his meta-analysis study that lonely people are more likely to use social media, while Kim, Kim and Yang (2019) suggested that loneliness level of those who follow celebrities on social media leads to more visits to that person’s website. Also, a study conducted with female university students in Turkey has revealed that some of the participants tend to use social media more when they feel lonely and that they try to eliminate the feeling of loneliness through social media (Izci, 2019).

As the related literature presents, there has been a significant relationship between loneliness and social media use. Therefore, it might be questioned how healthy this situation is since people suffering from loneliness choose to ignore this fact rather than accepting it. This might be a problem in terms of psychological well-being because Yalom (2014), who is one of the famous psychotherapists in America, suggests that people who embrace their loneliness will live a more satisfactory life

while those who reject to face it will be approved only by the presence of others. This is a critical point to consider because this fact might prevent adolescents from developing necessary skills to cope with emotions they do not like and prevent them from living a more satisfying life.

When another finding related to connectedness is examined, the results showed that YouTubers read the comments the adolescents made on their videos, and they sometimes reveal that they like some of their comments and take some of their suggestions into consideration. Through doing this, YouTubers help adolescents to feel connected. However, as it was revealed in the interviews, adolescents feel this connection so intensely that they became depended on the reaction of YouTubers. In other words, adolescents try to measure their self-value according to how YouTubers react to them. For instance; adolescents feel happy when their comments are liked by YouTubers, but they can come to the edge of unfollowing a YouTuber when their comments are not taken into consideration or paid attention, and they eventually cannot feel the connectedness anymore. This finding is vital because it displays that adolescents have a difficulty in perceiving their opinion as valuable, regardless of what others think about them. In this context, the results of the study are in line with the findings of Izci (2018), who has revealed in his study that female university students feel anger, sadness and worthlessness when rejected or ignored by others on social media. It could be stated that the same result could be applied to the YouTube platform, as well. Under the light of the relevant studies, it can be considered as an important criterion for adolescents to feel connected to the significant other and to be seen as an actual individual.

The findings related to the extension of social interaction range were supported by creating sense of participation on adolescents. The most important

inference was that YouTubers have developed participatory culture by enabling adolescents to be participants. This result is emerged, when answering the research question of "how do adolescents get engaged with the YouTube videos?". Accordingly, it was found out that this active participation is accessible on YouTube by commenting, rating, and subscribing. It was revealed that these engagements motivate some adolescents to participate because they become happy with their contribution and feel participated in a bigger platform by giving advices to a YouTuber's game video or making suggestions to other participants. These results especially underlined that adolescents care about expressing their own thoughts and sharing their personal ideas or beliefs, which means that YouTube platform enhances social interaction space for adolescents by supporting their active participation.

In contrast to the previous study by Burgess and Green (2009), which suggested that the feeling of participation is mainly based on the adolescent's own broadcasting, so adolescents can participate in the society through YouTube especially in political and ideological issues, the results of this study demonstrated that this is not the case for the present study. None of the participants of this study take part in a community by making their own videos, but they generally feel participated through the comments they make on YouTubers' videos. Although the concept of participation is supported by adolescents' different actions, it is a fact that YouTube platform promotes interaction. Jenkins (2006) called this fact as "convergence culture", which means that followers and fans are no longer a passive subculture, but they are active and collective. Thus, more research about adolescents producing their own videos on YouTube could be helpful in order to provide insights about the feeling of participation through their eyes.

5.1.2.2 Preparation for commitment to identity construction

In addition to the enhancement in exploration opportunities during the identity formation process, it has been observed that YouTubers also have an effect on the commitments in the identity development. That is, it was found that YouTubers make a lot of contribution in determining adolescent's internal investment and they socially, physically, emotionally and cognitively empower individuals with regard to personal development.

As revealed by the interviews in the study, one of the central contribution YouTubers make to individuals is that they allow their followers to gain another perspective. In fact, adolescents indicated that they can realize things they have not before, they can consider situations from another point of view in a way they have not before, which enables them to become independent from their current socio-cultural value system and look at people or things from a different angle. Particularly, thanks to YouTubers who make traveling videos, adolescents have the opportunity to see the countries they have never been to and have a general idea about different cultures. Adolescents also indicated that it gives them the opportunity to realize the negative aspects of a thing which they have always considered positively and to gain a wider perspective on social issues. The results especially underlined that YouTubers are thought to provide adolescents great opportunities for personal development and a wider perspective. This is similar to the findings of De Jans et al. (2019), who found out that vlogs are considered as an effective source for teenagers because they create awareness in social issues as well as leading to positive behavioral changes. It might be concluded that all of these contributions might help adolescents in determining which option suits the best for their internal investment.

The second contribution, which prepares adolescents to commitments, is the opportunities provided to young people by YouTubers in intellectual matters. It has been observed that especially some YouTubers who make tutorial videos teach adolescents many important matters for free, such as how to play chess or how to play the violin, and almost every adolescent uses this opportunity. As Berryman and Kavka (2017) proposed that tutorial is one of the most commonly used genre of YouTubers. This is a crucial opportunity for adolescents to develop themselves in many topics without any payment to any expert. These results are in line with the findings of Jiménez and Gaitán (as cited in Jiménez et al., 2013), who have found in their study that YouTube increases the adolescents' sources for information. In line with this, Tolson (2010) indicates that young people use YouTube not just for fun, but as an alternative source of information and that the YouTubers serve this purpose as "ordinary experts" (p.283).

Regarding this intellectual purpose, the interviews revealed that being able to get information in a field they are interested in as if they were working with a private teacher from their own home instead of doing a private course is one of the most important reasons for adolescents to follow YouTubers. For instance, an adolescent who has a toy collection can learn from relevant videos what else to collect or how to improve the collection. According to the interviews, many adolescents keep up with the scientific developments according to the advice of YouTubers and get to improve their English by downloading some applications suggested by them. It might be stated that YouTubers have a positive effect on adolescents in terms of their learning habits and improvement they make. Considering all these, the opportunities offered by YouTubers cannot be ignored in terms of creating and developing one's own identity in certain fields, such as academic, social, professional, or hobby.

The last contribution of YouTubers to adolescents' internal investment was found to be life coaching. According to the interviews, YouTubers have a role in helping adolescents live a more qualified life and increase their wellbeing just like a personal life coach does. It has been observed that adolescents care and follow their suggestions on certain issues, such as efficient sports, good nutrition and having a more organized life. In other words, it could be stated that YouTubers want adolescents to consume the content they produce, the advice they give, and the products they use in order for them to have a better physical and mental wellbeing. In parallel with the explanation of Giles (2018) about lifestyle genres of YouTube videos such as health, religion or any theme assists to inform people specific topics.

On the other hand, this result is significant since it highlights the concept of "consuming" for adolescents, since adolescents are said to have a tendency to consume the products suggested by their favorite YouTubers. That is why, this finding related to Willet's (2008) explanation who describes the issue of consuming through Foucault's "technology of self" concept, which is "a mechanism through which people present and "police" their identities in society" (P. 54). In other words, people construct their behavior according to the comments and reactions of others around them. In the light of the related literature, it could be stated that YouTubers might shape identities of adolescents because they are able to change adolescents' behaviors, thoughts or mindset as long as they consume YouTubers' videos.

However, as Jerslev (2016) discussed that the most essential thing to note about how competent or reliable a YouTuber is when proposing such a thing because many YouTubers are not afraid to emphasize that they are amateur and ordinary, not professionals. In the current study, it has been observed that there are no competence criteria for adolescents. While taking one's advice into consideration, they only care

about whether that person is someone they love or someone they find sincere. As the study showed, there was no guideline or any prior knowledge for adolescents to evaluate the YouTuber's proficiency on the topic they are talking about. There were no participants in the present study who evaluated the situation from a more systematic and critical perspective and act accordingly. Briefly, it could be stated that adolescents follow their emotions rather than any of their rational capacities.

These results are in line with the findings of Martinez and Olsson (2018) who conducted a study with children aged nine to 12. Young and older children take whatever is said about products in the videos as tips and advices. They do not tend to have a critical evaluation of the products; therefore, showing no reflexivity. Similarly, all adolescents admit that YouTubers advertise various products, but they have stated neither standards nor clear criteria when differentiating between advertised products and YouTubers' genuine recommendations. It is also consistent with the findings of De Jans et al. (2019) and Folkvord et al. (2019) who indicated that young people are less likely skeptic about vlogs.

However, it has been found that in this study older adolescents are in the same situation as younger adolescents. The results of this study are also noteworthy since they highlight the fact that adolescents need critical media literacy skills when they are following YouTubers' advice. In addition to this, As Piaget (1926) stated, although cognitive skills have developed at this age, there is still an ongoing process. Consistent with the arguments of Döring (2014) and Schwemmer and Ziewiecki (2018), this finding of the present study might indicate how important the new media literacy issue is and that adolescents need various guidance and support to acquire distinctive skills. As Forbes (2016) published that these ordinary-looking experts on YouTube introduce many products to their followers and share their own experiences

in many areas, from make-up to technology. The main purpose here is to provide information, offer products and suggestions to the audience. According to the findings of Lutton (2019) and Jerslev (2016), although it seems to have only positive aspects, it has been observed that YouTubers introduce many products for the purpose of advertising rather than genuine purposes. That is why it can be said that adolescents become open to be misled by YouTubers. Governmental and nongovernmental organizations should focus on this topic to prevent adolescents from possible harmful results.

In this context, the current study has aimed to understand whether adolescents are aware of this situation or not. It has been found that many adolescents are aware that YouTubers advertise products, and they try to differentiate whether the products are advertised or not according to their own internal criteria. When the internal criteria of adolescents are examined, five criteria have been revealed in this study. The first one is that adolescents chronologically keep all recommended products in their memory. For example, if adolescents notice a better product in previous videos than the current recommended one, they think it is advertising. The second one is that adolescents pay close attention to YouTubers' facial expressions. If YouTubers recommend a product or anything else pleasantly in the video, they believe it is based on real experience. Also, mentioning both positive and negative sides of a product is another criterion for adolescents. The forth one is that some adolescents decide on the YouTuber's reliability and competency by searching whatever is recommended in Google and reading the comments on it. As the last one, some adolescents follow the recommendations depending on whether they are applicable or not.

All these findings showed that adolescents have at least an evaluation system of their own and try cognitive filtering. However, it needs to be more universal and

systematic for them. As for the role of internal criteria, it is in line with Zimmermann & Jucks (2018) who worked on product recommendation of YouTubers because he also found that people pay attention to a number of cues to understand the reliability of someone, especially 'linguistic style of YouTuber' was found to be effective to decide on the genuineness. When the findings of both the present study and the previous study are considered, it might be a good point to start raising awareness about the linguistic style of YouTubers.

The second revealing theme related to commitment to identity formation was adolescents' identification with YouTubers. In this study, it was found out that YouTubers are important role models for late adolescents and they have an influence them to make an internal investment in an option. That is, identification takes place with new role models in the identity formation process. Thus, adolescents act like YouTubers in everything they do. Moreover, they dream of doing what YouTubers do one day, such as producing intimate content, making easy money like them and going to the places they go. According to Erikson (1968), individuals have their own identifications based on their childhood experiences; however, they keep adding up to these characteristics as they grow up. At the end of this period, where individuals go through certain changes in their individuality, they reach to a point where they construct their reasonable and constant identity by means of certain interactions. Therefore, the importance of the fact that YouTubers interfere in this process and have an influence on how adolescents construct their final identity is far-reaching.

When adolescents accomplish something and they define themselves with the accomplishments they made, this kind of identification seems to lead to successful identities. However, a high level of identification with YouTubers in this kind of relations is likely to result in the adoption of the thoughts and feelings of the

YouTubers. That is, it has been observed that there are adolescents who identify with YouTubers too much, and insistently do something unpleasant just because a YouTuber does it or likes it. For example, one of the participants stated that she keeps eating oat even though she finds it disgusting because she identifies herself with the YouTubers and wants to feel like one of the them. This example was a quite dramatic one among the results of this study and it indicates the severity of the level of identification with YouTubers. Also, this result is in line with those of the study by Ergen (2019) which investigated the effect of YouTubers on children of primary school age. According to his study, children take YouTubers as role models, want to be like them in the future and they desire to be known, become popular and loved by everyone. Furthermore, the current study has demonstrated that this identification has come to a level in which adolescents get angry when a YouTuber is evaluated negatively while they get happy when that YouTuber is evaluated positively in society. It can be concluded that over-identification with YouTubers seriously harms adolescents' individuality and causes them to be controlled by their significant other. This result calls for attention to the concept of awareness for all of the people who closely follow YouTubers.

The third theme under the commitment phase of identity formation was adolescents' awareness on themselves. Regarding this concept, when adolescents were asked how their emotions, thoughts and behaviors were affected by YouTubers, most of them stated that they were not affected at all. For example, an adolescent who dyes his hair blue because his favorite YouTuber's hair is blue says that he is not actually influenced by the YouTuber, or another participant who kept eating oat even though she did not like it also stated that she did not think that she was affected. As their answers revealed, awareness is a fundamental issue related to identification

because adolescents are so much identified with YouTubers that they do not realize how this situation is reflected on them. These results were in line with the findings of Westenberg, (2016) who found that although adolescents purchased the products YouTubers recommended, followed their advice and imitated their behavior, adolescents suggested that they were not affected by them at all.

As it was indicated, one of the significant contributions of this study is that it reveals adolescents' awareness level by considering adolescents' statements which contradict their internal thoughts. The majority of the participants in the study stated that they were not affected at all, but many people outside were negatively influenced. Additionally, many of them stated that they think they are in the safe zone, but younger ones are vulnerable to the possible negative impacts of social media and such platforms. However, participants contradict even with themselves because during the interviews they stated that they do things only because some YouTubers do, which clearly shows that they are indeed affected by them. For example, an adolescent stated that there might be some dishonest YouTubers even though she has never encountered one. According to the previous findings of Aran-Ramspott et al. (2018), De Jans et al. (2019) and Folklord et al. (2019) emphasized. that feeling unaffected might be regarded as an indication that there is a lack of awareness. Taking this example into consideration, it is important to explore the reasons why and how adolescents can come up with certain conclusions even when they claim they do not have a criterion to tell honest and dishonest YouTubers apart. In other words, when they cannot properly identify clues of honesty, they claim they have not encountered a dishonest one. These results obtained from the present study are also noteworthy since they might be an inspiration for further research in this field.

In the light of all this information, it can be concluded that YouTubers are highly influential on adolescent identity formation, on their behavioral patterns and on their mindset. There is a current need to increase the awareness of adolescents related to this matter, which brings up the new media literacy concept to the agenda. Further research considering YouTubers and the influence they have should be conducted to raise awareness among adolescents.

5.2 Implications of the study

The findings of the present study call for attention to the YouTubers phenomenon and its effects on adolescents' identity construction. Therefore, it is crucial that parents, educators, policy makers and mental health professionals shoulder a responsibility to raise awareness among the members of the society. In order to empower adolescents, the ways to raise it should be discussed on various platforms and an intervention plan should be developed. The implications of the findings of this study are discussed below briefly as they relate to education of new media literacy, parent trainings, school counseling programs and sessions.

The first implication refers to education of new media skills. Regarding the cognitive capacity of late adolescents, the abstract thinking abilities, problem solving skills, perspective taking abilities and processing information take more mature form (Wigfield, Eccles & Pintrich, 1996). Therefore, adolescents can easily follow educational programs about enhancement of new media literacy skills. This is vital in order to empower adolescents because they need to learn about necessary skills to be able to practice in their daily life. It is essential to teach new media literacy skills to adolescents in terms of critical consuming and prosuming, which is a new concept referring to the action of not only producing but also consuming new media contents,

in emerging media settings. Adolescents can acquire three essential skills; namely evaluation, analysis and synthesis. According to Chen, Wu & Wang (2011), this is noteworthy in terms of four aspects:

1. Adolescents can acquire the ability to realize what is being transmitted on new media contents.
2. Adolescents can do contextual interpretation of media contents.
3. Adolescents are able to examine social, economic, political and cultural contexts of media contents, which makes adolescents to make more realistic judgments.
4. Adolescents can learn harmless participation to the new media.

Therefore, it is crucial that adolescents not only become knowledgeable about new media literacy skills, but also be able to put them into practice in their participation to the virtual domains. This could be done through formal education policy or social responsibility projects. In Turkey, both ministry of education and some nongovernmental organizations (Habitat Association, the Association of Media Literacy, Association of Alternative Informatics) have currently conducted studies about media literacy skills, but the findings and suggestions of these studies have not been included into their agenda as the new form of media literacy. Considering the rise of new media, this kind of educational projects must be put in process immediately.

Since the new media literacy might not address YouTubers in particular, there should be direct educational projects referring the YouTuber and their effect on the adolescent's. In more specific terms, these projects should start with the posing questions such as "are YouTubers just virtual characters in our lives?" or "could YouTubers have any effect on our lives". Beginning with this kinds of awakening

questions leading adolescents to examine their actual values, mindset, daily practices and beliefs might be helpful. Also, opening a space where adolescents can express their thought and experiences freely might enhance attention to YouTubers topic. Then, as it is indicated chapter II, introducing YouTubers to the adolescents and explaining what are the descriptive features of them, which techniques they use in their videos and what kind of genres they produce might be beneficial for raising awareness. Accordingly, they can observe their watching behavior, contents they follow and the YouTubers contents. After that giving an ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of YouTubers 'video and discourse might protect adolescents' from YouTubers' dishonest suggestions and advertising. From the identity perspective, there could be questions asking "what are the similarities and differences between YouTubers and themselves?" Also, there might be further questions asking "is it possible for YouTubers to shape their identity?" or "how much do we have a say in our identity formation?".

The second implications resort to parents training because as the results of this study revealed, there are other parties that need to be empowered in many aspects. To begin with, when the main motivation of adolescents watching YouTubers is examined, the findings pointed at some factors related to the parents. One of the most important result is that adolescents feel obliged to do certain things in order to get their friends' and the society's approval. Considering developmental features of adolescence period, adolescences shift their attention to environment and they start to make great investment to the relationships with their peer. Therefore, they develop concern for others and incline to move away from their parents (Sanders, 2013). In this period, adolescents conflict with their parents a lot, which can reduce the effective communication between them. Although there are

significant alterations in adolescents cognitive, social and emotional state, familial emotional bonds are noteworthy for their healthy development (Laursen & Collins, 2004). Accordingly, it is safe to state that parents need to learn communication skills to strength their relationship with their children. On the other hand, it can be said that adolescents have particular social needs and these needs must be met effectively because parents might miss some emotional and social developmental milestones for their children. That is why parents should be empowered to learn about the developmental needs of adolescents. For example, parents can be trained through seminars that aims to raise their awareness and empower them with vital skills regarding communication, social approval and acceptance to their children. When the main aims of these seminars are considered, they can be specified as follows;

- Giving information about characteristics of adolescence period. It is important to emphasize hormonal changes, autonomy seeking behaviors, desire for privacy and great investment to the peers (Laursen & Collins, 2004).
- Helping parents to increase the quality of their relationship thorough shared activities, rituals or times.
- Teaching effective communication skills such as active listening, empathy, reflecting, and responsiveness (King et al., 2011).
- Assisting parents to learn how to give social feedback to their children in order to answer adolescents' questions concerning the social validations.

Through establishing a healthy connection, adolescents' needs for socialization might decrease.

The third implication refers to development of counseling programs in schools. Because of the fact that considering the other motivation for adolescents to

watch YouTubers, this study indicated that adolescents resort to YouTubers' videos and comments in order to gain self-knowledge. They try to sort out their position among the same group and to what extent their thoughts and behaviors are coherent when compared to others. This indicates that they could not receive sufficient feedback from their immediate social environment. Therefore, it is vital to understand why adolescents resort to social media platforms to gain self-knowledge. Therefore, the necessity to develop various counseling programs for parents and adolescents to enhance self-knowledge of adolescents cannot be underestimated. Particularly, ministry of education can make certain changes in the curricula of guidance and psychological counseling programs' and integrate related subjects related to enriching self-knowledge. It might as well be added to the agenda of training programs designed to empower parents. Either school counselor can do something creative on their own. For example, school counselors can use the data for helping students get to know themselves through what they like to watch online because YouTube platform is not like the TV. Adolescents' choice really matters and counselors can interact with the person they follow. It tells a lot about the adolescents.

Regarding the third motivation for adolescents to follow YouTubers, it has been observed that many adolescents watch YouTubers in order to escape from the unpleasant feelings they experience in daily life. As it is stated in discussion part, adolescents use YouTubers like an "emotional pacifier" in order to soothe their boredom, loneliness or depressive feelings. Rather than silencing their feelings, it is better for adolescents to learn how they can cope with the undesired feelings and events. Thus, school counselors can design activities or guidance sessions management strategies on how to deal with negative feelings, such as

disappointment, frustration, sadness and loneliness. Thanks to these sessions and seminars, adolescents can be empowered to face the difficulties they have and develop ways to overcome those challenges. As a matter of fact, embracing unpleasant feelings might increase the overall well-being of adolescents and allow them to get more satisfaction during their lifespan (Ivtzan, Lomas, Hafferon, & Worth, 2016; Tamir, Schwartz, Oishi, & Kim, 2017).

Apart from these results, this study indicated that identification with YouTubers is another crucial matter in adolescent live. That is, it is found that adolescents take YouTubers as role models, and they have a tendency to imitate them in various domains. However, most of them are not aware of this fact. Although the reason behind adolescents' acts is that the same behaviors are shown by their favorite YouTubers, most of them claimed that their mindset and daily practices are not affected by them. As they asserted, unless adolescents realize that they are influenced, YouTubers may have an important advantage in shaping individuals' and communities' beliefs and actions. Therefore, awareness about this issue must be raised. They need to observe themselves more objectively and understand the consequences of watching YouTubers on their life. Therefore, it can be said that what school counselors do might be the key to deal with this result. In order to reach this goal, school counselors might develop social projects to raise awareness in cooperation with administrators, teachers, students and parents. They could hold seminars, lessons, design activities, and tasks in order to empower each group. All of these actions should include certain components that are intended to help develop critical skills or abilities for effective results.

Regarding identification with YouTubers, the current study indicated that adolescents have added the option to become a YouTuber to their career plan

because it was shown that adolescents gravitate the luxury and comfort of the being a YouTuber. Rather than pursuing their talents, skills and gifts, they prefer chasing easy money and fame. Authorities must be aware of this emerging reality and they should take it serious in order to help the development of occupational identity of adolescents. Considering developmental patterns of adolescents, the cognitive maturity of individuals and autonomy increases; thus they can pursue more realistic goals targeting to establish their future (Sanders, 2013). However, Erikson (1950) proposed that they might be experience inability to determine their career choices. Especially schools, administration and educators can guide adolescents in terms of how they can plan their future considering many elements, such as expectations, talents, resources and curiosities. Guidance and psychological counseling services in schools might focus on this issue during their career counseling sessions or activities to help adolescents in decision-making processes. It is also important that thinking about the gains and losses of being a YouTuber might enrich the future plans of adolescents.

All in all, all of these suggestions need to be integrated into the curriculum in order to reach the aim of the present study. The mission and vision of nongovernmental organizations that are working in the field of new and digital media should also be highlighted. Raising awareness can be achieved with active participation and collaborative work of all parties; namely policy makers, school counselors, parents and all mental health professional. The fact that there is a linkage between micro and macro environmental features, which also has an influence on identity development, should not be neglected. Therefore, the final result of the transformation can only be achieved when all parties actively participate in taking responsibilities.

5.3 Recommendation for future studies

Based on the findings of the current research, the following suggestions might be helpful for future studies. This research study has tried to understand identity construction from the perspective of adolescents. In a future research design, the interviews can be conducted not only with adolescents, but also with parents, teachers or peers in order to have different perspectives, which might help researchers have a deeper understanding in this matter. This is important in terms of hearing the voices of other people with whom adolescent have interaction.

As the analysis revealed, participants stated that they also follow people on a platform called Twitch, which is a live streaming video platform, competing with YouTube to grab adolescents' attention. Some YouTubers broadcast live on that platform. Therefore, as a future research suggestion, studies examining the impact of Twitch broadcasts can be effective in gaining insights about the matter.

Additionally, there was no question particularly intended to explore how gender identity development is influenced by watching and following YouTubers. In the present research, this theme has not been revealed in the answers to any other questions either. Therefore, there might be a separate study focusing on the gender identity construction under the influence of YouTubers.

5.4 Limitations

In the present study, samples were selected on a voluntary basis, which means probability was not the main focus. The findings of this study are confined to 10 adolescents who are close followers of YouTubers, which reduced the possibility of detailed examination of each individual due to excessive data and time limitation. On the other hand, eight participants were living in certain districts of Istanbul; most of

them have high socioeconomic status. Thus, it reduces the generalizability of the study. It might be noted that future research might include participants from different regions with different ethnic identities and different economic levels.

According to the results of the study, the participants of the study can be considered relatively well informed regarding the perils of spending long hours watching YouTubers. compared their peers; therefore, this might limit the chance to have a true representation of adolescents in Turkey. Regarding the matter as to how the data was collected, there is another limitation of this study since adolescents may not have shared their genuine thoughts and routines about YouTubers and themselves. That is, they might have answered the questions in a socially desirable way.

Another shortcoming of this research is that the emerging themes are reached only by the researcher's interpretation. In order to ensure reliability in qualitative studies, data should be examined by multiple independent experts in the field of inquiry. At the end of the evaluation, the common themes are examined and they are used in the study. However, this method was not applied in this study. Researchers are recommended to apply expert opinion in order to obtain more reliable results in future studies.

5.5 Conclusion

This study examined the influence of YouTubers on adolescent's identity construction. In an effort to reach this aim, six questions were asked:

1. How do YouTubers influence adolescents' identity construction processes?

a. What role do YouTubers play in adolescents' lives?

b. How do YouTubers influence the mindset of adolescents?

c. How do YouTubers influence the daily practices of adolescents?

2. What kind of interaction occurs between adolescents and YouTubers?

a. How do adolescents get engaged with YouTube videos/ video content?

b. How do these behaviors interact with the identity-formation processes of the adolescent?

Regarding the first research question, the results of the data analyses revealed that adolescents are affected from YouTubers during their identity development in terms of both the construction process and the outcomes. Predominantly, it was seen that adolescents quite benefit from YouTubers and their videos in the identity formation process because YouTubers enhance exploration opportunities for adolescents and expand their interaction zone.

Moreover, YouTubers pave the way for personal growth for adolescents by allowing perspective taking skills, proving information in many topics and acting like a personal life coach. All of these make adolescents explore themselves more deeply and make more accurate decisions. On the other hand, YouTubers assist adolescents to be coherently integrated into the society thanks to helping adolescents feel like they are belonging to the same group, thus having some sort of a social approval. In addition, YouTubers enable adolescents to notice their unique characteristics. These findings indicated that YouTubers contribute to fundamental dimensions of identity notion. Also, this finding indicated the role of YouTubers on adolescents' life.

However, the present study also showed that YouTubers might hinder the identity exploration process because adolescents identify themselves with YouTubers more than they should and they renounce their individuality for the sake of being like them. It was also found that adolescents' daily practices and mindsets are highly

affected by YouTubers' thoughts and suggestions. In spite of the findings mentioned above, adolescents stated that they are not affected from YouTubers, which indicates a current need to increase the awareness of adolescents.

Considering the second research question, adolescents engage with the YouTubers' videos through subscribing, following, watching, commenting or emailing. Thereby, they find a chance to meet their social needs such as social approval, acceptance and sense of belonging by watching particular YouTubers and participating in the virtual world they have created. Moreover, adolescents also prefer to watch YouTubers' videos in order to disregard their actual needs. That is, this study indicated that adolescents watch YouTubers to ignore their boredom, loneliness and frustration. Therefore, this study proposed that YouTubers take the place of "emotional pacifier" for shooting unpleasant feelings.

All of these findings were discussed in the light of previous literature. The results of the current study have similarities with the previous studies in the related literature. It was also recommended that new media literacy skills and awareness should be brought into parents', policy makers' and mental health professionals' agenda in order to empower adolescents. In the implementation phase, the main motivations for adolescents to watch YouTubers must be critically examined to obtain fruitful results.

Lastly, the interviews were conducted with 10 adolescents in the present study. However, it was found that there are certain other topics related to parents, educators and mental health professionals that also need to be taken seriously. Therefore, future studies can include these parties to their focus group interviews because the purpose and transformation can only be achieved when the micro and macro systems work together and collaborate in the process.

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

Demographic Information Form

Please, answer the sections on this form either by marking the most appropriate option or writing your answer into the provided spaces on the table. Thank you for your participation.

- Age:
- Gender:
- Class:
- City:
- District:
- Neighborhood:
- Your Parents:
    - Separate
    - Together
    - Mother is not alive
    - Father is not alive
- Number of siblings
    - Only child
    - Two siblings
    - Three siblings
    - Four siblings
    - More than five
- Indicate your birth order:
- Is there anyone living in your home outside your mother-father-siblings? If yes, who are they?
- What is your total monthly income of your family?
- Indicate your mothers' educational level?
    - Illiterate
    - Literate

    - Primary School
    - Elementary school
    - High school
    - College
    - University
    - Postgraduate
- Indicate your fathers' educational level?
    - Illiterate
    - Literate
    - Primary School
    - Elementary school
    - High school
    - College
    - University
    - Postgraduate
- Is your mother working?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Occupation:
- Is your father working?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Occupation:
- Indicate whether your home is rent or property?
    - Rent
    - Property
    - Other:
- Do your family give you pocket-money?
    - Yes
    - No
    - If yes, indicate the average pocket-money that you receive

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM (TURKISH)

Demografik Bilgi Formu

Lütfen istenilen bilgilere, sizin için en uygun seçeneği işaretleyerek veya bırakılan boş alanlara yanıtınızı yazarak cevap veriniz. Katılımınız için teşekkür ederiz.

- Yaşınız:
- Cinsiyetiniz:
- Sınıfınız:
- Yaşadığınız şehir:
- Yaşadığınız ilçe:
- Yaşadığınız semt:
- Anne-babanız:
    - Ayrı
    - Birlikte
    - Anne hayatta değil
    - Baba hayatta değil
- Kaç kardeşsiniz belirtiniz:
    - Tek
    - İki kardeş
    - Üçkardeş
    - Dört kardeş
    - Dörtten fazla
- Ailenizin kaçıncı çocuğu olduğunuzu (doğum sıranızı) yazınız:
- Evinizde anne-baba-kardeşler dışında yaşayan biri var mu? Varsa kim/kimler belirtiniz:
- Ailenizin aylık toplam ortalama gelirini belirtiniz:
- Annenizin öğrenim düzeyini belirtiniz:
    - Okuryazar değil
    - Okuryazar
    - İlkokul

    - Ortaokul
    - Lise
    - Yüksekokul
    - Üniversite
    - Yüksek lisans
- Baba öğrenim düzeyini belirtiniz:
    - Okuryazar değil
    - Okuryazar
    - İlkokul
    - Ortaokul
    - Lise
    - Yüksekokul
    - Üniversite
    - Yüksek lisans
- Anneniz çalışıyor mu?
    - Evet
    - Hayır
    - Annenizin mesleği:
- Babanız çalışıyor mu?
    - Evet
    - Hayır
    - Babanızın mesleği:
- Evinizin kira ya da size ait olup olmadığını belirtiniz:
    - Kira
    - Kendinize ait
    - Diğer (belirtiniz)
- Aileniz size düzenli olarak harçlık veriyor mu?
    - Evet
    - Hayır
    - Veriyorsa aldığınız aylık ortalama harçlık miktarını belirtiniz:

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Protocol

Interview #: _____ Gender: _____ Age: _____

CONFIDENTIALITY

(While we are stating what we have learnt, we do not use your name and we will keep your personal information confidential. Also, there is no right or wrong answers of these questions. This is not a test.)

Can I record your speech? TURN ON THE RECORDER.

1. How often and how long do you watch channels of YouTubers?
2. What are the features that your find/care about in YouTubers?
3. Do want to do what YouTubers do? What they?
4. Who are your favorite YouTubers? Why?
5. Do you have any similar features with your favorite YouTubers? What are they?
6. How do you get in touch with YouTubers? How do you contact or keep in communication with them?
7. Do you read the comments under the videos of YouTubers you follow? What do you feel/think when you read?
8. Have you ever followed the recommendations of YouTubers? If yes, what was it?
9. What do you consider when you implement the suggestions and recommendations of YouTubers? As a result, how was your life affected? What has changed?
10. Have you ever bought any product recommended by YouTubers? What was it? What was your reason to buy?
11. If YouTubers say something about certain product, do they share their honest opinions? If yes, why? If no, why?
12. According to you, do YouTubers use the product they recommend?
13. Do you think that YouTubers earn money from the videos they shoot?
14. How the suggestions and recommendations of YouTubers influence your thoughts and behaviors?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (TURKISH)

Röportaj Protokolü

Röportaj #: _____ Cinsiyet: _____ Yaş: _____
GİZLİLİK
(Öğrendiklerimizi bildirirken, isminizi kullanmayacağız ve kişisel bilgilerinizi gizli tutacağız. Ayrıca, bu soruların doğru ya da yanlış cevapları yoktur. Bu bir test değildir.)
Konuşmamızı kaydedebilir miyim? KAYIT CİHAZINI AÇIN.

1. YouTuber kanallarını ne sıklıkla ve ne kadar süre ile izliyorsun?
2. YouTuberlarda bulduğun/önemsediğin özellikler neler?
3. YouTuberların yaptıklarını sen de yapmak ister misin? Peki, neler bunlar?
4. En sevdiğin/en çok takip ettiğin YouTuberlar kimler? Neden?
5. En sevdiğin Youtuber ile benzer özelliklerin var mı? Varsa nedir?
6. Youtuberlarla nasıl ilişki kuruyorsun? Onlarla nasıl iletişime geçiyorsun ya da iletişimde kalıyorsun?
7. Takip ettiğin Youtuberların videolarına yapılan yorumları okuyor musun? Bu yorumları okuduğunda neler hissediyorsun/düşünüyorsun?
8. Bugüne kadar hiç YouTuberların tavsiyelerine uydun mu? Eğer öyleyse, nedir?
9. Bir Youtuberın tavsiye ve önerilerini neye göre hayatına geçiyorsun/uyguluyorsun? Bunun sonucunda hayatın nasıl etkilendi? Neler değişti?
10. Youtuberların tavsiyesi üzerine herhangi bir ürün satın aldın mı? Ne o zaman? Ürünü satın alma nedenin neydi?
11. YouTuberlar bir ürün veya hizmet hakkında bir şey söylüyorsa, dürüst/gerçek görüşlerini paylaşıyorlar mı? Evetse neden? Hayırsa neden?
12. Sence, YouTuberlar tanıttıkları ürünleri gerçekten kullanıyor mı?
13. Youtuberların çektikleri videolardan para kazandığını düşünüyor musun?
14. Youtuberların tavsiye ve önerilerinin senin düşünce ve davranışlarını nasıl etkilediğini düşünüyorsun?

APPENDIX E

ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

T.C.
BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Yüksek Lisans ve Doktora Tezleri Etik İnceleme Komisyonu

Sayı: 2019-68

30 Ekim 2019

Merve Nadide Akbaş
Eğitim Bilimleri

Sayın Araştırmacı,

"Ergenlerin Kimlik İnşasında YouTuberların Etkisini Keşfetmek" başlıklı projeniz ile ilgili olarak yaptığınız SBB-EAK 2019/64 sayılı başvuru komisyonumuz tarafından 30 Ekim 2019 tarihli toplantıda incelenmiş ve uygun bulunmuştur.

Prof. Dr. Feyza Çorapçı

Doç. Dr. Mehmet Yiğit Gürdal

(Görevli)

Doç. Dr. Ebru Kaya

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi İnci Ayhan

APPENDIX F

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

T. C.
BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY
THE ETHICS COMMITTEE IN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
CONSENT FORM

Supporter Institution: Boğaziçi University

Research Name: Exploring the influence of YouTubers on Adolescents' Identity Construction.

Name of the Researcher: Merve Nadide AKBAŞ

Address: [redacted]

E-mail: [redacted]

Phone Number: [redacted]

Dear Parents,

This study aims at investigating the experiences of adolescents who are close followers of YouTubers associated with identity construction and examining the feelings and thoughts of adolescents. As it is known, identity development is one of the most apparent developmental tasks of adolescence. Considering the fact that adolescents' social relations and interactions with the environment have a decisive role in this period, it is thought that YouTubers may have an impact on the identity building process of adolescents. This is because YouTubers are one of the people having the most social interactions with adolescents in the 21st century; adolescents closely follow them, and adolescents have sincere feelings toward them. Therefore, the research aims to provide relevant information in order to understand the role of YouTubers in the identity development of adolescents.

The location of the interviews will be determined in accordance with the preference of volunteer participants. In the interview, we expect from the volunteer participants to answer the questions according to their own opinions. Interviews will take approximately 1,5-2 hours. Since the scientific analysis of your answers to the questions in interviews will be conducted, the voice recorder will be used. This research study carries out scientific aims; therefore, the confidentiality of the information given by participants is necessary. In the recordings, random participant

numbers will be utilized instead of using the names of participants. All voice recordings will be held in lockers and they are going to be destroyed at the end of the study. The information collected from participants is not going to include credentials, and they will not be matched your identity.

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary. We do not charge you, and we will not pay you. If you acknowledge participating in this study, you have a right to withdraw your consent without showing any reason or making any explanation. We do not expect any kind of risk for participants. Before signing this form, please ask if you have any questions about the study. If you want to take any additional information regarding this research project, please contact with Merve Nadide AKBAŞ ([redacted]). You can consult with **The Ethics Committee for Master and Ph.D. Theses in Social Sciences and Humanities** about the rights of the participants to the study.

If you want to participate in this research project, please sign a suitable place at the end of this form; and give it to the researcher.

I accept participating in the study voluntarily.

Participant Name-Surname: …….

Signature: …….

Date: …. / ….. /……

One of the Parents Signature: …….

Date: …. / ….. /……

APPENDIX G

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (TURKISH)

T.C.
BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERİ BİLİMLER İNSAN ARAŞTIRMALARI ETİK KURULU
KATILIMCI BİLGİ ve ONAM FORMU

Araştırmayı destekleyen kurum: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi
Araştırmanın adı: Ergenlerin Kimlik İnşasında YouTuberların etkisini keşfetmek
Proje Yürütücüsü/Araştırmacının adı: Merve Nadide AKBAŞ
Adresi: [redacted]
E-mail adresi: [redacted]
Telefonu: [redacted]

Sayın Veli,

Bu çalışma Youtuberları yakından takip eden ergenlerin kimlik inşası ile ilişkili yaşadıkları deneyimleri, bu konudaki duygu ve düşünceleri incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bilindiği üzere kimlik gelişimi ergenlik döneminin en belirgin gelişimsel görevlerinden biridir. Bu dönemde çevre ile etkileşimler, sosyal ilişkiler belirleyici rol oynadığı göz önünde bulundurularak, 21. yüzyılın ergenlerinin sosyal olarak en fazla etkileşimde oldukları, yakından takip ettikleri ve samimi duygular hissettikleri Youtuberların, ergenlerin kimlik inşası sürecine etkisinin olabileceği düşünülmektedir. Dolayısıyla araştırmanın, Youtuberların ergenlerin kimlik gelişiminde oynadığı rolü anlamak adına önemli bilgiler sağlaması hedeflenmektedir.

Araştırmaya destek vermeye gönüllü olan katılımcıların tercihlerine göre bir yer belirlenip bireysel görüşmeler yapılacaktır. Gönüllü katılımcıların araştırmacı tarafından yöneltilen sorulara kendi görüşlerine göre cevap vermesi beklenmektedir. Yaklaşık 1.5 - 2 saat sürecek görüşmelerde nitel analiz yapabilmek adına ses kaydı alınacaktır. Bu araştırma bilimsel bir amaçla yapılmaktadır ve katılımcı bilgilerinin gizliliği esas tutulmaktadır. Ses kayıtlarında katılımcıların ismi yerine bir numara kullanılacaktır. Ses kayıtları araştırma projemiz süresince kilitli dosyalarda muhafaza edilip araştırma sona erdiğinde silineceklerdir. Edinilen bilgilerin hiçbir yerinde kimlik bilgisi yazılmayacak, bilgileriniz kimliğinizle eşleştirilmeyecektir. Çalışmaya katılmanız tamamen isteğe bağlıdır. Sizden ücret talep etmiyoruz ve size herhangi bir ödeme yapmayacağız. Katılımcı herhangi bir nedenden dolayı kendini rahatsız hissederse görüşmeyi istediği anda bırakıp çıkabilir. Böyle bir durumda çıkmak

istediğini söylemesi yeterlidir. Bu durumda katılımcıdan almış olduğumuz örnek imha edilecektir.

Yapmak istediğimiz araştırmanın size risk getirmesi beklenmemektedir. Bu formu imzalamadan önce, çalışmayla ilgili sorularınız varsa lütfen sorun. Daha sonra sorunuz olursa, Merve Nadide AKBAŞ'a ([redacted]) sorabilirsiniz. Araştırmayla ilgili haklarınız konusunda Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Etik İnceleme Komisyonuna da danışabilirsiniz. Adres ve telefon numaranız değişirse, bize haber vermenizi rica ederiz.

Bana anlatılanları ve yukarıda yazılanları anladım. Bu formun bir kopyasını aldım. Çalışmaya katılmayı kabul ediyorum.

Katılımcı Adı-Soyadı: ……..
İmzası:……
Tarih (gün/ay/yıl): ...../...../.....

Katılımcının VELİSİNİN İmzası: .....
Tarih (gün/ay/yıl): ...../...../.....

APPENDIX H

QUOTATIONS (TURKISH)

1) “Mesela bir tane şey var, vlog yapan doktor var o Kanada’da yaşıyor. Daha çok YouTuberların kendime benzediğini fark ediyorum. Hani benim gibi ders çalışmayı seviyorlar ya da benim gibi bende tıp okumayı istiyorum. Bir doktorun çektiği vloglara bakıyorum mesela. Hani işte bunun gibi biraz da kendime benzer özelliklerde olan arıyorum diyim.”

2) “Iıı, komik gelecek biraz ama yulaf videoları. Yulafı ilk başta yediğimde Youtuber videolarında şey diyordu “yulaf çok tatlı, kahvaltıda yiyebilirsiniz, yulaf lapası yaptığınızda sıcak sıcak iyi gelir.” Denedim asla öyle olmadı. Tadı çok kötüydü. Ne sıcak tuttu ne tok tuttu. Sonra devam ettim yemeye. Bazen sabah yemedim, sabahleyin annem kahvaltı hazırlıyor onu yiyorum ama öğlen okuldan gelince falan atıştırmaya. Yemeye devam ettim. Bir zaman sonra tadı hoş gelmeye başladı. Hani onların tavsiyeleri üzerine o kadar fazla video izledim ki hani dedim ben mi tuhafım çünkü tadı çok kötüydü. Ve baktım herkes diyor ki çok güzel tadı çok tok tutuyor, çok güzel oluyor, işte üstüne tarçın döküyorsun mükemmel oluyor falan ama çok kötü gelmişti. Sonra hepsini ayrı ayrı izledim. Herkes işte çok beğenmiş. Herkes çok tavsiye etmiş. Denedim denedim bir zaman sonra bana da gerçekten güzel gelemeye başladı.

   Şey yani senin hoşuna gitmedi ama yemeye devam ettin?

   Çünkü o kadar fazla video vardı ki ben kendimi garip hissettim. Herkes çok beğenmiş. Herkes en sevdiğim yemek falan demiş.

   Sen de kendini sanki onların…

   Sanki onlardan biriymiş gibi davranmaya devam ettim. Belki de kendimi tuhaf olarak görmeye devam etmek istemediğim için devam ettim. Psikolojik mi bilmiyorum ama bir zaman sonra yedikten sonra hoşuma gitmeye başladı. Beğeniyorum artık. Çok sık yemiyorum çünkü gerek duymuyorum genelde annem yemek yapıyor, kahvaltı falan hazırlıyor zaten ama boş bulduğum zaman yiyorum.”

3) “Onlar Youtuberı biliyorlar ama ben hiçbirini bilmiyorum. Böyle sosyal ortamlarda onlar konuşurken ben bunu bilmeyince ya da takip etmeyince o trendi sanki dışlanmış gibi kalıyorum mesela. James Charles diye bir tane Youtube kanalı var. Çok saçma buluyorum ama arkadaşlarım onu dinliyorlar. Oradan referanslar yapıyorlar konuşurken falan. Ben bilmediğim için arada sırada sohbetlerden kalıyorum. Öyle.

   Nasıl hissettiriyor sana? Nasıl geliyor?

   Bu aslında şöyle sinirimi bozuyor çünkü hani benim aslında seçtiğim bazı şeyler var bu benim ilgi alanlarımı şey yapmıyor olabilir ama bütün dünya ona doğru kitlendiği için ben onu yapmayınca yargılanmış gibi hissediyorum.”

4) “Instagram’dan takip ediyorum ama çok fazla… Sadece beğeniyorum. Çok yorum yapma gibi bir huyum yoktur. Sadece yine anı olarak bahsedecek olursak biraz “Cansu Akın” vardı. Onun vlogunun bir kısmında depresif bir dönemden geçtiğinden bahsediyordu ve ben de biraz öyle bir dönemdeyim bu ara. Çok benzer olarak anlattı ve tam benim yaşadığım duyguları anlatınca yorumlara da baktım bir sürü kişi hâlbuki benle aynı durumdaymış.”

5) “Yani bazen okuyorum. Mesela merak ettiğim Böyle yapınca nasıl tepki verilmiş Ne olmuş diye diğer insanlarla benimle aynı şekilde düşünüyor mu diye...”

6) Yani videolarda belirli noktalar oluyor. Bütün insanlar o noktayı fark etmiştir falan. Çoğunlukla hep aynı yorumları gördüğümü fark ediyorum. Herkes bir noktaya takılmış mesela. O videoda komik bir saniye olmuş herkes o saniyeden bahsediyor işte.

7) “Ne yazık ki Türk toplumunun maalesef kötü bir aynası yani orası. Bizim kötü yanımızı çok net bir şekilde gösteriyor. Oraya bakınca hayal kırıklığına uğruyorum gerçekten. İnsanların bu kadar böyle küçük şeyler için birbirlerinin kalbimi kırmalarının boş olduğunu düşünüyorum. Ve ayrıca bir de şeyi görüyorum insanların daha demin ki YouTuberlara bağlılık demiştim insanlar da bu ne kadar büyük bir etkiye ulaştığını. Mesela benim için o da bir insan ben de bir insanım. Onu kendimden çok yukarıda bir yere koymama gerek yok. Ona çok yüksek bir değer vermeme gerek yok ama bazıları işte “abi lütfen gel, şuraya gel, Adresini ver buluşalım, bir şeyler yapalım” diye neredeyse yalvaran tavırlarla şey yapıyorlar. Bu bağlılığa şaşıyorum.”

8) Kişinin kendini ifade edebilmesi önemli. En basitinden bir yemek videosu izliyorum yanlış kelimeler kullanıyor kekeliyor, bilemiyor. Şu an ben de kekeliyorum çok iyi konuşamıyorum. Hani böyle olunca insanı izleyesim dinleyesim gelmiyor. Akıcılık benim için çok önemli oluyor. Videolara önem vererek yapmış olması”

9) Toksik yorumlar var Toksik yorumlara çok fazla aldırış etmemeye çalışıyorum. Daha soru cevap odaklı daha bilgi verme odaklı yorumları genellikle kendim cevap veriyorum ya da insanlar zaten cevap vermiş oluyor

10) “İnsanların da benden farklı düşünebildiğini fark ediyorum. Farklı düşüncelere sahip olduğunu.”

11) “Kişinin kendini ifade edebilmesi önemli. En basitinden bir yemek videosu izliyorum yanlış kelimeler kullanıyor kekeliyor, bilemiyor. Şu an ben de kekeliyorum çok iyi konuşamıyorum. Hani böyle olunca insanı izleyesim dinleyesim gelmiyor. Akıcılık benim için çok önemli oluyor. Videolara önem vererek yapmış olması”

12) Genellikle hobilerle alakalı oluyor, mesela ben oyuncak koleksiyonculuğu yapmayı severim. Mesela işte hangi figürleri tavsiye edersin sorusuna biri cevap veriyor ama “neden” sorusuna cevap vermediği sürece ben o tavsiyeye uymam.

13) “Şey aslında. Mesela o “Violin MD”de, Imm, orada mesela hem zaten keman çalışıyormuş hem de işte aynı zamanda doktormuş. Mesela bu aynı anda bir

hayatın iki yönlerini zevk alabilme bu yönlerini görüyorum. Ya da işte hayatın farklı yönleriyle başa çıkabilmek için yaptığı mesela şeylerden görüyorum. Mesela ölümle. Hani hastaların ölümüyle ilgili bir tane şey vardı. Sonuçta sürekli doktorların hep iyi tarafını görüyoruz ama bir de o hani psikolojik şey tarafı da var aslında."

14) "Bu kadar farklı hayatları görmek geleceğimi düzenlemem de yönetmemde bana yardımcı oluyor. Çünkü diyorum ki ben... Benim böyle bir hayatım olsun ister miyim? İsterim... Ya da istemem. Ona göre yapacağım şeyler değişiyor. Şekilleniyor. Mesela yine bu Erasmus projesi ile yurtdışına giden YouTuberlar var. Onların videolarını izliyorum. Diyorum ki evet ben de böyle yapmalıyım. Ya da şu an aklıma gelmese de farklı şeyler yapan YouTuberlar var ben diyorum ben böyle olmamalıyım. Biraz daha geleceğim üzerine bana yardım ediyorlar."

15) "Dediğim gibi onlar Amerika'da yaşıyorlar yaşam tarzları çok farklı. Gittikleri okul yaşadıkları hayat çok farklı. Türkiye'deki yaşamı da biliyorlar. Hani daha çok bir yabancının Türkçe öğrenmesi gibi değil de anadilleri gibi Türkçeleri var. Hani burada da yaşamışlar. Buradaki hayatı da biliyorlar. Hani o iki hayat arasındaki fark beni çok etkiliyor. Hani iki kanala koydukları videolar o kadar farklı ki. Yani bilmiyorum ilgimi çekiyor.

Yabancı olanı da takip ediyor musun? Mesela Hailey'nin yabancı kanalını da takip ediyorsun.

Evet. Mesela onların oradaki okullarında çektiği videolar var. Okul o kadar farklı ki. Bizim o Netflix dizileri falan dediğimi dizilerdeki hayatı şimdi yaşıyorlar resmen. Hani Türkiye'de ben kendi lisemle karşılaştırınca arada dağlar kadar fark var. Eğitimleri arasında fark var. Her şey arasında fark var."

16) "İletişime geçemiyorum maalesef ama hani onlar daha çok bir arkadaşımmış gibi oluyor. Bazen tavsiyeler veriyorlar çektikleri videolarda. Şunu Şöyle yapın böyle yapın falan diye. Bilmiyorum arkadaşımmış gibi bakıyorum. Mesela Buket diye bir kız var. Bu kız mesela ne zaman storylerinin altına yazsa sakarlık yaşıyor hep bir şey yaşıyor. Diyor ki mesela "bunu böyle yapmayın, bunu şöyle yapmayın." Komik oluyor. Bir arkadaşım sanki yaşadığı olayı bana anlatıyormuş

Bu sana ne hissettiriyor?

Yalnız olmadığımı hissettiriyor. Mesela bazen kimse bana mesaj atmıyor atıyorum. Evde oturuyorum annem yok mesela. Markete falan gitmiş. Ben video izliyorum. Kız orada bir sürü bir şey söylüyor. Yanımda sanki bir arkadaşım konuşuyormuş gibi."

17) "Instagram'dan takip ediyorum ama çok fazla… Sadece beğeniyorum. Çok yorum yapma gibi bir huyum yoktur. Sadece yine anı olarak bahsedecek olursak biraz "Cansu Akın" vardı. Onun vlogunun bir kısmında depresif bir dönemden geçtiğinden bahsediyordu ve ben de biraz öyle bir dönemdeyim bu ara. Çok benzer olarak anlattı ve tam benim yaşadığım duyguları anlatınca yorumlara da baktım bir sürü kişi hâlbuki benle aynı durumdaymış. Öyle bir yorum yazdım ve beğendi baya. Şey oldu baya onun dikkatini çekmiş oldum. Öyle bir etkileşim kurmuş oldum.

Nasıl hissettirdi sana?

Güzel hissettirdi. Yani şey. Biraz o hani tek olmadığımı bilmek güzel hissettirdi ve onun da yazdığım yorumu görmesi güzel hissettirdi. Sonuçta karşımda biri var gerçek biriymiş gibi konuşmuş oldum.

İletişim de kalmış hissi.

Evet, iletişimde kalmış hissi."

18) ***Peki, sen yorum yazdığın da cevap veriyorlar mı?***

Genel olarak bazıları okuyor, değer verenler cevap veriyor bazıları ise hiç umursamıyor zaten. Zaten o insanlarla da nasıl desem. Bana değer vermeyene benim de değer vermeme gerek yok yani bence. O yüzden bazılarıyla iletişimi bırakıyorum.

19) "Bir de videolarda şey çok önemli bence facecam denen oyun oynarken bir yandan da adamların yüzleri gözüküyor sağ alt köşede falan Mesela bu da çok önemli. Göz teması sağlanmayınca mesela adamın kim olduğunu bilmediğim videoları izlemek istemiyorum. O facecam Olmayınca videoları izleyesim gelmiyor. Direkt karşındaki insanı görmek istiyorum zaten bu da bence YouTuberların yayılmasında belli bir öneme sahip. Hem bir yandan görüntü ses oyun dediğin birazcık muhabbet konuşma bir yandan da direkt adamın kendisini gördüğün için biraz daha samimi bir yakınlık olabiliyor bence. Bu yüzden kitap bir yazarın okuyla kurduğu ilişkide çok değerli Bence ben de çok severek kitap okuyorum ama Youtuberın bu kadar çok sevilmesinin ya da çok fazla taraftarının ya da fanının olmasının sebebi Bence bu. Yüz yüze iletişim kurmaları bence çok önemli."

"Neyi amaçlıyorsun ona bir öneriyi verirken? Oraya yazarken?

Daha iyi oyunlar oynamasını istiyorum. Belki de o yüzden. Bir de söylemezsem içimde kalıyor, söylemezsem sanki hiç bilmeyecekmiş gibi. Bunu söyleyince rahatlıyorum. Görsün görmesin."

20) "Bir saniye. Mesela birisi bilgisayar parçalarıyla ilgili bir soru sormuştu. Hangi ekran kartını hangi işlemciyi kullanayım diye. Onlara mesela cevap vermiştim çünkü kanalın, büyük bir kanal cevap veriyordu ve hani kanalın doğrularına cevap vermesi çok fazla mümkün değildi. O yüzden dedim "ben bu konuda bilgili hissediyorum kendimi" buna cevap verebilirim diye düşündüm."

21) "Tabi bir yerde hayata bakış açını etkiliyor. Senin hayatınla ilgili ki bir şey söylüyor ve sen onu uygulamaya başladığında yeni bir bakış açısına sahip oluyorsun. Başka insanların nasıl düşündüğünü de görmüş oluyorsun bir yer de. Bakış açını genişletiyor genel olarak."

22) "Violin MD diye bir doktor dediğim o. onu takip ediyorum. Vloglarını merak ediyorum çünkü ilerde aslında Youtube deyince insanın akına sanki önemsizmiş gibi geliyor ama. Mesela ben onu aslında ilerde doktor olup olmadığıma falan karar verebiliyorum. Hayatı daha iyi görüyorum mesela. Hani o bana iyi geliyor. Emm eğlenceli geliyor. Sanki staj yapmış gibi aslında çünkü bütün hayatını orda

çektiği için neler. Ama kötü yanlarını da görüyorum. Hani bir hastasının ölümüyle başa çıkmasını falan öyle şeyleri de görüyorum. Emm aslında genel olarak sevdiğim bu."

23) "Evet, Mesela daha önceki örneğe dönecek olursak Barış Özcan dediğim İngilizce kanallarını taramaya başlıyor bir şeyler bulup bir de sunmaya başladı ben de bunun ardından bazı İngilizce internet sitelerini açıp Ben de artık Kendi kendime araştırma yapmaya başladım. Sadece Türkçe değil bu benim İngilizcem de birazcık ilerletti. Ondan ziyade İngilizce kaynakları birazcık daha erişim ve özgüven sağladı bana. Hem de bunlara bakarak kendi de bir şeyler araştırmaya başladım bu bana bir şeyler kattı."

24) "Barış Özcan'ın ardından birkaç tane satranç kanalı var satranç Medya satranç TV ve chess channel. Bunlar da yeni oynanan bir Satranç oyununu hemen analiz edip YouTube'a videosunu yüklüyorlar ve bu sayede güncel oyunlardan bir şeyler öğrenip kendime bir şeyler katılabiliyorum."

25) "Bu çok ekstrem bir örnek olacak ama geçen ay bir teknoloji firması CES diye bir teknoloji fuarı var onun için bir tane sunum hazırlamıştı. Bu yaklaşık gecenin üçüne denk geliyordu. Onu izledim. Yeni bir işlemci ve ekran kartı tanıttılar."

26) "Spor yaparken de Ağır sağlamı dinlemiştim. Sporda yapama gereken şeyleri, spor öncesi ve spor sonrası yapmam gereken şeyleri söylediği için onları da yaptığım için daha hızlı geliştiğimi düşünüyorum."

27) "Olumlu yönde aslında. Çünkü şey ben mesela böyle ortaokulda falan daha böyle çok uzun süre çalışıyordum. Ama verimsiz oluyordu. Ama şimdi çok az çalışıyorum ama çok verimli oluyor. Ve hatta başarım arttı."

28) "Mesela ben okulda çok dağınık biriydim Eskiden bir türlü okulda hocaların verdiği fotokopileri falan tek bir dosya gidiyordum. Gidiyorum. Bir yerde duydum ama hatırlamıyorum nerede duyduğumu. Her kâğıdı ayrı bir dosyada tutmanın Alman usulü denen şekli ile yapmaya başladım fizik kâğıtların fizik dosyasından kimya kâğıtlarım kimya dosyasında tutmaya başladım ve buna acayip yardımcı oldu yani. Artık bütün ödevlerim falan düzenli bir şekilde duruyor. Bu bana katkı yaptı işte ne bileyim bana dışsal etki olmasa, videoda görmesem Belki çok daha uzun bir süre dağınık gezecektim. Bu şekilde pozitif etkileri çok güzel oluyor yani."

29) "Damla Altun mesela evini değiştiriyor hani ben evimi değiştiremem ama odamı değiştirebilirim. Ufak tefek kitaplığıma bir şeyler alıyorum. Mesela odama mum koydum hoşuma gitmişti. Onu da bir videoda görmüştüm. Mum aldım kokulu mum. Böyle küçük küçük değişiklikleri geçiriyorum hayatıma."

30) "Yani mesela izlediğim kanallarda en basitinden arabada şarkı söylüyor. Veya bir yere gidecek arabada soru cevap tarzı bir şey.. Mesela bilmiyorum ben çok özeniyorum onlara. Bende büyüdüğümde arabam olur tek başıma araba ile gelebilir miyim? Yanımda bir arkadaşımla öyle sohbet edebilir miyim? Mesela özeniyorum.

Daha var mı? Bunu da yaparım dediğin…

Yurtdışı seyahat vlogları çekiyorlar mesela. Bazen diyorlar çok yorulduk çok ettik. Şimdi otele geldik dinleniyoruz falan. Mesela o yorgunluğu yaşamak bile isterim. “

31) “Ben de yazılımcı olup ben de bir Oyun yazılımında bulunmak istiyorum bir ekip kurup arkadaşlarımla. Oyun satarak para kazanmayı düşünüyorum. Dediğim gibi ben şu anda mesela yazılımla uğraşıyorum küçük çapta da olsa ve bana çok keyifli geliyor bir oyun yapmak. Çünkü bir anlamda sosyal medya demeyeyim de sanal dünyanın şöyle bir avantajı var. Siz gerçek hayatta bir ev yapmak istiyorsanız tuğla çimento betona ihtiyacınız var ve sürekli çalışacak bir sürü insana ihtiyacınız var. Ama sanal alemde bir şey tamamen kendimiz de bir programı tamamen kendimiz de kodlayabiliriz ve yaptıktan sonra gerçek hayata göre çok daha fazla para kazanabilirsiniz. Gerçek hayatta ağır işlerde çalışan insanlar az para kazanıyor ama sosyal medyada ve sanal dünyada çok daha az emekle çok fazla para kazanılıyor böyle iken ben de bu kervana katılmak istiyorum diyebilirim.”

32) “Mesela bazı YouTuberlar bazı konulara bakış açılarını paylaşıyor. Mesela o bakış açılarından etkilendiğim oluyor. Çok mantıklı gelenler oluyor.

Bir örneği?

Buket Senanur diye bir. Çok şair vardı adını unuttum ama. Çok meşhur bir şair. Onun bir konferansına katılmıştı. Video da çekmişti. Ona sorular sormuştu. O adamın söylediği ve Youtuberın da kendi yorumladığı düşüncelere göre benim de fikrim değişmişti. Çünkü çok mantıklı gelmişti. Konuyu tam hatırlamıyorum gerçekten ama onların düşüncelerinden yorumlarından etkilenmiştim. “

33) “Okuyorum. Yani. hımm. Dediğim gibi beni çok etkilemiyor. Kötü bir yorum yapılırsa tabii ki üzülürüm. Çünkü madem sevmiyorsun onun videolarını, onun davranışlarını, onun tavırlarını o zaman izlememe gibi bir seçeneğin varken girip izliyorsun ve hayatında bir zaman kaybı yaşıyorsun. O yüzden kötü yorum yapanları çok anlamıyorum. Ama eleştirilerden bahsetmiyorum. Mesela arka planın çok gözümü yordu değiştirebilirsin gibi yorumlardan bahsetmiyorum ama direkt bir nefret halinde bulunan kişiler oluyor ve onları pek anlamıyorum. Sevmiyorsan izlememe gibi bir şansın var. Güzel yorumlar görünce tabi mutlu da…”

34) “Yani tabi burada ikiye ayrılıyorlar. Paylaşan da var paylaşmayan da var. Mesela “Merve Özkaynak” benim için paylaşıyor yani. Çok samimi biri olduğunu ve gerçek düşüncelerini yansıttığını düşünüyorum ki başka insanlar da tavsiye ettikleri ürünü alıp denediklerini söyleyip memnun kaldıkları için onun dürüstçe söylediğini düşünüyorum. Ama bu tavsiye ettiği ürünleri kullanmamış olup sadece para için tavsiye edenler de vardır ama ben şu anda karşılaşmamış olabilirim.”

35) “Yüz ifadesinden falan belli oluyor. Ürünleri falan tanıtırken söylüyor ama böyle zevksiz söylüyor. İzleyesim gelmiyor. Sevdiyse zevkle söylüyor. Mutlu ağzı yüzü falan güler.”

36) “Eğer küçüksen benim düşünce yapımı onların düşünce yapımı onların düşünce yapısına doğru değiştirmiş olurum. İlk başta eğer küçüksem annem babamdan almadan YouTuberlardan alırsam çok farklı düşünce yapısına sahip olabilirim. Ama ben annemden alıp da sonra gelip bir de Youtuberlardan izlersem onun üstüne katlamış olurum.

Peki, senin şu an ki durumun ve şu an ki yaşın için nasıl bir şey?

Şu an ki yaşım için iyi bir şey. Çünkü ben tek başıma bazı kararları veremeyebilirim. Bazı kişiler bana yardımcı olabilir. O yüzden iyi bir şey. “

37) “Ben onları eğlence için ya da canım sıkıldığı için izlediğim için benim üzerimde bir etkileri olduğunu düşünmüyorum. En azından şu an. Küçükken olabilir mesela kardeşimde oluyor. Mesela çok fazla video izleyince şımarabiliyor. Iıı, rüyalarında oyunları falan görmeye başlıyor.”

38) “Imm yani bende. Beni aslında olumlu etkiledi bazı durumlarda. İşte bu ders çalışma alışkanlığımın oturmasında vs. ama benim genelde studytuberlara bakmıyorlar. Derste bile oyun. Mesela “PewDiePie” diye bir Youtube kanalı varmış. Ben hiç video oyunu oynamıyorum bir tane arkadaşım oynuyor. Derste bile arkadan şeyi açıp onun video oyunlarını şeylerini seyrediyor. Mesela bu tip şeyler hem akademik başarıyı düşürebilir hem zaten çok kötü bence hayatın her alanına nüfuz ediyor. Bütün arkadaşlarımda da görüyorum bunu aslına bakarsanız. Olumlu şeylere rastlıyorum ama olumsuz özelliklere rastladığım pek çok arkadaşım var.

Örnek verebilir misin? Ne görüyorsun olumsuz olarak?

Mesela işte şey diyordu bir tane arkadaşım ben böyle başladım işte hafta sonu. Cuma başladım. Pazara kadar hiç odamdan çıkmadan sürekli video oyunu oynadım. Bir de o şeyi seyrettim. PewDiePie var onu seyrettim. Hani bu zaten hem hiçbir açıdan iyi değil. Hem akademik başarısını düşürüyor hem fiziksel sağlığını hem ruhsal sağlığını çok düşürten bir şey ve bunu ben gördüm. Sürekli şahidim aslında böyle şeylere.”

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