SOCIETY AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE NEW MEDIA AGE:

CHANGING COMMUNICATION FORMS, PLATFORMS, AND PRACTICES

ED: ONUR ÖNÜRMEN

PALET YAYINLARI

SOCIETY AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE NEW MEDIA AGE

Changing Communication Forms, Platforms, and Practices

Editor
Onur ÖNÜRMEN

PALET YAYINLARI ®

T.C. KÜLTÜR ve TURİZM BAKANLIĞI SERTİFİKA NO: 44040
ISBN: 978-625-5603-85-2

SOCIETY AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE NEW MEDIA AGE
Changing Communication Forms, Platforms, and Practices

Editor
Onur ÖNÜRMEN

Scientific Review Committee
Prof. Dr. Hakan AYDIN
Prof. Dr. Vahit İLHAN
Prof. Dr. Abdullah AYDIN
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Recep ÜNAL

Aralık 2025

www.paletyayinlari.com
bilgi@paletyayinlari.com
Mimar Muzaffer Mah. Rampalı Çarşı No: 42 Meram / Konya
Tel: (0332) 353 62 27

Tasarım: Palet Grafik

Baskı: Sebat Ofset
Fevzi Çakmak Mah. Hacı Bayram Cad. No: 57 Karatay / Konya
Sertifika Numarası: 74481

SOCIETY AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE NEW MEDIA AGE

Changing Communication Forms, Platforms, and Practices

Editor
Onur ÖNÜRMEN

YAYINLARI

FOREWORD

Like any work that focuses on technology, this study aims to both understand the current situation and provide a reference point for future research. However, in today's world where technology has accelerated time, so to speak, all these studies are also at risk of being lost in a whirlpool of information. Throughout human history up to this point, knowledge has always accumulated symmetrically through human effort. Although various innovations and inventions have occurred throughout history that have affected the dissemination of knowledge, these were not immediately available worldwide, but spread slowly. However, with the advent of internet technology and artificial intelligence, for the first time in history, humankind has lost control over the speed at which information circulates. A total bombardment of information has come to affect us all.

Even the novelty of the concept of “new media,” one of the most important concepts in the emergence of this process, is now debatable. The consensus on the concept of truth has given way to a post-truth form where everyone constructs their own truth. Therefore, technology has brought many debates into our lives. Precisely for this reason, approaching this new era from a multidimensional perspective will also be key to understanding it. For this reason, our book covers a wide range of topics, from health communication to public diplomacy, digital activism to artificial intelligence aesthetics, examining how technology impacts our life practices.

The book's first article, titled “Health Communication in the Shadow of Technology” and written by Faruk TEMEL, examines the paradoxical relationship between modern medicine and technology. The study critically examines how technology speeds up and facilitates medical processes while simultaneously weakening the human touch in the doctor-patient relationship. Questioning the role of technology in the processes of commodification and medicalization of health, TEMEL discusses how health communication remains under a

“shadow” on the fine line between digitalization democratizing access to information and creating information pollution.

Immediately following, İsmailcan DOĞAN's article titled “Public Relations Dynamics in the Public Sector in the Context of Digitalization” shifts our focus from the individual to the state. Examining how public institutions' relationship with citizens is being restructured in the digital transformation process, this study centers on the concepts of transparency, accountability, and two-way communication.

The next study is Metin EKEN's article titled “The Role of Media in Combating Islamophobia: A Model for the Political Axis,” which examines how technology transforms social prejudices.

This is followed by the article titled “The Visual Language of Digital Opposition: Internet Memes in New Social Movements,” in which Burak SOMUNCU and Mustafa TEMEL examine the role of internet memes (caps/memes) within the logic of “connected action” in today's world, where humor and visual culture have become tools of political resistance. Using various social examples, the authors discuss the power of memes in collective identity construction and the limits and possibilities of digital activism.

Another study, penned by Ömer Faruk KOÇAK and focusing on the experiences of young people considered natives of the digital world, is titled “Surviving in the Digital Age: A Qualitative Analysis of High School Students' Perceptions of Digital Risks.” This study reveals how Generation Z perceives risks such as digital bullying, technology addiction, and disinformation, and outlines their strategies for coping with these risks based on field data.

The study titled "Cultural Representations in Digital Marketing: Orientalist Codes in Cappadocia YouTube Videos,“ examines how tourism promotional videos on YouTube turn the East into a ‘mystical’

and ”exotic" object of consumption to meet the expectations of Western tourists through a semiotic analysis.

In her study titled “Visual Power On Social Media Platforms: Aesthetics And Manipulation On Instagram” Şeymanur KORUCUK SÖĞÜT critically examines how Instagram positions itself as a visual power field within the 21st century's visually-centered digital ecosystem and how it manipulates users' perception of reality. The article reveals how technical, algorithmic, and discursive filters combine to trap individuals in “filtered reality” bubbles and transform tragic events into objects of consumption within the framework of the concept of “aesthetic violence.”

Strengthening the theoretical basis of the study, author Efe Numan CAN discusses the final stage of media evolution under the heading “From New Media to Synthetic/Artificial Media.” Arguing that within the historical spiral of communication tools, the concept of “new media” has now been replaced by “synthetic media,” shaped by productive artificial intelligence and large language models, the author emphasizes that we have entered an age of “hyper-reality” where issues of truth, copyright, and ethics have deepened, and the boundaries between human and machine production have blurred.

Finally, Onur ÖNÜRMEN examines the practical implications of artificial intelligence in artistic production with his study titled “Algorithmic Sounds: Content Analysis of Turkish Songs Produced with Artificial Intelligence on YouTube.” The study, which examines these new forms of musical production ranging from cloning the voices of deceased artists to works composed entirely by artificial intelligence, also opens up discussions on topics such as nostalgia, copyright, and the loss of the “artist aura.”

Ultimately, the study attempts to explain that technology is not merely a “technical” process, but a phenomenon that guides and changes our understanding and behavior in many social and cultural areas, and that this situation has become inevitable in the first quarter of the 21st

century. Another important point to mention is that, as befits a book on technology, we used certain technological applications and software when translating the articles and indicated this. However, in the end, all authors reviewed their own translations.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the esteemed members of our scientific board, whose evaluations have contributed to broadening the scope of our book, to our authors for their dedication and meticulous work during the writing process, and to you, our readers.

We hope it will be useful to our academic field and our readers.

Onur ÖNÜRMEN
2025 - Kayseri, TURKIYE

CONTENTS

SURVIVING IN THE DIGITAL AGE: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF DIGITAL RISKS[14]

Ömer Faruk KOÇAK[15]

INTRODUCTION

The internet, recognized as one of the most significant technological revolutions of the 21st century, has brought about profound changes and transformations in nearly all areas of human life. Today, the internet has transcended its role as a mere communication tool, becoming a multi-layered sphere of life that spans from access to information and education to economic activities and social relationships. The relatively egalitarian structure it offers in accessing information has led to new formations in communication processes and social practices; thus, the dynamic structure of the internet, which permeates every area of life, has become increasingly stronger. In this context, it can be said that the internet has fundamentally transformed the ways individuals live, learn, work, and communicate. Due to its pervasive structure in all areas of life, the quantitative use of the internet is also quite widespread. Statistics on internet usage show that of the world's current population of 8.2 billion, 6.04 billion are active internet users, and 5.66 billion of these are social media users (https://www.worldometers.info/).

The impact of the internet on human life has reached a level unmatched by any previous communication technology; the increase in frequency and intensity of use has made individuals more

[14] This study was produced within the scope of the project titled "Digital Health Guidance Academy for Young Leaders", shortly known as SafeYou, funded by the European Union within the Erasmus+ Programme carried out by the European Union Education and Youth Programmes Centre. Chatgpt artificial intelligence application were used in the translation of this article.

[15] Erciyes University, Faculty of Communication
Orcid: 0000-0002-0152-5875

vulnerable to various dangers and risks encountered in the online environment (McQuade & Sampat, 2008; Wolak et al., 2006). Although individuals' attitudes toward this technology and their patterns of use play a critical role in determining the level of risk they are exposed to, it is evident that all individuals who actively use the internet have become potential subjects of different types of digital risks. Moreover, the continuous development and transformation of internet technologies not only increases the likelihood of existing risks emerging but also paves the way for the formation of new and more complex types of risks.

Digital life has become an integral part of the daily lives and social interactions of Generation Z, as it has for all age groups. The proliferation of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed children and young people's educational processes, entertainment habits, and forms of social communication; these technologies have become almost indispensable elements of their daily learning practices and life routines. Current statistics reveal that Generation Z accounts for nearly 40 percent of internet and social media usage (https://www.statista.com). This situation demonstrates that, while digital environments offer significant opportunities and advantages for young people, they also carry various risks and threats.

El Asam and Katz (2018) have developed four risk classifications (High-Risk Online Experiences) based on young people's experiences in online environments; contact risks (manipulation, deception, etc.); content risks (hate speech, violence); behavioral risks (online gambling, etc.); and cyber fraud (such as account hacking or identity theft) (El Asam & Katz, 2018). On the other hand, according to the Risk Typology created by the OECD (2011), there are four different types of risks that children may encounter in the digital environment. These are: content risks, behavioral risks, contact risks, and consumer risks.

Content risks are defined as the passive consumption of digital content accessible to all other users in the online environment by the child, or

the child's unintentional exposure to such content. Within this framework, four main types of risks are classified under the heading of content risks: hateful content, harmful content, illegal content, and disinformation. Each type of content poses different threats that can negatively affect the child's cognitive and emotional development.

Behavioral risks encompass the dangers arising from actions that children actively participate in or are exposed to in digital environments. This category includes hateful behavior, harmful behavior, illegal behavior, and problematic behavior generated by users. Such behaviors can arise from children's interactions with both their peers and other online actors and can have various negative effects on their psychosocial development. Contact risks refer to the risks arising from direct communication and interaction between children and other users in digital environments. This risk category is assessed in three sub-dimensions: (1) the child being exposed to hateful interactions in the online environment, (2) the encounter having the intent to harm the child, and (3) the act in question being prosecutable under criminal law. However, it has been observed that the motivations and consequences of behavioral and contact risks often overlap, meaning that an action can fall into both the behavioral and contact risk categories simultaneously. Children, as consumers in the digital economy, may also face various commercial risks. This risk category includes new and emerging risk types not covered in previous typologies. Children may encounter (1) online marketing messages inappropriate for their age (e.g., alcohol or other age-restricted products), (2) encounter content whose commercial nature is not easily discernible (e.g., product placements or dating services aimed at adults), or (3) are exposed to initiatives that could result in economic loss through the exploitation of their inexperience (e.g., online fraud), they face online consumer risks (OECD, 2011).

In addition to typology, content, behavior, contact, and commercial risk categories, it also identifies other risk areas that could have broad

and multidimensional effects on children's lives. Within this framework, three additional risk categories stand out: (1) privacy risks, (2) risks associated with advanced technology, and (3) health and well-being risks. Previously identified risk types, such as cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content, or online harassment, continue to exist, changing in nature in parallel with the evolution of digital technologies. In addition, different forms of abuse in the digital environment—such as sexual blackmail—continue to pose a serious threat to children. With the increasing complexity of the digital ecosystem, new types of risks have also emerged. The spread of misinformation and disinformation increases the likelihood of children being exposed to misleading information online, while peer interactions, where children's own digital behaviors leave them vulnerable, broaden the scope of behavioral risks. Additionally, today's children may be exposed to new marketing strategies based on commercial manipulation, designed with unclear boundaries, and blurring the line between commercial and non-commercial content. Furthermore, children are exposed to targeted advertising through the collection of their personal data; this raises various concerns regarding privacy, financial security, and online safety. The continuing risk of access to illegal or age-inappropriate products and services in the digital environment is also considered another factor that increases the vulnerability of children's online lives (OECD, 2011).

In terms of the current study, digital risks have been classified based on the relevant literature as digital addiction, digital bullying and violence, digital disinformation, digital security, digital hate speech, digital illnesses, and YouTubers.

Digital addiction refers to harmful levels of dependency on smartphones, computers, video games, and similar digital media tools. This concept, which encompasses various types of addiction such as social media addiction, smartphone addiction, and internet addiction, covers a wide range of problematic uses of digital technologies (Matei,

2013). Digital addiction is one type of addiction stemming from excessive or problematic use of digital technologies. Studies on digital addiction use terms that are synonymous, such as technology addiction, internet addiction, computer addiction, etc. (Singh & Pawan, 2009).

Despite the advantages offered by digital platforms and the positive effects of digital devices on productivity, an increasing number of studies show that individuals' use of digital devices has increased to a level that interferes with the functionality of daily life (Cash et al., 2012; Cho, 2015). In this context, internet addiction is defined as a behavioral disorder characterized by excessive dependence on internet use, loss of control over usage, intense and recurring cravings for internet access, continued use despite negative consequences of online activities, and uncontrollable attempts to access the internet when offline (Kuss et al., 2014).

It is emphasized that excessive or compulsive use of digital devices, especially among young individuals, leads to various negative consequences. These consequences include a decrease in face-to-face social interaction, reduced participation in community and school activities, declining academic performance, interpersonal relationship problems, health problems related to sleep patterns, attention, and learning processes, increased risk of obesity and depression, exposure to inappropriate content or individuals, damage to privacy and confidentiality, distraction, weakening of social skills, and negative effects on psychological or physical health (Chassiakos et al., 2016).

Cyberbullying and violence refer to a form of traditional bullying that has been transferred to the digital environment with the widespread use of information and communication technologies. Cyberbullying is defined as individuals using electronic communication tools to intimidate, threaten, or harm others; it constitutes a significant problem area in terms of online safety and psychosocial well-being in the digital age. The deliberate and repetitive use of computers,

smartphones, and other electronic devices to cause harm constitutes the core component of cyberbullying. In today's digital media environment, cyberbullying manifests in various forms, such as abusive or threatening emails, instant messages, sexually explicit images, manipulated videos, and derogatory posts. This misuse of information and communication technologies allows individuals to belittle, stigmatize, and psychologically harm others (Dhakshnamoorthi et al., 2024). Cyberbullying is also conceptualized as a form of online social bullying that includes different behaviors such as intentionally sending aggressive, threatening, or untruthful online messages, spreading personal information without permission, or damaging an individual's digital reputation (Rodríguez-Enríquez et al., 2019).

Cyberbullying is conceptualized as a form of online social bullying that includes various behaviors such as intentionally sending aggressive, threatening, or untruthful online messages, disseminating personal information without permission, or damaging an individual's digital reputation (Rodríguez-Enríquez et al., 2019).

The structure of the digital environment, which provides anonymity, ease of access, and speed, plays a significant role in the spread of cyberbullying. Social media platforms enable users to create, share, and rapidly disseminate content to large audiences, paving the way for cyberbullying to become more visible and effective. Many users do not sufficiently consider the psychological consequences their online posts may have on others—such as emotional distress, social withdrawal, or mental health deterioration (Mohinder Singh, 2019).

Research shows that exposure to cyberbullying leads to serious psychological consequences such as low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, decline in academic performance, and deterioration of social relationships (Kutok et al., 2021). These effects reveal that cyberbullying is not only a digital problem but also a critical risk area

in terms of the mental health, developmental well-being, and social participation of children and young people (Kutok et al., 2021).

Disinformation is considered one of the most critical issues of the digital age, particularly due to the speed and scale that social media provides for information production and sharing. While social media platforms offer significant opportunities for news dissemination, information sharing, and social mobilization, they also facilitate the rapid spread of false or misleading information to large audiences (Shu et al., 2017).

Digital disinformation arises when information produced in the online environment undergoes various manipulation processes, becoming distorted from reality, and this distorted information is disseminated to a large number of users. The internet's status as a difficult-to-control communication space causes misinformation to spread rapidly, which can have serious social, political, and psychological consequences. Such widespread disinformation often exploits the trust of social media users and the mutual bonds in their social relationships; it encourages hate speech through distorted content and can directly harm individuals or groups. The unprecedented increase in disinformation on social media platforms has made this phenomenon a significant threat to democracy, social justice, public trust, freedom of expression, journalistic ethics, and economic stability (Shu et al., 2017). In this context, disinformation is no longer merely a problem that leads to misinformation at the individual level, but is considered a critical risk category in terms of social and institutional security.

Digital security risks refer to threats that may arise on individuals' and organizations' information systems, network infrastructures, and digital data. These risks consist of multidimensional elements such as data breaches, malware, phishing attacks, social engineering, weak authentication practices, and lack of user awareness. In particular, individuals' insufficient level of digital literacy increases the impact of digital security threats, which has significant consequences in terms of

both personal privacy and corporate sustainability (Von Solms & Van Niekerk, 2013).

Digital security risks are not limited to technical vulnerabilities; they also increase significantly due to human error and low awareness levels. In particular, users' inadequate awareness of password security, authentication, neglecting updates, and social engineering attacks strengthens the impact of cyber threats. The literature indicates that individuals' low level of digital awareness increases security vulnerabilities and weakens the effectiveness of security policies (Bada et al., 2019).

Digital hate speech refers to all discriminatory, derogatory, threatening, or hostile statements made online against a specific person, group, or community. The transformation of interaction patterns on social media platforms has significantly increased the speed and impact of the spread of such speech. Digital hate speech not only causes harm at the individual level, but also threatens democratic communication environments by deepening social polarization (Mathew et al., 2019).

In academic literature, the fundamental motivations behind digital hate speech are generally associated with othering, political polarization, identity-based hatred, and the sense of immunity from punishment afforded by anonymity. In particular, the tendency of social media algorithms to promote emotionally charged content increases the visibility of hate speech and facilitates the online organization of hate groups (Brown, 2018). In this context, combating digital hate speech is possible not only through technical filtering or content moderation, but also through the development of digital ethics awareness, media literacy, and critical digital citizenship skills (Verduyn et al., 2020).

The increasing visibility of content creators in the digital media ecosystem has given rise to a new sphere of social influence, which has

brought with it various digital risks, particularly for young audiences. YouTubers play a significant role in shaping digital culture thanks to their online influence, wide audience reach, and economic motivations. However, the uncontrolled spread of this influence has paved the way for risks such as misinformation, encouragement of excessive consumption, dangerous challenges (challenge culture), and digital addiction (Burgess et al., 2009).

The algorithmic structure of the YouTube platform tends to highlight content that will hold users' attention for the longest time; this leads popular YouTubers to produce content that encourages risky behavior or spreads misinformation for the sake of the "click economy." Indeed, studies on young people show that YouTubers have a powerful influence on identity development, consumption habits, and value judgments. This influence can pose significant risks to digital safety and psychosocial well-being, particularly among adolescents, when the perception of digital role models is not balanced by critical thinking skills (Bärtl, 2018).

This study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of high school students' perceptions, experiences, and coping strategies regarding digital risks, following their participation in the Digital Health Guidance Academy for Young Leaders project, which provided training on digital risks. To this end, qualitative interviews were conducted with 13 high school students to reveal how the training process reflected on their awareness levels, behavior patterns in digital environments, and risk assessment practices.

1. METHOD

1.1. Research Model

This research was conducted using the semi-structured interview technique, one of the qualitative research designs. Qualitative research aims to deeply understand individuals' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes, examining phenomena in their natural environment

(Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). Accordingly, a semi-structured interview form was preferred in this study to enable participants to express their thoughts on the subject in detail.

1.2. Study Group / Participants

The study group consists of 13 high school students selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling allows for the selection of information-rich situations appropriate to the research objective (Patton, 2015). Therefore, when determining the study group for the research, care was taken to ensure that the participants were students who participated in the *Peer-Supported Education Program for Surviving* in the Digital Age, organized as part of the *Digital Health Guidance Academy for Young Leaders* project.

1.3. Data Collection Tool

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher. The interview form was created by reviewing the relevant literature, and its content validity was ensured by obtaining expert opinion. The questions in the form were designed to be open-ended, allowing participants to freely express their thoughts. The form consisted of 12 questions covering each digital risk and 1 question regarding whether there was a change in attitude before and after the training.

1.4. Data Collection Process

The interviews were conducted with the voluntary consent of the participants, at appropriate times and in accordance with the principle of confidentiality. The interviews were conducted in writing at the request of the students. The documents containing the interview questions were distributed to the students and asked to be filled out, and the interviewer provided detailed information on points that were unclear or required further clarification.

1.5. Data Analysis

The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive analysis methods. In descriptive analysis, data are organized within the framework of predefined themes and associated codes and interpreted with direct quotations (Creswell, 2018). In this context, six themes and nine codes were created in the study using the descriptive analysis approach.

2. FINDINGS

Meaningful statements for the research were analyzed from the written data obtained from each participant, and six themes and codes were created based on frequently repeated phrases and discourse.

Table 1: Themes and codes related to the interviews

Theme	Subtheme / Code	Participant Quote (Example)
Cyberbullying and Violence	Code 1: The Line Between Jokes and Bullying	"Sometimes people share things to be funny, but it really upsets the other person. I don't think that's a joke, it's bullying." (P3)
	Code 2: Audience Attitude	"I usually don't get involved because it makes the atmosphere tense." (P2)
Digital Addiction	Code 1: Awareness	"I'm on my phone for 6-7 hours a day. I know it, but I can't stop." (P1)
	Code 2: Self-Regulation Strategies	"Turning off notifications helps. I check it less when I'm out." (P4)
YouTubers and Digital Culture	Code 1: Content Quality Criticism	"Some people just make silly videos to get views." (P2)
	Code 2: Ethical Awareness	"I immediately leave any content that contains insults." (P5)
Disinformation	Code 1: Verification Methods and Difficulty in Detection	"I search on Google to see if other pages have shared it." (P3)

Theme	Subtheme / Code	Participant Quote (Example)
Hate Speech and Digital Ethics	Code 1: Respectful Communication and Sensitivity	"I block those who use profanity in the discussion." (P10)
Digital Security	Code 1: Use of Secure Passwords	"I don't share my password with anyone; I've enabled two-step verification." (P2)

Theme 1: Digital Bullying and Violence

This theme contains the participants' responses to questions aimed at revealing their views on the extent to which sharing, jokes, and online behavior in digital environments can be considered bullying. The theme has two codes: "the line between joke and bullying" and "bystander attitude." Participants' statements show that humorous content in online environments is not always a harmless form of entertainment; sometimes it causes emotional harm to the other party. Most students stated that the line between humor and bullying in digital environments can easily be blurred.

Code 1: The line between joking and bullying: Participant 3 (P3) explained this situation as follows: "Yes, sometimes people think they're joking, but that person is really upset. It's dismissed as a joke." Similarly, participant 7 (P7) emphasized that mocking photos and content, especially on social media, is a clear form of bullying: "Giving someone a nickname, mocking a photo, I think that's digital bullying. It's not a joke." Another participant, P10, drew attention to the context of the behavior, stating that jokes made in private settings are perceived differently from those made on social media: "It's not a problem when done among friends, but when done publicly on social media, it becomes bullying."

When the participants' statements are evaluated overall, it is seen that high school students are beginning to recognize the limits of humor in digital environments; however, they believe that some behaviors carried out under the name of "jokes" can unknowingly cross the line into bullying.

Code 2: Bystander attitude: This code covers participants' responses to a question aimed at revealing their reactions to incidents of cyberbullying occurring around them. Participants' statements show that although young people are aware of being sensitive to bullying in digital environments, they exhibit a hesitant and passive attitude when it comes to intervening in such situations. While some participants preferred to remain silent in the face of bullying, a small number of students showed a tendency to report the situation to an adult or react directly.

Participant 2 (P2) stated that they generally remained silent in response to bullying incidents around them with the following statement: "I usually don't get involved because the environment is growing, but I feel uncomfortable." Participant 5 (P5), who took a more active approach, shared an incident they experienced and reported it to their teacher: "Once, someone was excluded from the class group, and I told the teacher." However, participant 13 (P13) stated that although they tried to stand up against digital bullying, they did not receive support from their peers: "Sometimes I stand up against bullying, but my friends always tell me that I take it too seriously." When the participants' statements are evaluated together, it is seen that students have a moral awareness of digital bullying.

Theme 2: Digital Addiction and Health

This theme includes participants' responses to questions aimed at revealing their views on the frequency of digital tool use, screen time awareness, and strategies for coping with digital addiction. The theme has two codes: awareness and self-control strategies. Participants'

statements show that students are aware that their daily screen time is high; however, despite this awareness, they find it difficult to control their use of digital tools. Furthermore, it is seen that digital addiction affects not only academic performance but also physical and psychological well-being.

Code 1: Awareness: Participant 1 (P1) expressed that the time spent on digital devices is excessive and that this situation has turned into a psychological addiction as follows: "Sometimes it exceeds 6-7 hours. I don't realize how time passes when I'm on YouTube or playing games outside of class... I feel uncomfortable when I don't have my phone.“ Similarly, participant 6 (P6) stated that although they are aware of the need to control their screen time, this habit persists on its own: ”Actually, I open it to study, but then I switch to Instagram. My screen time increases, my eyes hurt. So I’m aware, but I can’t stop.”

Finally, participant 3 (P3) expressed their gaming addiction tendency as follows: "When I come home from school, I play games to relax, but before I know it, three or four hours have passed... I want to stop, but I keep going as if it were my duty.“ Participant 4 expressed that the phone disrupts their perception of time management: ”When I come home from school, I say I'll just check my phone for a bit, but before I know it, two hours have passed. Then I don't have time left to do my homework."

When participants' statements are evaluated overall, it is seen that high school students have a high level of cognitive awareness regarding digital addiction; however, they struggle to translate this awareness into action at the behavioral level.

Code 2: Strategies for coping with digital addiction: This sub-theme covers the participants' responses to a question aimed at revealing the strategies they have implemented or plan to implement to reduce digital addiction. Participants stated that they were aware of digital addiction and expressed that they tried various self-control and

environmental regulation methods to control this situation. Participant 4 (P4) stated that they used the strategies of turning off notifications and physical distancing to reduce digital addiction as follows: "Turning off notifications works. Because when I hear the sound, I reflexively look at it. I also try to go out on weekends to stay away from my phone." Participant 8 (P8), who tried a more radical method, stated that a short-term social media detox was good for them:

“I deleted Instagram for a week. The first two days were really hard, but then I realized it was actually unnecessary. It was better that way.” Participant 11 (P11), who mentioned using self-control tools, expressed that digital addiction had become a physical habit as follows: “When I heard about it in class, I set up time-limiting apps, but I didn’t really stick to them. My hand automatically reaches for my phone." When the participants' statements are evaluated overall, it is seen that high school students have developed individual awareness in the fight against digital addiction, but that this awareness needs more systematic support and guidance to translate into behavioral change.

Theme 3: YouTubers and Digital Content Culture

This theme includes participants' responses to questions aimed at revealing their views on YouTubers' and social media influencers' content production processes, ethical attitudes, and credibility. The participants' statements show that students have both admiration and a critical distance towards social media content creators. Participants generally stated that most content is focused on entertainment and popularity; however, it can pose problems in terms of ethical values and information reliability.

Code 1: Criticism of content quality: Participant 2 (P2) stated that social media phenomena's desire to attract attention overshadows quality in content production, saying: “Some are very high quality, but most just do silly things to attract attention.” Participant 9 (P9) questioned the authenticity of influencers by linking this situation to financial gain:

"There are good examples, especially educational content that is useful for lessons and other things. But most are doing it for money.“ Similarly, participant 13 (P13) emphasized that advertising content undermines trust: ”Some YouTubers I follow are honest, but sometimes I feel like they're lying in their ads."

When participant statements are evaluated as a whole, it is seen that students exhibit a dual attitude towards YouTubers: on the one hand, they enjoy consuming their content, while on the other hand, they tend to question the ethical and commercial aspects of this content.

Code 2: Perception of ethics and accuracy in digital content: This code reveals participants' views on how they evaluate ethical boundaries, accuracy criteria, and information reliability in the digital content they watch. Participants stated that they are aware of information pollution and manipulation, especially on social media, and that they pay attention to accuracy, reliability, and respect when viewing content.

Participant 5 (P5) expressed that when evaluating content, they first question whether the purpose is to inform or to advertise, stating: “I look at whether it provides real information or whether it is advertising.” Participant 12 (P12) demonstrated ethical sensitivity by stating that they stop watching when content contains hate speech or aggressive language: “If there are insults or hateful things, I usually leave immediately... It's usually gamer YouTubers... I don't like that kind of content.”

When participants' statements are evaluated overall, it is understood that high school students are ethically aware and seek accuracy when consuming digital content, but they are unable to fully utilize their critical thinking skills when faced with commercial or sensational content.

Theme 4: Disinformation (False Information)

This theme includes the participants' responses to questions aimed at revealing their awareness of fake news, misinformation, and disinformation content they encounter on social media. The participants' statements show that students are aware that they are frequently exposed to misinformation on social media; however, they use different and sometimes inadequate methods to verify the accuracy of this information. In general, high school students see disinformation as a significant digital risk, but they are unable to adopt a systematic approach to the information verification process.

Code 1: Verification methods and difficulty in detecting: Participant 3 (P3) stated that they refer to user comments and other sources to understand the accuracy of information: "I usually look at the comments posted under the news; people write that it's fake. Then I Google it to see if it's on other sites.“ Participant 8 (P8) emphasized that fake news is not easy to spot, explaining: ”It's not easy at all. Even the pictures look very realistic. People can easily believe it.“ Participant 1 (P1) stated that they assess reliability based on the format of the news: ”If the headline is very exaggerated, it's definitely fake... But when everyone shares that news, people don't suspect it, so it's hard to spot."

When the participants' statements are examined in general, it is seen that students rely on their own experiences in the process of recognizing fake news; however, verification mechanisms (such as fact-checking platforms or media literacy strategies) are not sufficiently known. This situation shows that young people's critical digital literacy skills need to be developed in the digital age.

Theme 5: Hate Speech and Digital Ethics

This theme includes participants' responses to questions aimed at revealing their views on how they maintain boundaries of respect in the face of disagreements in online environments and their level of

sensitivity to hate speech. Participants' statements show that students generally try to maintain a respectful attitude when encountering different opinions on social media, but in some cases, they find it difficult to control their emotional reactions. Furthermore, it is observed that students have developed a certain awareness against hate speech and feel uncomfortable, especially when confronted with discriminatory statements based on gender, religion, and ethnicity.

Code 1: Respectful communication and sensitivity: Participant 10 (P10) expressed distancing themselves from insulting language in online discussions with the following statements: "I try to stay away from arguments. But if someone insults me, I block them.“ Participant 4 (P4), on the other hand, emphasized that they value sharing ideas in online discussions but that ethical boundaries must be maintained: ”I don't usually say anything to anyone... I sometimes write my own thoughts. If they don't insult me, I continue to message them; if they insult me, I block them."

When participants' statements are evaluated overall, it is seen that high school students are aware of the need to maintain boundaries of respect in online interactions, but sometimes struggle with emotional self-control. Furthermore, participants' statements show that students have developed a high level of sensitivity to discriminatory and hostile content. Students emphasized that hate speech is attempted to be legitimized on social media platforms under the guise of “jokes” or “humor,” but that this is ethically unacceptable.

Participant 11 (P11) stated that hate speech is sometimes normalized even among friends, but that they react when they notice this: “Some friends joke around, but it's actually hate speech. For example, they make fun of Syrians a lot. I don't like it, and it makes me sad.”

Participant 9 (P9) stated that they used to ignore such speech in the past, but over time, they realized the negative effects of hate in the

digital environment: “I didn't care much before, I knew it, but after taking the training, I learned that it was called hate speech.”

When participant statements are evaluated collectively, it is understood that high school students view hate speech not only as a personal attack but also as a social ethical issue. This awareness indicates that young people are moving towards more conscious, respectful, and empathetic communication in the digital environment.

Theme 6: Digital Security

This theme includes the participants' responses to questions aimed at revealing their awareness of protecting their personal data in online environments, safe internet use, and dealing with suspicious digital interactions. The participants' statements show that students have a high level of awareness about the importance of digital security; however, some of their behaviors still reveal risky tendencies stemming from habit or curiosity.

Code 1: Secure password usage: Participant 2 (P2) stated that they took basic measures to ensure online security and expressed their attention to password confidentiality as follows: "I don't share my password with anyone. Two-step verification is enabled on my social media accounts, as was also mentioned in the training.“ In contrast, Participant 13 (P13) stated that despite knowing the importance of security, they continued some bad habits in their daily practice: ”I usually use the same passwords because I can't remember them, but I know this isn't secure. Still, it's practical."

When the participants' statements are evaluated overall, it is seen that high school students have a high level of knowledge about digital security, but their behavioral consistency is limited. This situation indicates a need for additional support and guidance in transforming cognitive awareness about safe internet use into behavioral habits. Participant 3 (P3) stated that they intervene directly in such situations and inform those around them: “I usually delete it right away. Once, a

message came from my friend's account, so I asked them, 'Did you send this?' and they told me their account had been hacked."

When participants' statements are evaluated as a whole, it is seen that high school students have strong digital security awareness but face risks based on curiosity and habit. This situation shows that digital security for young users is not only a matter of information but also a matter of behavioral self-control.

2.1. The Impact of Education on Participants

Under this heading, sample statements are presented regarding the results of whether there was a difference in the perspectives of students who participated in the training on digital risks before and after the training.

2.1.1. Digital Addiction

This theme shows that participants began to use digital tools more consciously after the training, gaining awareness about reducing screen time and controlling their online time. Students stated that they spent a long time in the digital environment without realizing it before the training, but that their self-control skills improved after the training.

- "Yes, I believe the training benefited me. Before the training, I never put my phone down, but now I realize how much time I spend on it and try to limit it (P3)."
- "Before the training, I wasted time on social media, but now I pay attention to what I watch and how long I stay on it (P6)."
- "After the training, I started monitoring my screen time. Previously, 7-8 hours seemed normal, but now I'm trying to reduce it (P11)."

2.1.2. Digital Security

This theme reveals that participants gained significant awareness about digital security after the training. Students stated that they acted more consciously after the training in terms of protecting their personal data, ensuring password security, and being cautious about suspicious links.

- "Yes, after the training, I understood how important password security is. I used to use the same password everywhere, but now I've changed it (P1)."
- "Before the training, I would immediately click on incoming messages, but now I think first. I check if it's really reliable (P8)."
- "I knew the importance of passwords before the training, but I learned about different protection methods (P9)."

2.1.3. Cyberbullying

This theme shows that participants gained awareness about ethical behavior and empathy in digital environments after the training. Participants stated that they realized that behaviors they considered "jokes" before the training could actually be examples of cyberbullying.

- "Yes, I believe the training made me more aware. Before the training, I didn't know that things done as jokes could actually be bullying (P3)."
- "Yes, I really liked the idea of responding to bullying with jokes. If it happens to me, I will definitely try it (P13)."

2.1.4. YouTubers and Digital Content Culture

Participants stated that after the training, they developed a more critical perspective toward the content of social media influencers and placed greater importance on ethical and accuracy criteria.

- “Yes, I think the training made me more aware. Now I don’t immediately believe everything I watch; I check the source first (P7).”
- “Before the training, I was just watching for fun, but now I try to distinguish between advertising and information (P8).”
- “I no longer believe everything YouTubers say. I can now tell what is exaggerated and what is real (P10).”

Conclusion

This study examined the perceptions, experiences, and coping strategies of high school students who received training on digital risks as part of the Digital Health Guidance Academy for Young Leaders project, using a qualitative approach. The findings reveal that digital technologies occupy a central place in young people's daily lives and, therefore, awareness, self-regulation, ethical attitudes, and safety behaviors regarding digital risks are critically important.

The students' statements show that the line between digital bullying and joking is often blurred and that young people are becoming aware of the emotional effects of this situation. Although some of the participants adopted a passive observer attitude in the face of bullying, it was observed that they developed a more sensitive and responsive approach after the training.

Under the theme of digital addiction, it was determined that students were aware of their excessive screen time but struggled to control it at a behavioral level. However, it was found that efforts to implement self-regulation strategies such as turning off notifications, social media detox, or physical distancing increased after the training.

In the context of YouTubers and digital content culture, students have indicated that they approach content creators with both interest and critical distance. They are aware of profit-driven, manipulative, or unethical content; however, it is understood that students still resort to limited methods when it comes to fact-checking.

The theme of disinformation showed that students recognize the prevalence of misinformation but lack systematic verification skills. Most students rely on search engines or user comments to verify information; professional verification mechanisms appear to be insufficiently known.

In the hate speech and digital ethics theme, students developed a clear awareness, especially after the training, regarding respectful communication and sensitivity; they stated that they understood that hateful content could have not only personal but also societal consequences.

The digital security theme revealed that students understand the importance of basic security measures but sometimes make risky choices in their behavior due to practical convenience. After the training, an increase in password security, personal data protection, and awareness of suspicious links was observed.

Overall, the study shows that digital risk education significantly increases young people's awareness levels; however, it also indicates that longer-term, application-based, and reinforcing training is needed for awareness to translate into behavioral change. In the digital age, young individuals need to develop not only technical knowledge but also critical thinking, ethical sensitivity, digital citizenship, and self-regulation skills.

In light of these findings, it is recommended that digital risk education be made continuous, family-school cooperation be strengthened, digital literacy programs be expanded, and, in particular, practical educational content on disinformation and digital security be increased. This study highlights the vulnerabilities of young people in the digital environment and serves as an important reference for policies, school programs, and media literacy initiatives addressing digital risks.

References

Bada, M., Sasse, A. M., & Nurse, J. R. C. (2019). *Cyber Security Awareness Campaigns: Why do they fail to change behaviour?* https://doi.org/10.48550/ARXIV.1901.02672

Bärtl, M. (2018). YouTube channels, uploads and views: A statistical analysis of the past 10 years. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, *24*(1), 16-32. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856517736979

Brown, A. (2018). What is so special about online (as compared to offline) hate speech? *Ethnicities*, *18*(3), 297-326. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796817709846

Burgess, J., Green, J., Jenkins, H., & Hartley, J. (2009). *YouTube: Online video and participatory culture*. Polity.

Cash, H., D. Rae, C., H. Steel, A., & Winkler, A. (2012). Internet Addiction: A Brief Summary of Research and Practice. *Current Psychiatry Reviews*, *8*(4), 292-298. https://doi.org/10.2174/157340012803520513

Cho, J. (2015). Roles of Smartphone App Use in Improving Social Capital and Reducing Social Isolation. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *18*(6), 350-355. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2014.0657

Creswell, J. W. (with Bütün, M., & Demir, S. B.). (2018). *Nitel araştırma yöntemleri: Beş yaklaşıma göre nitel araştırma ve araştırma deseni* (4. baskı). Siyasal Kitabevi.

Dhakshnamoorthi, T., Giriraj, M., Gokul, S., & Vanitha, K. (2024). Improving Cyberbullying Detection Accuracy with Advanced Machine Learning Models. *2024 8th International Conference on Computational System and Information Technology for Sustainable Solutions (CSITSS)*, 1-5. https://doi.org/10.1109/CSITSS64042.2024.10817024

El Asam, A., & Katz, A. (2018). Vulnerable Young People and Their Experience of Online Risks. *Human–Computer Interaction*, *33*(4), 281-304. https://doi.org/ 10.1080/07370024.2018.1437544

Hawi, N. S., Samaha, M., & Griffiths, M. D. (2019). The Digital Addiction Scale for Children: Development and Validation. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *22*(12), 771-778. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2019.0132

Https://www.statista.com/. (access date: 10.11.2025).

Https://www.worldometers.info/. (access date: 10.11.2025).

Kuss, D., Griffiths, M., Karila, L., & Billieux, J. (2014). Internet Addiction: A Systematic Review of Epidemiological Research for the Last Decade. *Current Pharmaceutical Design*, *20*(25), 4026-4052. https://doi.org/10.2174/138161 28113199990617

Kutok, E. R., Dunsiger, S., Patena, J. V., Nugent, N. R., Riese, A., Rosen, R. K., & Ranney, M. L. (2021). A Cyberbullying Media-Based Prevention Intervention for Adolescents on Instagram: Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial. *JMIR Mental Health*, *8*(9), e26029. https://doi.org/10.2196/26029

Matei, S. A. (2013). *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* , by Nicholas Carr. New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2010. 276 pp. $26.95. ISBN 0393072223 (hardcover). *The Information Society*, *29*(2), 130-132. https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2013.758481

Mathew, B., Dutt, R., Goyal, P., & Mukherjee, A. (2019). Spread of Hate Speech in Online Social Media. *Proceedings of the 10th ACM Conference on Web Science*, 173-182. https://doi.org/10.1145/3292522.3326034

McQuade, S., & Sampat, N. (2008). *Survey of Internet and At-Risk Behaviors. Report of the Rochester Institute of Technology*.

Mohinder Singh. (2019). Cyberbullying in the 21st Century: A Rising Threat to Youth in Digital Age. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, *11*(3). https://doi.org/10.25215/1103.306

OECD. (2011). *Children in the Digital Environment: Revised Typology of Risks*.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (Fourth edition). SAGE.

Reid Chassiakos, Y. (Linda), Radesky, J., Christakis, D., Moreno, M. A., Cross, C., Council On Communications and Media, Hill, D., Ameenuddin, N., Hutchinson, J., Levine, A., Boyd, R., Mendelson, R., & Swanson, W. S. (2016). Children and Adolescents and Digital Media. *Pediatrics*, *138*(5), e20162593. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-2593

Rodríguez-Enríquez, M., Bennasar-Veny, M., Leiva, A., Garaigordobil, M., & Yañez, A. M. (2019). Cybervictimization among secondary students: Social networking time, personality traits and parental education. *BMC Public Health*, *19*(1), 1499. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-7876-9

Shu, K., Sliva, A., Wang, S., Tang, J., & Liu, H. (2017). *Fake News Detection on Social Media: A Data Mining Perspective* (Versiyon 3). arXiv. https://doi.org/10.48550/ARXIV.1708.01967

Singh, A. K., & Pawan, K. S. (2009). Recent Trends, Current Research in Cyberpsychology: A literature review. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*.

Verduyn, P., Gugushvili, N., Massar, K., Täht, K., & Kross, E. (2020). Social comparison on social networking sites. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *36*, 32-37. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2020.04.002

Von Solms, R., & Van Niekerk, J. (2013). From information security to cyber security. *Computers & Security*, *38*, 97-102. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cose.2013.04.004

Wolak, J., Kimberly, J. M., & Finkelhor, D. (2006). Online Victimization of Youth: Five Years Later. *National Center for Missing & Exploited Children Bulletin*.

Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2006). *Sosyal bilimlerde nitel araştırma yöntemleri* (6. baskı). Seçkin.