

Digital Detox Experiences of Generation Z

Derya Çakmak Karapınar¹, Arif Daş², Nihal Daş³

¹Department of Public Relations and Publicity, Ataturk University Faculty of Open and Distance Education, Erzurum, Türkiye

²Department of Computer Programming, Vocational School of Technical Sciences, Ataturk University, Erzurum, Türkiye

³School of Foreign Languages, Ataturk University, Erzurum, Türkiye

ORCID iDs of the authors: D.Ç.K. 0000-0003-0796-1800, A.D. 0000-0002-0138-171X, N.D. 0000-0002-2143-097X.

Main Points

- Although digital addiction is most common in Generation Z, it also affects other age groups. Digital detox is a method of intervening in digital addiction by enabling the individual to take a break from the use of digital tools for a certain period of time.
- Digital detox should be applied when individuals cannot fulfill their responsibilities due to the use of technology, when disruptions begin to occur in their social and educational lives, and when negative effects occur in their health, personality and character structures.
- Participants stated that during the digital detox process, tasks such as not watching something while eating, taking up a hobby, and using a wristwatch instead of using a phone to learn the time could be fulfilled more easily.
- During the digital detox process, addicted individuals have difficulty in the tasks of switching off notifications of applications and leaving the phone in another room while sleeping.
- Digital detox helps individuals to reduce the level of digital addiction, which is a behavioral addiction, and if digital tools are not continued to be used within certain rules after digital detox, the possibility of relapse of digital addiction increases.

Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the experiences of students with high levels of digital addiction in their application of digital detox processes to reduce or overcome their addiction. The Digital Addiction Scale for University Students, developed by Kesici and Tunç (2018), was applied to 152 students participating in the study, and interviews were conducted with 49 students who had high/very high levels of digital addiction. Based on volunteered participation, 10 students were included in the digital detox program. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview form and analyzed using content analysis. It has been observed that students express that overcoming digital addiction with beneficial activities is a challenging yet highly useful experience. Students have stated that the easiest applications for them during the digital detox process are not watching anything while eating, picking up a hobby, and using a wristwatch, while the most challenging applications are turning off notifications for mobile applications and leaving the phone in another room while going to bed. Furthermore, it has been observed that while some students describe reading books as an easy application in the digital detox, others express that they face difficulties in implementing this application.

Keywords: Addiction and recovery, digital addiction, digital addiction awareness, digital detox, digital detox practice

Introduction

Addiction is when an individual continues to use substances or exhibit behavior (alcohol, drugs, games, internet, etc.) despite harmful consequences (Erol Karaca & Gökçearslan Çifçi, 2021). This situation

can affect many areas of the individual's life and even endanger the individual's life (Hürriyet, 2017). Addiction is a condition that has physical, emotional, and mental aspects. Over time, addicted individuals increase the frequency or dose of substance use or behavior (Duyan & Gövbakan, 2015; Akkaş,

Corresponding Author:

Arif Daş

E-mail:

arif.das@atauni.edu.tr

Received: February 13, 2024

Revision Requested: March 18, 2024

Last Revision Received:

April 16, 2024

Accepted: May 2, 2024

Publication Date: July 12, 2024



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Cite this article as: Çakmak Karapınar, D., Daş, A., & Daş, N. (2024). Digital detox experiences of generation Z. *Addicta: The Turkish Journal on Addictions*, 11(2), 208-216.

2019; Ergenç & Yıldırım, 2007). Addiction can cause an individual to lose control and can affect every aspect of an individual's life. There are many ways for prevention and treatment, but this process can be long and difficult (Ergenç and Yıldırım, 2007). Addiction may be related to substance use or behavior (Kesici & Tuğç, 2018). In behavioral addictions, individuals may exhibit psychological and behavioral problems that occur as a result of substance use, even though they do not use any substance (Sevindik, 2011). Digital addiction is also considered within the framework of behavioral addiction (Yengin, 2019).

Digital addiction is a non-chemical (behavioral) addiction that involves human – machine interaction (Rahayu et al., 2020). Digital addiction is the individual's continued use of the internet, social media, mobile phone, tablet or other technological tools despite harmful consequences (Hawi et al., 2019; Akkaş, 2019). Digital addiction can affect many areas of an individual's life and even endanger the individual's life. For example, digital addiction can affect an individual's relationships, health, education or work (Rahayu et al., 2020; Yıldırım, 2021). At the same time, digital addiction can reduce an individual's attention and focus and have negative effects on an individual's psychology (Zheng & Lee, 2016). There are solutions offered for the prevention and treatment of digital addiction, but this process can be challenging for the individual (Kalkan, 2021). Setting boundaries for oneself, controlling how much time is spent on resources like social media and the internet, and devoting attention to other pursuits are crucial.

The demand to use digital tools goes above and beyond what is typical, and the usage of these tools takes priority in the person's life. In order to spend time using digital tools, the person might abandon other pursuits or neglect other requirements (Küçükvardar & Tıngöy, 2018). Additionally, if they attach too much importance to the game, the person may experience emotional reactions while using digital tools, such as worry or dissatisfaction (Doan Keskin and Aral, 2021). Digital addiction is especially common among children and young people due to their weak self-control (Fauzi et al., 2020), and it is thought that digital addiction will become even more common in the coming years due to the widespread use of mobile devices. Baruffati's (2023) technology addiction statistics show that the technology addiction of individuals between the ages of 13 – 17 and 18 – 24 is higher than other age groups (Figure 1).

Since digital addiction can be risky for people of all ages, everyone should be careful about it (Arslan, 2019). Digital detox is recommended for people who want to get rid of or reduce their

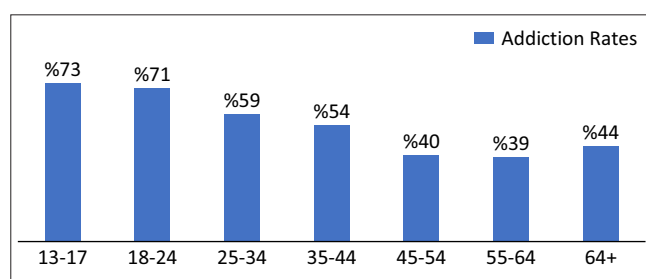


Figure 1. Technology Addiction Rates by User Age Groups (Baruffati, 2023).

addiction to technology. Setting limits for oneself, balancing the use of digital tools, and engaging in other activities can be part of a digital detox. To support their emotional and mental health, people may find it advantageous to seek extra services such as therapy or counseling (Zahariades, 2018). In digital detox, a person avoids using digital devices (internet, social media, mobile phones, tablets, etc.) for a predetermined period (such as a few hours, days, or weeks). During this period, the person either does not use digital devices at all or uses them very little (Schmuck, 2020). Digital detox aims to reduce the negative effects of technology use, increase focus and attention, or give more time to focus on personal needs. A digital detox can be beneficial to reduce an individual's symptoms of digital addiction. For digital detox programs to be successful, a person needs to balance the use of digital tools, focus on other activities, and set realistic goals for themselves. Digital detox can be implemented in many ways. Digital detox programs can be implemented by individuals of all ages who have a dependent relationship with technology. For example, a person may use their mobile phone only during certain hours or access the internet only during certain hours. The individual can try to do other activities during the time allocated to the use of digital tools, such as exercising, reading a book, or chatting with friends. The individual can plan a digital detox program for himself/herself, or he/she can follow the digital detox practices revealed by various studies. What is important here is that the individual chooses the most suitable digital detox program for himself/herself and implements it successfully. Since digital addiction affects the comfort of life and can bring health problems over time, studies on the effectiveness of digital detox are important. In this study, a digital detox program was carried out for 1 month with volunteers who were found to have digital addiction. As a result of the digital detox application, it aims to create individuals' perceptions about digital addiction and digital detox and to reveal their experiences and opinions about the detox application process to get rid of addiction.

Importance of Study

It is important for individuals to have perceptions and awareness about digital addiction, which can make it difficult for people to carry out their daily life practices or establish social relationships and even cause psychological and physical harm. Individuals who know what digital addiction is and can evaluate their situation will be aware of the negative situations that arise. Individuals who want to improve their quality of life and regulate their interpersonal relationships positively may tend to reduce the effects of technology on their lives. This study is important in terms of creating students' perceptions of digital addiction, raising awareness about its impact on their lives, and determining the effectiveness of the application and the results of the application in order to get rid of this addiction. In addition, the limited number of studies in the literature examining digital detox applications and their outcomes reveals the importance of the research in terms of shedding light on the scientific gap.

Scope and Limitations of the Research

The research was planned to determine the opinions of Atatürk University students about the digital detox process applied to get rid of digital addiction or reduce their digital addiction levels. Within the scope of another study, students whose digital

addiction levels were determined were contacted, and interviews were held with volunteer students within the scope of the study. This research is limited since

- Not all Atatürk University students could be reached, and 152 students were reached for the study.
- Among the students, 152 of them in the sample did not want to participate in the study for various reasons, and 10 students volunteered to participate in the study.
- The research was carried out over a certain period of time, so there is a possibility that students’ opinions, thoughts, ideas, and expectations may change over time.
- The findings are entirely subjective data resulting from the analysis of the answers given by the students.

Material and Methods

In this study, which aims to determine the experiences of students with high levels of digital addiction regarding the digital detox process they applied to reduce their addiction levels or get rid of addiction, a qualitative research method-based study was conducted because it focused on the student’s experiences and opinions regarding the digital detox process. Yıldırım & Şimşek (2008) define qualitative research as “research in which qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview, and document analysis are used, and a qualitative process is followed to reveal perceptions and events realistically and holistically in a natural environment.” In other words, qualitative research involves revealing the network of relationships within the natural environment or creating theory by examining events or problems in the context of the values and environment in which they occur and develop. In this study, an instrumental case study was used as the research design. The case study design, which is widely used in qualitative studies, is divided into different types according to the type, number, and content of the situation (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016; Creswell, 2013).

An instrumental case study, one of the qualitative case studies, is used when focusing on a single issue or a problem. This research focused on determining students’ opinions about their digital detox experiences.

Sample of the Research

The study group was determined using the criterion sampling method, which allows for the examination of all cases that meet the criteria on the criterion list determined by the researchers (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). The first criterion in the study group was being a student at Atatürk University. Participants were informed about the steps, methods, and data-sharing rules of the study, and their informed consent was obtained. This study was approved by Social and Human Science Ethics Committee of Atatürk University (approval number: 17 and decision 218 ; date: 16.11.2021). Then, it was checked whether the participants were willing to participate in a survey developed by Kesici and Tunç (2018) to determine their level of digital addiction. Afterward, the informed consent form, which included the information that the data would not be shared with third parties, was re-submitted before the survey, and access to the survey application was provided after additional consents were obtained. Among the 152 participants who completed the relevant survey, 49 participants with high levels of digital addiction were informed about the digital

detox application process. Finally, a study group was formed with ten participants who voluntarily wanted to participate in the digital detox process as the last criterion. Examinations and discussions were conducted on the experiences of the study group regarding the process.

Research Questions

Within the framework of the relevant literature, the following research questions were put forward and answers were sought in line with the aims and scope of the study.

Research question 1: What are students’ perceptions of digital addiction?

Research question 2: What are students’ perceptions of digital detox?

Research question 3: What are students’ experiences and opinions about digital detox practices?

Data Collection Tools, Process, and Analysis

In the study, an attempt was made to search for “digital detox” by focusing on the context of “digital addiction” among the publications in the widely referenced Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Scopus indexes. To access digital detox applications specifically for digital addiction studies, Boolean “AND” (Gough et al., 2017) was used among the keywords in each search string. As a result of the search, 46 studies were found in the databases (Figure 2).

As a result of the literature review, an interview form was prepared. Before the prepared interview form was given its final form, the necessary reviews and arrangements were made by language and field experts. It was aimed to include 49 students who were determined to have a high level of addiction in the study group. However, only 10 students volunteered to apply the digital

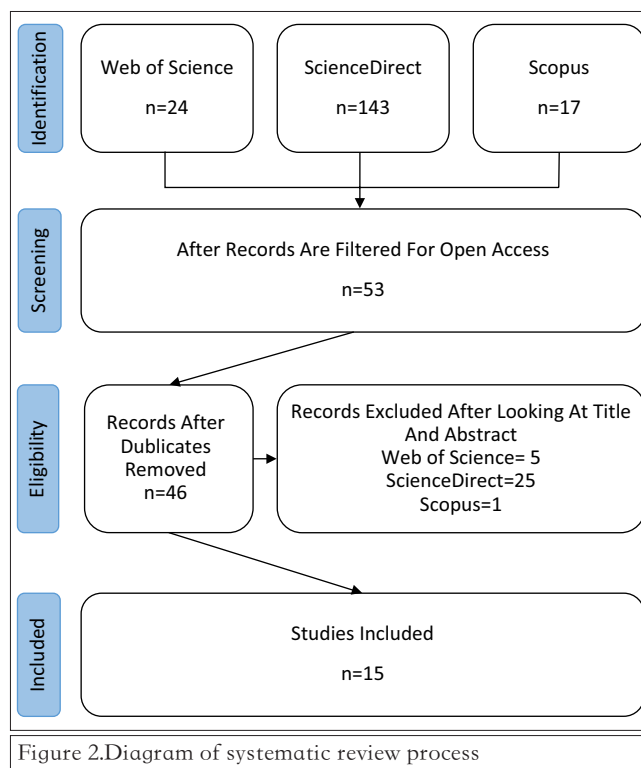


Figure 2. Diagram of systematic review process

detox process. For this reason, opinions could be obtained from 10 students in the study group through the finalized semi-structured interview form. The transcripts of the interviews with the students were extracted and made available for qualitative data analysis. Then, all interview transcripts obtained were transferred to the MAXQDA 2020 program and coded within the framework of certain codes. After the coding process, the data were reviewed again and checked whether there was a need for combinations or distinctions in the coding, and the answers given by the students to the interview questions, and the opinions they expressed were analyzed by the content analysis method.

Results

In this part of the study, the findings of the field research conducted to determine the experiences of students with high levels of digital addiction regarding the digital detox process they applied in order to reduce their addiction levels or get rid of addiction are presented and interpreted. The findings resulting from the analysis of the data obtained within the framework of the research questions are presented under the relevant headings.

The study was carried out between September 1, 2022, and October 1, 2022. Six (60%) of the students participating in the study were female and 4 (30%) were male.

Six (60%) of the students participating in the study were studying in the Computer Programming Associate Degree Program, three (30%) were studying in the Child Development Undergraduate Program, and one (10%) studying in the Public Relations and Promotion Undergraduate Program.

Students' Perceptions Toward Digital Addiction

In order to determine students' perceptions of digital addiction, "What do you think digital addiction is?" "What are the negative effects of digital addiction on people's lives?" and "What kind of negative situations are there in your life due to digital addiction?" were asked. All students who agreed to participate in the interview answered these questions.

To the question, "What do you think digital addiction is?" students answered the question in a way that addressed both the causes and consequences of digital addiction. Students define digital addiction as having an "excessive addiction" to digital tools and the internet ($N = 3 - 30\%$). Due to this addiction, individuals "spend most of their time in digital environments and with digital tools" to the extent that it disrupts their daily lives and work ($N=6$). -60%) and therefore described it as "wasting time" when they could have used the time more efficiently ($N = 1 - 10\%$). Some statements of students regarding their perceptions of digital addiction are as follows:

It is spending time on computers, phones and social media to the extent that it disrupts our daily work. It means spending time with these tools at night, as soon as you wake up in the morning, and for hours before going to bed at night. (P4)

It is a constant need for technological devices. Not being able to stay away, wanting to be at hand at all times. When it does not happen, it is psychologically affected. (P6)

It is the incapacity of the individual to stop using digital products while having obligations to fulfill, and as a result of this inability to stop, they neglect their obligations. (P10)

Students answered the question, "What are the negative effects of digital addiction on people's lives?" within the framework of physical, psychological, and social effects. Students stated that digital addiction "prevents individuals from socializing" ($N = 7 - 25.92\%$), "they fail to use their time well" ($N = 3 - 11.11\%$), and thus "disrupts their responsibilities" ($N = 5 - 18.52\%$). They stated that it caused them to "get away from real life" ($N = 3 - 11.11\%$). In addition, they stated that as a result of digital addiction, it causes individuals to experience physical ($N = 5 - 18.52\%$) and psychological ($N = 3 - 11.11\%$) disorders, causing their quality of life to decrease ($N = 1 - 3.71\%$). Some of the students' statements about the negative impact of digital addiction on people's lives are as follows;

Addicted individuals cannot fulfill their responsibilities. The individuals cannot focus on their own lives. Eye disorders, body fatigue, and headaches may occur as a result of excessive viewing of technological devices. (P2)

Digital addiction causes people to withdraw from social life, become asocial, experience physical discomfort (eye, waist, neck pain), become depressed, gain weight, and increase their belief in the virtual world. (P5)

Digital addiction causes loss of time, brain laziness, distance from social life, and distance from human vital activities. (P6)

Digital addiction keeps us away from our normal relationships and family environment, in short, from our human relationships. It causes disruptions in our daily work and disorders and problems in various body organs such as joints and eyes. (P7)

The students evaluated the question, "What negative situations are there in your life due to digital addiction?" on the basis of physical disorders, their social lives, and their own development. Students reported negative situations in their lives due to digital addiction: "their individuality increased because they could not socialize" ($N = 7 - 35\%$), "they neglected their responsibilities" ($N = 1 - 5\%$), "they spent most of their time in digital environments with digital devices" ($N = 3 - 15\%$), therefore they expressed "they could not find time for their personal development or education" ($N = 4 - 20\%$), "physical disorders" ($N = 4 - 20\%$), and "sleeping problems" ($N = 1 - 5\%$). Some of the students' statements about the negative situations that arise in their lives due to digital addiction are as follows;

I lose a lot of time without even realizing it. Excessive focus and extended use of technology goods can cause eye strain, headaches, and weariness. (P2)

My neck and eyes hurt, I have become aware that I have been getting away from people and nature, I have strayed from my personal development objectives, and my individuality has increased. (P5)

I waste way too much time. I am falling behind in my efforts to advance academically. My participation in sports and social activities is extremely limited. (P6)

To start with, my health is suffering. I find myself in an anti-social environment and have turned into an isolated character. (P7)

Students' Perceptions Toward Digital Detox

In order to determine students' perceptions of digital detox, the interview questions, "What do you think digital detox is?" "In what situations do you think digital detox should be applied?" and "Do you think people need a digital detox today?" were

asked. All students who agreed to participate in the interview answered these questions.

When asked, “What do you think digital detox is?” students defined it as a “technology diet” ($N = 1 - 7.14\%$), that is, a “set of rules or guide” ($N = 2 - 14.29\%$) that provides the individual “limits the use of technology” ($N = 9 - 64.28\%$) and “makes time for himself and his desires” ($N = 2 - 14.29\%$). Some of the students’ expressions regarding their perceptions of digital detox are as follows:

It means that people are interested in technological applications and tools as much as necessary and spend more time on themselves or their wishes. (P1)

I think digital detox is like a diet. Because just as we stay away from harmful things while on a diet, we stay away from the same harmful things during digital detox. (P3)

Digital detox is a guide prepared for individuals with digital addiction and includes practices to eliminate this addiction. (P7)

Digital detox is when an individual distance himself from digital devices and channels, spends time on himself, gets to know himself and engages in activities that will contribute to his development. (K8)

Students answered the question, “In what situations do you think it is necessary to apply digital detox?” by considering the impact of digital addiction on the individual’s life flow and health. Students stated that if individuals “spend a lot of time with technological tools and environments” ($N = 7 - 46.66\%$), they “neglect their responsibilities” ($N = 1 - 6.67\%$), “in their social life” ($N = 2 - 13.33\%$) and “when it causes disruptions in education life” ($N = 1 - 6.67\%$), “when its health is negatively affected” ($N = 2 - 13.33\%$), “when changes occur in individuality and character structure” ($N =$ they stated that digital detox should be applied when the individual is “not happy with real life activities” ($N = 1 - 6.67\%$) and “when it starts to negatively affect the individual’s life” ($N = 1 - 6.67\%$). Some of the students’ expressions regarding situations in which digital detox should be applied are as follows:

It may be necessary if the individual spends too much time with technological devices, unknowingly or unknowingly, forgets his responsibilities, and does not enjoy his real life outside of the digital world. (K2)

If more technological devices are used than necessary and after a while they get in the way of our own social life and education life, it is necessary to implement it. (P6)

It is necessary to apply it when you are asocial, when your mood is depressed and stressed almost every day and when you realize that you have lost control. (P9)

It should be applied when digital addiction occupies a large place in the individual’s life. It should be applied when the individual’s life begins to be negatively affected by this addiction. (P10)

In response to the question, “Do you think that people need digital detox today?” all students, regardless of age group, stated that everyone needs “digital detox.” The reasons for thinking that everyone needs a digital detox are that it causes “the emergence of physical and psychological disorders” ($N = 4 - 26.67\%$),

“communication between people breaks down” ($N = 4 - 26.67\%$), “not spending time for their families, friends, and themselves” ($N = 6 - 40\%$), and “especially children become asocial” ($N = 1 - 6.66\%$). Some of the statements of the students regarding their belief that people need a digital detox are as follows;

Mostly yes, because today’s advanced technology has the power to distance people from other people. The lack of communication with friends and most importantly with family because of technology is tearing us away from each other. (P1)

Digital detox is a type of detox that every person should voluntarily implement in their lives. An individual makes a big mistake by spending the time they should spend on their family, career, hobbies and friends on social media platforms (P2)

Absolutely. We live our lives for social media now, we share photos of what we do on Instagram and our emotions in 140 characters on twitter. We spend too much time here and can’t focus on the real work we need to do. We spend hours watching a reels or reading a tweet, and then we spend hours wasting our time here. (P4)

I think yes, because people have become so distant from each other with technology and communication has decreased. Now everyone in an environment is laughing with their phone videos or spending time on social media and quietly waiting for the company to pass. Conversations have decreased and various diseases have emerged as a result of looking at the screen for a long time. I think it should be done to prevent these. (P9)

Experiences and Opinions on Digital Detox Application

In order to determine the experiences and opinions of the students about the digital detox application, the interview questions, “What was the experience of deciding to do digital detox for you?” “Which detox application was the easiest for you while doing digital detox?” “Which detox application was the most difficult for you while doing digital detox?” and “What are your opinions and suggestions about the digital detox application?” were asked. All of the students who agreed to participate in the interview answered these questions.

In response to the question, “How was it for you to decide to do a digital detox?” students mostly stated that it was a “nice and very useful” experience ($N = 7 - 70\%$). There were also students who stated that they experienced that “digital addiction can be overcome with useful activities” ($N = 1 - 10\%$), that it was a “challenging but different experience” ($N = 1 - 10\%$), and that it was “an unfinished experience because they wanted it to continue longer” ($N = 1 - 10\%$). Some of the students’ statements about their experiences of deciding to do digital detox are as follows;

All the tasks given in the digital detox program were rules that I already knew I had to do to distance myself from digital life. I just didn’t want to apply such rules in my life. I decided to try these rules with the digital detox program. It was a good experience. (P2)

The fact that I started the digital detox during my exam preparation helped me overcome my attention problems while preparing for the exam. As I progressed through the stages, I realized that I couldn’t really pay attention to my

lessons because of the phone. Therefore, the process affected me in a very positive way. It was a useful experience. (P4)
I experienced that digital addiction is not an addiction that cannot be overcome, but that it can be overcome with more useful activities. Therefore, it was a good experience. (P7)
It was a good experience, it made me more confident in my will and myself. (P9)

In response to the question, “Which detox practice was the least challenging for you during the digital detox process?” students answered “reading books” ($N = 5 - 50\%$), “not watching something while eating” ($N = 2 - 20\%$), “taking up a hobby” ($N = 1 - 10\%$), and “using a wristwatch” ($N = 1 - 10\%$), as well as “there is no such stage as the easiest” ($N = 1 - 10\%$). Some of the students’ statements about the easiest digital detox practices are as follows;

All of them were easy, but the easiest one was not to watch something while eating. I usually just focus on the food when I eat anyway. (P3)
There was no easiest stage, I had difficulty in all stages gradually. (P4)
The easiest thing to do is to buy a book and read. It was something I wanted to do for a long time but couldn’t find the time, and I did it thanks to detox. (P5)
Wristwatch application was easy for me. Because I don’t use my phone much to look at the time anyway. (P6)

In response to the question, “Which detox practice was the most challenging for you while doing digital detox?” students answered “turning off notifications of applications” ($N = 4 - 33.33\%$), “leaving the phone in another room while sleeping” ($N = 4 - 33.33\%$), “not being able to play games” ($N = 1 - 8.34\%$), “reading books” ($N = 1 - 8.34\%$), but there were also students who stated that “there was no challenging detox practice” ($N = 2 - 16.66\%$). Some of the statements of the students about the most challenging practice while doing digital detox are as follows;

Turning off notifications. There were many times when I involuntarily picked up the phone wondering if I had received a notification. (P2)
It was quite difficult for me to turn off all notifications. I felt the need to look at my phone all the time because of questions such as, “Did someone write? Did something happen?” Even at first, because notifications were turned off, I had to go to the applications and check if there was anything, which caused me to spend more time on the applications. (P4)
The hardest part was taking the phone away from the room at night and going to sleep. Because I can’t sleep at night, I sleep by watching videos to distract my mind and I got bored while trying to sleep because I couldn’t watch them. And when I woke up, I couldn’t look at the phone immediately, which was a bit annoying because I wanted to get news from the outside world as soon as I woke up. (P6)
Getting to a level where I almost never play games and reading books. Reading books was very difficult for me (P9)

Students answered the question, “What are your opinions and suggestions for digital detox?” in the direction of their opinions and did not make any suggestions. In addition to the students’ opinions that “everyone should be made aware of digital

addiction and detox issues and experience detox practices” ($N = 4 - 40\%$), they also expressed their opinions that digital detox “allows them to spare time for themselves and their environment” ($N = 2 - 20\%$), “it is a good practice” ($N = 3 - 30\%$) but “they are not satisfied because it is difficult” ($N = 1 - 10\%$). Some of the students’ statements about their views on the digital detox application are as follows;

Everyone who is not active in their social circles and cannot spare time for themselves should be made aware and detox. If we follow the detox steps and pay attention carefully, we can focus on ourselves and our environment as we want. (P1)
In general, I am satisfied because it affected me positively, I was able to do the things I needed to do and spare time for myself. I read the books I wanted to read, I visited museums. (P4)
I think that since digital addiction affects every aspect of a person’s life, I think that everyone should benefit from this guidance for a more productive social and quality life. (P7)
We had a good experience thanks to our teachers. When I think I overdid it, I will start practicing from the beginning. I was not very satisfied with the detox, most of the time I could not be patient and exceeded the rules. But I still thank my teachers. (P8)

Discussion

The concept of addiction is thought to be related to substances that have a narcotic quality (Erdamar & Kurupınar, 2014) and cause individuals to have an excessive desire to use them repeatedly (Ögel, 2001). The two most prominent features of addiction are chronic and primary (Dinç, 2015). However, with the developments in technology, tools, equipment, and applications (Çalışır & Aksoy, 2018), which are offered to individuals with the aim of facilitating people’s lives, may also have negative effects contrary to expectations. These negative effects usually occur depending on the age, purpose of use, and duration of use (Aral & Keskin, 2018). One of the negative effects is digital addiction. Digital addiction is considered as a type of behavioral addiction. Behavioral addiction can be defined as the individual’s inability to give up the behavior, increasing the amount of behavior over time, experiencing deprivation when he/she cannot perform the behavior, constantly making an effort to perform the behavior, and being negatively affected psychologically, physically, or economically due to this situation (Ögel, 2001; Kır & Sulak, 2014; Young, 1998). In the literature, there are studies in which digital addiction is evaluated and analyzed under different categories such as addiction to mobile devices (phone, tablet, computer), social media environments (Facebook, Instagram, etc.), games, or the internet (Yang & Tung, 2007; Yengin, 2019; Shaw & Black, 2008; Young, 1998).

In the interviews conducted to determine the experiences of students with high levels of digital addiction regarding the digital detox process they apply to reduce their addiction levels or to get rid of addiction, it was primarily aimed to determine the students’ awareness of digital addiction and digital detox and their opinions and suggestions regarding the digital detox application process. It was observed that students defined digital addiction as excessive fondness for digital tools and the internet, spending a large part of their time in digital environments and digital

tools to the extent that individuals disrupt their daily lives and work due to this fondness, and therefore wasting their time when they could use it more efficiently. Çukurluöz (2016) defined digital addiction as a type of addiction that occurs as a result of spending long periods of time with digital media tools, while Avcı and Er (2019) defined digital addiction as the inability of individuals to perform their daily duties and responsibilities due to spending too much time with digital tools and being damaged in many ways.

It has been observed that individuals who are digitally addicted need to be constantly on digital applications or platforms with digital tools, and when they cannot meet this need, they may exhibit nervousness, anxiety, restlessness, depressive behaviors, and angry behaviors up to tantrums (Arısoy, 2009; Güney, 2017; Dilci et al., 2019). Excessive use and misuse of time spent on digital tools and platforms can negatively affect individuals from all age groups (Arslan, 2020). With this excessive use of digital tools and platforms, individuals' communication with their social environment is restricted or completely cut off, and they move away from real life (Şata et al., 2016), that is, individuals isolate themselves from other people. Thus, both the communication of individuals with their environment and their social lives are negatively affected (Arslan & Bardakçı, 2020). In addition, individuals are not aware of the time they spend on digital platforms. For this reason, their daily life tasks are disrupted or cannot be realized because they are constantly postponed (Güney, 2017). When the individual tries to stay away from digital devices and platforms or is forced to stay away from them, they start to exhibit behaviors such as irritability, restlessness, and unhappiness. It also negatively affects individuals' success in academic or business life (Dilci et al., 2019; Horzum, 2011). In addition to the psychological and social negativities listed above, digital addiction can cause physical problems such as obesity, muscle weakening, posture disorders, or vision problems (Mustafaoğlu & Yasacı, 2018). In this study, students expressed the social effects of digital addiction as preventing people from socializing, not being able to use their time well, disrupting their responsibilities in daily life, and distancing themselves from real life. Also, it was seen that they stated that it caused a decrease in their quality of life because they were negatively affected physically and psychologically. The students evaluated the negative effects of digital addiction in their own lives on the basis of physical ailments, social life, and individual development and stated that their individuality increased because they could not socialize, they disrupted their responsibilities, they spent most of their time in digital environments with digital devices, and therefore could not find time for their individual development or education, in addition to physical ailments and sleep problems. From the students' statements, it was seen that their awareness of digital addiction was fully formed and they were able to reveal the negativities caused by digital addiction in people's lives in general and in their own lives in particular.

It was observed that students defined digital detox as a technology diet, that is, a set of rules or a guide that allows an individual to spend time for himself and his wishes by limiting the use of technology. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, digital detox is defined as individuals choosing to stay away from the internet with smart and mobile devices for a period of their lives in order

to focus on physical interaction and socialization and to reduce their stress (Göktaş & Ülkü, 2021). Schmuck (2020) defined digital detox as consciously staying away from smart devices and activities for a certain period of time. Syvertsen and Enli (2019) defined digital detox as staying away from online environments and digital media tools for a short or longer period of time and a practice that offers individuals ways to resist experiences in the virtual environment by restricting the use of digital tools.

Considering the impact of digital addiction on an individual's life flow and health, students listed the situations in which digital detox should be applied as when they spend a lot of time with technological tools and virtual environments and disrupt their responsibilities, when it causes disruptions in their social and educational life, when their health is negatively affected, when changes occur in their personality and character structure, and when they are not happy with real-life activities. In other words, it was observed that they stated that digital addiction should be applied when it starts to affect the individual's life negatively. The students stated that everyone, regardless of age group, needs digital detox today because it causes physical and psychological disorders in individuals, communication between individuals is broken, individuals do not spare time for their families, friends, and themselves, and especially children become asocial. Syvertsen and Enli (2019) examined the studies on digital detox and found that when people decide to do digital detox or decide that they need digital detox, they think that their daily lives and health are negatively affected. The study revealed that individuals believe that face-to-face (offline) communication is the communication in which they feel safe, that online communication pollutes their minds and makes their body image look unhealthy, and that online environments increase the stress level of individuals, so they want a life where everything progresses more slowly, is more realistic, and has a lower stress level. From the students' statements, it was seen that their awareness of digital detox was formed, and they were able to express their views on in which situations people should apply digital detox.

Finally, when the students' views on their experiences related to the digital detox process were examined, it was seen that it was a challenging but different, beautiful, and very useful experience that showed that digital addiction can be overcome with useful activities and that they evaluated it as an unfinished experience because they wanted it to continue for a longer period of time. While the students stated that the easiest applications that they found easiest during the digital detox process were reading books, not watching something while eating, taking up a hobby, and using a wristwatch, some students stated that there was no easiest application, every application was difficult at first, while the most difficult applications were turning off notifications of applications, leaving the phone in another room when going to bed, and reading books; on the contrary, it was determined that there were students who stated that there was no detox application that forced them. While some of the students described the book reading application in the digital detox process as the easiest application, the other part described it as the most difficult application. The main reason for this situation is that reading books is actually a personal hobby. Each individual has different hobbies or leisure time activities that they enjoy. The fact that students perceive and evaluate the book reading practice in two

different ways may be due to their different hobbies. Therefore, while planning the digital detox process, enriching the practices by considering possible personal hobbies may increase the success rate of the digital detox process.

In addition to these, students expressed that everyone should be made aware of digital addiction and detox issues for the digital detox application process and that everyone who wants to spare time for themselves and their environment should apply detox. Recovering from digital addiction differs from recovering from substance addiction in one point. An environment that completely isolates the individual with substance addiction from the substance can be prepared, and the individual can maintain the same isolation when he/she gets rid of his/her addiction. However, in digital addiction, which is a behavioral addiction, it is not possible for the individual to isolate himself from digital tools and environments in individual applications.

Anyone who wants to recover from digital addiction can reduce the level of addiction by participating in a planned practice or detox camp that provides complete digital isolation. Even if an individual trying to get rid of digital addiction is successful in the digital detox process, there is a high probability of relapse of the same addiction when he returns to his daily life. Because in the digital age, individuals cannot keep themselves away from digital tools and environments. This can cause addiction to be triggered periodically and even become chronic.

Although digital detox seems to be a very popular concept recently, it can be considered an effective method that individuals can apply to purify their lives from the negative effects of technology. People sometimes think that digital detox is a practice imposed by popularity. Sometimes they think that detoxing is a necessity because they realize that it negatively affects individuals both physically and psychologically, leaving no time for them to meet all their needs, from communication with their families or their environment to many activities that they can perform for themselves and their personal development. Regarding the digital detox practices that will enable individuals to take control of their lives, a more comprehensive and, if necessary, even a camp-like practice in which many activities such as sleeping, waking up, walking in nature, and reading books are planned in advance can be realized.

Ethics Committee Approval: This study was approved by Social and Human Science Ethics Committee of Atatürk University (approval number: 17 and decision 218 ; date: 16.11.2021).

Informed Consent: Written informed consent was obtained from the participants who agreed to take part in the study.

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Author Contributions: Concept – A.D., D.Ç.K.; Design – A.D., D.Ç.K.; Supervision – A.D., N.D.; Resources – A.D., D.Ç.K.; Materials – A.D., N.D., D.Ç.K.; Data Collection and/or Processing – A.D., D.Ç.K.; Analysis and/or Interpretation – A.D., N.D.; Literature Search – A.D., N.D., D.Ç.K.; Writing – A.D., N.D., D.Ç.K.; Critical Review – A.D.

Declaration of Interests: The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

Funding: The authors declare that this study received no financial support.

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