

Understanding Risks and Crises through the Media

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INTRODUCTION

A THEORETICAL EVALUATION ON THE INFLUENCE AND EFFECTS OF MEDIA IN THE DIGITAL RISK SOCIETY

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Survival and safety have been a top priority for humans throughout history. Thus, the society reached a consensus where the state protects the members of the society from safety risks in return for certain freedoms. The perception of dangers as risks was introduced with modernity. In modern times, the individual became an active subject and was freed from the yoke of dogmas. Thus, individuals stopped resorting to mystical powers or religious elements to prevent the disasters and started to take responsibility for the consequences. This, on the one hand, led to individualization and isolation of the individuals, while on the other hand, it motivated them to act. The pre-modern danger became risks with modernity. For example, a pre-modern epidemic could have been considered fate; however, today, an infected individual during an epidemic could consider the authorities, irresponsible individuals, and other countries as perpetrators since they did not take necessary precautions. Literary narratives reflect the distinction between the pre-modern danger and modern risks. “*Macbeth*”, where the witches prophesied and induced death, depicted the pre-modern human-danger antagonism, while the relations and struggles between Tereza, Tomas, Sabin, and Franz during the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union in Milan Kundera’s “*The Unbearable Lightness of Being*” reflected the modern human-risk antagonism. The mystical powers were responsible for the disasters that befell the main character in *Macbeth*, whereas the cause of the problems experienced by the main characters in

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The Unbearable Lightness of Being was other individuals and states ruled by people.

Several philosophers such as Ulrich Beck, Zygmunt Bauman, Anthony Giddens, Deborah Lupton, Niklas Luhmann, and Mary Douglas analysed the society based on risk. According to Beck (2006: 330-337), the risk is indecision. The clash of risk cultures is the main conflict in today's society, which Beck called the second modernity. Risk-taking is the mode of existence and governance in the modern world. Global risks are the norm in the early twenty-first century. According to Beck, who argued that today's society is determined not by class conflicts, but by risks, measurability and calculation of risk were the integral parts of early modernity. In that period, the development and organization of the welfare state were based on legitimacy to protect its citizens against all types of dangers. In the second modernity, that is, in the global risk society, a world of uncontrollable risks has been experienced (Beck, 2002: 41). In the global risk society, risk became uncontrollable, unquantifiable, and unavoidable. Furthermore, the global risk society will even be more prominent as long as its existence is denied.

In a world where risk is uncontrollable, immeasurable, and unavoidable, it is important to investigate the relationship between risk and media, since both traditional and social media play a role in the reinforcement of social acceptance. In other words, the media is one of the building blocks of society. Although Cottle (1998: 25) argued that Beck's analysis on the role of media in the risk society was not adequately complete, Beck did not completely ignore the role of the media in the risk society. Beck (2002: 45) claimed that global environmental and economic risks are reproduced by the media. According to Beck, the news reports that include horrific images of terrorist attacks transformed the terrorist groups into global actors who compete with nations. Thus, the terrorist threat is reproduced. Furthermore, Beck (2006: 332-339) stated that the politics of fear is amplified by the media. Although the risks in Europe are much lower than in Africa or the Middle East, they are prioritized by the media. Also, the consequences of risks and disasters are loved by the media. Beck indicated that Hurricane Katrina and tsunamis entered every living room via the TV, which is a law of the global risk society. Furthermore, Beck (2011: 1349) argued that global crises depend on the global news media since global risks become global events when they reach the global audience. Bauman, on the other hand, argued that the risks portrayed by the media are rarely associated with the underlying causes of social problems. According to Bauman (2014: 28),

the most severe, exaggerated, and persistent threats broadcasted by the media are rarely the main factors behind social fears and tensions.

Other scholars have studied the relationship between risk and media after Beck and Bauman. The works of Denney, Arnoldi, and Brindle were central. Denney (2005: 83) claimed that the media sometimes minimize and in other times exaggerate the risks. Arnoldi (2009: 126-131) emphasized that for risks to become a topic of debate, they should be newsworthy, and news reports about risks generally favour the description of a guilty or responsible individual. However, this does not mean that events such as global warming were not covered because these are no one's fault. Also, for a risk-related news report to be of value, it should be current and talk about an issue that poses a threat to a section of society. Brindle (1999), on the other hand, argued that newsworthiness is higher when risks occur. For example, if the pilot is guilty of a plane crash, the news reports are centred on the pilot.

The studies on risk in the media have increased in recent years. Singer and Endreny (1994: 262-9) reported that the description of risk could change over time. Singer and Endreny determined that the news reports on abortion mostly emphasized the risks of illegal abortion for the mother in 1960, while the news reports in 1984 emphasized the risks of legal abortion for the fetus. Wahlberg and Sjoberg (2000) investigated the impact of media on risk perception and concluded that risk perception could be influenced by the media (more knowledge has a greater impact); however, the impact decreased with impersonal influences. Stack (2002) investigated the correlation between suicide as a risk factor and the media and concluded that suicides in media reports increased suicides in society. Binder (2012: 269) conducted a study on nuclear risk based on the view that the risk defined by scholars and the risk perceived by individuals could be different, therefore the risks are not static but variable. The study by Vasconcellos-Silva et al. (2015) studied resistance to vaccination and autism risk based on media. Johnstone (2016) investigated the representation of Alzheimer's disease in the media and euthanasia. Johnstone considered a risk as a construct in that study. Raupp (2014) conducted a study on the *Escherichia coli* epidemic in Germany in 2011 and concluded that both traditional and social media increased the risk. Rousseau et al. (2015) analysed the perception of media about swine flu in Quebec and France. They concluded that clear information and coordination between health authorities and the media led to preventive behaviour; however, exaggeration of the risks undermined the reputation of health authorities. Turancı and Biber (2021) investigated the presentation of health risks in newspapers and reported that

the concepts of "problem, harm, and loss" were used in the news reports, while medical terms were frequently included; however, almost half of these terms were not explained for laypersons and not all publications cited resources.

In my previous study (Kayihan, 2020), where I analysed the news report discourses and reception, the risks constructed by the society were reinforced by the news discourses and the current reception of the risk discourse in the news aimed to support political arguments that were not associated with the commercial profit or the risk. Furthermore, it was determined that perceptions of the individuals about the risk discourse could be preconstructed before they read the news; however, these could become apprehensive after reading the news, even the risks they approached with suspicion before reading the news. Thus, it could be suggested that people become afraid of risks due to risk discourses in the news, and they form or restrict their behaviours accordingly.

Recent studies have been conducted on both the impact of media and social media coverage about risks on individuals. Deborah Lupton (2016: 301) proposed that the new era could be described as the age of "digital risk society" due to digital surveillance and that the intersection of the risks and digital technologies was central to the risk and social media studies. Deborah Lupton argued that the phenomena perceived as risky were reproduced by digital media and emphasized that new technologies were novel sources of risk. Sun-Wook Yoo, Jarim Kim, and Yeunjae Lee (2018: 32-38) conducted an online survey on 498 women who followed the Purple Ribbon Twitter campaign (@pprb), a campaign for cervical cancer awareness, and reported that when individuals were exposed to health risks on social media, they sought information in other channels. Thus, it could be suggested that traditional media channels or interpersonal communication channels could still be effective on health behaviour. Therefore, to be effective on Twitter and other social networks, healthcare professionals should include hyperlinks to relevant websites or organize live chats with healthcare providers; furthermore, the information selection and transfer behaviour of healthcare communicators should be considered to improve knowledge acquisition. On the other hand, certain studies demonstrated that social media could be important in raising awareness about various risks. According to Stefania Vicari (2017: 12), Angelina Jolie's preventive mastectomy to prevent breast and ovarian cancer, and the New York Times' approach to this news, led to the so-called "Angelina effect" on Twitter. The Angelina effect emphasized and popularized the topic on Twitter, and her posts about her experiences increased Twitter

conversations about the issue. However, according to Vicari, the 'Angelina effect' was short-lived, a few days after the broadcast, the number of posts returned to regular levels.

Based on the above-mentioned discussions, it was observed that the analysis of the correlation between risks and the media is important in the risk society. Thus, the present book focused on the correlation between risk and media. It includes seven chapters. In the first section, Türkan Akyol Güner discussed the risks in digital media during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Akyol Güner, individuals have started to spend more time on digital media platforms due to the pandemic. This led to certain problems such as dependency, psychological problems, disinformation, and fatigue. Akyol Güner argued that fake news spread quickly on chat and communications platforms such as WhatsApp, especially during the pandemic, which the WHO christened as an "infodemic", leading to public health risks. Thus, it became important not only to protect bodies from the virus during the pandemic, but also minds against misinformation. According to Akyol Güner, a "Disinformation Control Unit" should be established to prevent or at least reduce disinformation. Furthermore, digital literacy and media literacy training should be planned to allow society to cope with fake news in collaboration with social media and verification platforms. Thus, public institutions should determine and implement related social policies. According to Akyol Güner, one of the most important problems induced by digital media during the pandemic was health problems. Significant fatigue after spending the whole day on online instruction and meetings, the need for rest after a zoom meeting and not wanting to talk to anyone after a meeting were among these problems. These symptoms experienced after zoom meetings, which became a significant part of our daily lives, were christened as Zoom fatigue by Stanford University scholars. Akyol Güner argued that Zoom fatigue was generally induced by four factors: excessive screen time, limited physical mobility, constant video watching in solitude, and high cognitive load for both senders and receivers. However, according to Akyol Güner, digital media also had positive effects on individuals in quarantine. Digital media provided significant entertainment and recreation opportunities during the pandemic. Thus, Akyol Güner emphasized that there should be a healthy balance between real and virtual life and individuals' digital literacy levels should be adequate.

Diretgen Ozan Ercansungur and Borabay Erbay, aim to discuss Beck's 'World Risk Society' theory in the context of digitalization, which goes beyond being a technological process when its effects are considered. First,

they start discussing Beck's theory of risk society and sub-politics, which is the determinant form of politics in the risk society. Then they discuss how digitalization turned into a societal space and the unique characteristics of this societal space. After these parts, the study proceeds with the relationship between sub-politics and digitalization, aiming to evaluate the effects of epistemological and practical processes on each other in a theoretical context under the light of risk society, sub-politics, and digitalization. According to Ercansungur and Erbay, the unifying foundation of the risk society is the risks themselves. Risks are beyond the boundaries of classes, ranks, or even states. Everybody feels threatened by these risks at different levels and for this reason, everybody feels like they have the right to be protected from them and to talk about them. Under the unification of risks, the whole world turns into a cosmopolitan public sphere. Moreover, the political issues specific to the risk society turn into tools of a process that we related with ourselves and whom we want to be. This is why the political action taking place in the digital space is nowhere near collective, even though it seems very vocal. Just as individualization is one of the most important factors in the dissolution and transformation of politics into sub-politics in the risk society, digitalization breaks up sub-politics by presenting this individuality at an extreme point. In other words, with risk society, politics morphed into complaining about things out loud, rather than putting up a fight against them. Thanks to digitalization, we can make these complaints independent of time and place, away from the necessity of being anywhere, simply through the screen of our computers or smartphones, in the comfort of our homes. According to Ercansungur and Erbay, just like every social action that takes place in the digital space; political actions that are taken within this framework are also affected by the features specific to this space. Therefore, when it comes to digitalization, political action becomes a personalized, independent, and individual action rather than a collective one.

Eric Ouellet conducted an analysis of media and experts' discourse in the context of a state's decision to engage military forces. Ouellet used a case study, which has for its starting point the Canadian federal election campaign of 2015, where the Liberal Party of Canada promised that if elected they would re-engage the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) in United Nations peacekeeping missions; Canada was "back" into supporting militarily the UN. According to Ouellet, institutional logic regarding peacekeeping is part and parcel of wider forces dominating the Canadian state, especially because of Canada's implicit grand strategy based on seeing the United States as both its greatest ally and greatest threat. Such threat is not made of any danger of aggression, but simply of being "stuck" in the

shadow of a superpower. It is in this context that peacekeeping became a tool for Canada to distinguish itself from the United States. Which mission, how many missions, how many troops, what kind of capabilities, etc., are in the end all secondary and elective considerations. Furthermore, it is important to underline that projecting a distinct image from that of the United States is for the most part directed towards a domestic audience, playing on rampant anti-Americanism that exists in Canada, especially among liberal constituencies. According to Ouellet, the old and somewhat implicit institutional logic justifying the use of peacekeeping as a domestic political tool might eventually become a far more publicly contested one through the Canadian media. The international environment is a lot less value-based and rule-based for Canada, through its recent dealings with Communist China, accessing COVID-19 vaccines, having little roles to play in the Asia-Pacific shift of power, etc. All this might force Canada to seek more real impact in the world to defend its interests. Moreover, Canada will be at a crossroad sooner or later: it will be freer to engage even more in the liberal-minded foreign policy of its own, but it can also decide to follow a more North American and somewhat isolationist path.

In the next chapter, İsa Demir discussed the 'gig economy', which is a part of the digital platform economy. Demir emphasized that in this new employment regime of low wages and temporary jobs without social security, the employee rights are at the mercy of the capitalist market. Furthermore, there is no state mechanism to protect individuals from the labour market liquidity, low wages, and unemployment risk. According to Demir, the risks associated with the gig economy have been neglected. However, risks such as employment without a standard employment contract or a full-time job, health insurance, pension, job security, and minimum wage are prevalent. Even in crises, the employee has no guarantee of survival. Risks are individualized. Especially in economic crises and pandemics such as COVID-19, several employees are left without an income. According to Demir, while digital labour markets are quite prone to risks in neoliberal economies, various media platforms hide or evaporate these risks. The media present these platforms as businesses that create jobs, encourage entrepreneurship and innovation, support creativity and allow individuals to become their own boss by offering flexible work hours. Employees are misled and manipulated by these conditions.

In his chapter, Cem Koray Olgun analyses the knowledge crisis in the digital age. For him, accessing knowledge in the digital age is both easy and complex. This problem can be addressed in theoretical and applied studies in different dimensions. In this context, his primary aim was to analyse the

knowledge crisis problem through an online survey prepared to understand the practices of accessing and using information resources. In this direction, the theoretical framework was formed from the theories of Herbert Marcuse and Manuel Castells. Olgun's data focuses on the knowledge acquisition practices of undergraduate and graduate students studying in Turkey. For Olgun, Knowledge's Image Value, Trusting User-Generated Content, and Access to Knowledge Practice factors are statistically significant for analysing these practices. Besides, beyond a statistical expression, this situation also shows the importance of the image value of knowledge, the prevalence of the tendency to use user-generated content such as blogs and Wikipedia, and the trust placed in these contents. On the other hand, the regression analysis shows that the practices of acquiring knowledge vary according to the education level of the students, and the practices of acquiring knowledge change as the education level rises.

The chapter authored by Hasan Yurdakul focused on the refugee identity, which is among the most important properties of the modern risk society. According to Yurdakul, refugee identity generally poses a bilateral risk. The first of these risks is the perception of the refugees as a threat by the local people and the second is the life, health, and accommodation risks experienced by the refugees and promoted by the first risk group but directly affecting the refugees. In the chapter, the reflections of the health risks experienced by the refugees, and in particular, the Syrian refugees, including the pandemic, in the media were discussed based on the case of Turkey. This chapter approached immigration based on two disciplines. The first was the sociological dimensions of immigration and emphasized Goffman's "framing" theory in preliminary risks. The other discipline was the media. In the chapter, the stigmatization of refugee identity in digital media was discussed as both a standalone problem and in association with health risks. Furthermore, according to Yurdakul, refugees have been embedded within a greater risk framework and identified as the main causes of social risks by the media.

The chapter by Hülya Biçer Olgun focused on the risks in the field of arts in the digital age. Biçer Olgun analysed the current status, risks, and crises in visual arts in the digital age and discussed the cultural products of the arts of the future. Criticizing the transformation due to the employment of digital technologies in visual arts and the crises and risks introduced by new technological applications (NFTs/crypto-art, blockchain, and digital art), Biçer Olgun argued that the struggles among the digital public actors continue. According to Biçer Olgun, although the digital public domain and the internet provided hope by eliminating institutional structures and

creating a free space, “struggle”, “illusion” and “symbolic capital” were also important. Biçer Olgun emphasized that social equality, sustainability, conservation of the planet, and meaningful human existence are important in the digital society. Since art is also included in this meaningful life, the contributions and the leading role of arts should be recognized. The position of arts in the Anthropocene or Capitalocene era should advance social transformation in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way. This would not be possible in a society where art leads to various risks as a social status object, a social/economic “interest/illusion”, a means of fame, a spectacle, or entertainment. According to Biçer Olgun, art as a cultural product should exist based on the approach that it should illuminate the future instead of turning the economic wheels.

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DIGITAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL RISKS IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

TÜRKAN AKYOL GÜNER*

Introduction

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an emerging infectious disease that quickly spreads around the world. This epidemic, which causes a severe acute respiratory syndrome, has had a significant impact on the global health, economy, and society as a whole. It went down in history as the biggest pandemic in the world. Preventive measures implemented locally, nationally, and internationally have now affected the daily routines of millions of people around the world. Social distance, the most widely used of such measures, aims to reduce new infections by reducing physical contact between people, resulting in decreased communication and greater online social interaction. With the pandemic, some of our routines have changed and innovations have entered our lives.

Especially, digital media has become the most important means of communication to disseminate information, coordinate medical resources, encourage public health campaigns, communicate between people, and distance education. In short, digital media played a very important role in the pandemic process. However, digital media has also forced people physically and mentally to face some risks. This study, it is aimed to examine the digital media reshaped in the COVID-19 pandemic and the digital risks that it will bring.

COVID-19 Disease

Throughout history, societies have witnessed various epidemics that cause serious health problems and deaths. Today, once again, the whole world is

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fighting an invisible enemy, the new COVID-19 virus, and is going through a very difficult time (Nadeem, 2020, 8). The first case of the COVID-19 outbreak was reported in December 2019 in the Chinese province of Wuhan. Due to the rapidly rising infection rates and deaths, the Chinese government quarantined the city of Wuhan on 23 January 2020 (WHO, 2020c). Then, growing cases worldwide prompted the World Health Organization (WHO) to announce a public health emergency on 30 January 2020. In February 2020, the WHO named the disease COVID-19 and described it as a pandemic March 2020. The virus that causes COVID-19 is nominated as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2); it was formerly described as 2019-nCoV (the novel coronavirus) (WHO, 2020d). After these dates, cases continued to increase in many countries and nations. The first case in Turkey was diagnosed in March 2020 and the cases increased rapidly after that date (COVID-19 Pandemic in Turkey, 2020).

Coronaviruses are similar to the influenza virus, due to its contagion and its high transmissibility and they have triggered epidemics, such as SARS-CoV in 2002–2004 (Zhu, 2004, 195) and the MERS-CoV in 2015. The coronavirus is less deadly compared to MERS and SARS. However, the rate of human-to-human transmission was found to be higher (Rothan and Byrareddy, 2020, 125). While I was writing these sentences, who knows how many people got infected.

The experience of these previous epidemics shows that a behavior modification to adopt protective measures is required, such as the use of masks, washing hands, individual hygiene, and social isolation, principally among the affected populations (Peeri et al., 2021, 721). As the case numbers increased, urgent actions and plans and the announcement of these plans were needed to prevent the epidemic and to introduce these protective behaviors to society. Media has the most important role in this process, especially digital media (Bao et al., 2020, 20). Digital media has suddenly become the first place to share all information and updates about COVID-19. Health professionals, sharing information about the prevention and treatment of COVID-19, explained that digital media is an ideal tool for communication (Statistics, 2021).

Digital Media and COVID-19

In the literature, media are divided into traditional media and digital media. Traditional media includes communication portals such as

newspapers, television, radio, and institutionalized structures. Digital media are defined as all forms of electronic data, including text, images, databases, audio, and video. This term also refers to the electronic devices that store the data and to the communication methods like email, text messages, and video calls. Thus, digital media has broadly used the term to include a range of technological devices, apps, social media platforms, social gaming, and especially communication platform (Couldry, 2013,4). Briefly, digital media is the contemporary name for digital content and digital devices like smartphones, tablets, computers, televisions, watches, gaming consoles, and even billboards. It provides fast, easy, and efficient transmission and distribution of content (Gupta, 2021).

Today, the use of digital media is increasing day by day. With the pandemic process, the increase in the importance and use of digital media has accelerated. In this process, digital media began to be used quite frequently for activities such as communication, receiving news, learning, chatting, and buying (Demuyakor, 2020, 5). During the social isolation experienced during this pandemic process, people started to spend a large amount of time on digital media, and it has become a popular aspect of life for many people today (Depoux et al., 2020, 145). COVID-19 has been referred to as a “digital pandemic” due to the multitude of information in various forms that have been circulated since it got first detected. As the number of cases increased, the information shared by all digital media platforms increased exponentially (Zhao and Xu, 2020, 12). Given that more than three billion individuals use digital media regularly and for prolonged periods, it becomes the primary source of information and communication, especially during pandemic process.⁵ Thanks to digital media, people can now easily reach each other and current news and can be informed about developments at the other end of the world in a short time. During the pandemic, people learned almost all the news through digital media (Zeballos Rivas et al., 2021, 158). For example; with the curfew and quarantine practices applied in China, it was determined that the daily time spent with digital media increased to a serious figure such as 5 hours. Again, to follow the latest developments in Italy during the pandemic process, it has been reported that there has been a 150% increase in the use of digital media. It was found that 48% of United States (US) citizens used digital media more than usual during this epidemic and read more online news in digital media (WPP Report, 2021).

It is also necessary for people to have enough information about the use of digital media that they use so often, that is, their digital literacy level should be sufficient. Digital literacy is the person’s ability to engage with

digital technology so that they can locate, use and create information. “It is also referred to the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when presented via computers, or to a person’s ability to perform tasks effectively in a digital environment” (UNESCO, 2013). Digital literacy needs to be developed for societies that are increasingly based on digital technology or considering situations where digital technologies will be used frequently.

As a result, digital media has started to play a role as an indispensable part of our lives in this new pandemic process. But, this situation has brought some risks with it, and these risks have been described as the dark side of digital media and solutions have begun to be sought (Swarnam, 2021, 147).

Digital Media’s Dark Side: Negative Effects of Digital Media on People

In the pandemic process, people are trying to get news, communicate, receive training, participate in distance work, organize online meetings, etc. due to the activities, people had to be constantly online. With the increasing time spent in digital media due to these situations, important problems have begun to occur in people such as addiction, psychological problems, misinformation, fatigue, etc (NWPC Blog, 2021).

Digital Addiction

With this pandemic and social isolation processes in an increasingly digitalized era, the progress of the digital era has accelerated. Curfews and social isolation measures have increased the forms of online entertainment consumption, especially using social media and playing digital games. According to data from a company researching digital media usage; during the pandemic, it was determined that 67% of people use digital media more than before, 44% spend more time on social media, and 36% play games for longer (Göker and Turan, 2020, 2). For these reasons, digital addiction is caused by the long-term use of digital technologies, which has become an issue that needs to be emphasized.

Addiction is the next stage of habit. Addiction is a process that refuses precautions, cannot be stopped even if it is harmful, and gives a feeling of intense pleasure. This sense of pleasure, which occurs during the addiction process can distract people from anxiety and tension when the substance is

taken or the behavior is applied. The emergence of digital addiction is largely due to this reason. Because the internet has a wide area of use that includes elements such as communication, news, and information, as well as entertainment and pleasure (Kayri and Günüş 2009, 168). With this feature, the risk of developing addiction increases in a person using the internet. In a study, it has been reported that digital addiction is common in addition to addictions such as alcohol and cigarette addiction, shopping, sexuality, and gambling and It has been reported that it creates addiction in the human brain (Cheng and Li, 2014, 759). It has also been determined that digital addiction, like other addictions, shows signs of physical and psychological addiction. Excessive preoccupation with the internet, increasing desire to use it, failure to reduce or quit using the internet, restlessness or anger when access is not available, having problems with family or the social environment due to excessive use, not wanting to communicate with people, experiencing psychological problems and asociality like symptoms are signs of digital addiction (Arisoy, 2009, 61).

In the pandemic process, it has become difficult to determine whether people experience digital addiction. Because of social isolation, people had to spend a lot of time with these technologies. In this process, it is necessary to pay attention to digital addiction whether it has been abused or not. It has been reported that by drawing a certain framework for the use of digital technology and using it accordingly, abuse can be prevented, especially in young people, who are the riskiest group for addiction (Aziz et al., 2021, 7).

During the pandemic process, studies were conducted on the use of digital technology and digital addiction. For example; It has been reported that there was a 75% increase in digital gaming activities at the beginning of the social isolation process in the USA, and similarly, digital gaming increased by 70% in Italy (King et al., 2020, 139). In another study, it was reported that pandemic restrictions increased the growth of the worldwide gaming industry rapidly and it was determined that digital game revenue increased by 29% in 2020 compared to the previous year (Kalfa, 2020). It was determined that 37.5% of university students, who are the riskiest group in terms of digital game addiction, played digital games for 5 hours or more during the pandemic process (Aktaş and Bostancı, 2021, 58).

This increase in the rate of digital gaming is desirable to announce pandemic measures. In this way, the health rules to be followed can be communicated to people through the game. In the pandemic period, digital games can be adopted as a coping strategy and message in the short term.

But, if it turns into a habitual coping method, it carries the risk of increasing addiction and related problems (Öztürk, 2021, 187). For these reasons, it is an issue that needs attention.

Misinformation / Information Pollution

During the pandemic process, while efforts are being made to treat existing patients and prevent the spread of the virus, new information is obtained, scientific studies are carried out and information is frequently updated. Information sources must be up-to-date and evidence-based to fully implement the right behavior at the right time related to the disease (Til, 2020, 56). But public data shared on digital media platforms around the world has been able to quickly spread information about the COVID-19 outbreak. And this information, which was spread without proof, often misled society (Li et al., 2020).

While the WHO engaged in intensive information activities to prevent misinformation about the epidemic, it started new studies by defining such information with the concept of "Infodemic". The WHO defines the concept of infodemic as "the great accumulation of knowledge that emerges during the epidemic, some true and some false, spreading rapidly like a virus and complicating the health organization" (WHO, 2020a). Another concept that came up during the pandemic process is the word "Disinformation", known as "referring to false or misleading information" (Liu et al., 2020, 112). In the pandemic process, "infodemic" refers to the information pollution in the digital media about the epidemic and its excess. It is observed that misinformation made during epidemic management can strongly affect people's behavior, complicate the pandemic process and create an atmosphere of panic among the public (Zarocostas, 2020, 56; Yang et. al., 2020). The WHO emphasized that the infodemic is at least as dangerous as the virus and declared that it threatens public health. In the research report of the Oxford University Reuters Institute, it was announced that 59% of the information on COVID19 is infodemic (WHO, 2020a). A study analyzing social media platforms found that misinformation is shared more than evidence-based information (Pulido et al., 2020, 388). Studies show that high exposure to COVID-19 information in digital media has negative consequences that lead to fear and anxiety (Zeballos Rivas et al., 2021; Limaye et al., 2020, 277).

Some Examples of Infodemics on the COVID-19 Process

Some of the infodemics widely known in the society: “The new coronavirus is not transmitted in hot and humid areas”, “Coronavirus dies in cold weather”, “Taking a shower with very hot water prevents catching the disease”, “Rinsing the mouth and nose with saltwater regularly prevents the new coronavirus disease” There are statements such as “Only the elderly and those with chronic diseases are affected by the coronavirus disease” (Mythbusters, 2021). This information has been refused by WHO and the public has been enlightened on this matter.

Misinformation about COVID-19 has led to incorrect practices that increase the worsening of the disease and the spread of the virus. For example, due to the infodemic in Nigeria, a drug used in the treatment of malaria and thought to be effective in COVID-19 was used in an overdose and resulting in a fatal outcome. In addition, false information that some anti-inflammatory drugs increase the risk of coronavirus infection has spread in society (Tasnim et al., 2020, 173).

Introducing himself as a doctor, Thomas Cowan, whose video was shared on social media platforms especially in America and Europe, claimed that the Covid-19 epidemic was caused by 5G technology, and this situation lowered our immunity and caused illness. For this reason, people have started to stay away from 5G technology (Euronews, 2020).

Another infodemic is that COVID-19 is transmitted through food. And there has been a claim that it is trying to spread especially with a beverage company. However, it has been stated by the Center for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) that there is no scientific evidence that coronavirus is transmitted through food (Ayдын, 2020, 83).

It is seen that false news can spread very quickly, especially on closed platforms such as WhatsApp. This situation, which the WHO called "infodemic" was expressed as an important problem by the official authorities and emphasized that it has become a threat to public health. Therefore, during the pandemic period, while it is necessary to protect the bodies from the virus, on the other hand, it has become important to protect the minds against false information. For these reasons, a "Disinformation Fighting Unit" can be established within the states to prevent or at least reduce disinformation. This unit can even work in cooperation with social media and verification platforms. In addition, for society to cope with this fake news, it is necessary to receive training on

digital literacy and media literacy. For this purpose, public institutions should determine and implement a social policy on the subject. As a result; it can be said that during the Covid-19 pandemic which has affected the whole world, the infodemic and disinformation in social media have emerged more seriously than in normal periods.

Psychological Effects

During or after any pandemic, people's psychological health is greatly affected. Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic will also contribute to the increased risk of psychological problems and disease. In the early days of the epidemic, the physical consequences of the virus attracted more attention and the mental health consequences were not emphasized. However, even after the pandemic is over, the psychological effects will likely last for a long time once we return to our normal lives. With the pandemic, access to news sources through digital media has increased and people have started to be affected more psychologically with every negative news received. At the beginning of the pandemic, the rapid and random burial of corpses after deaths due to coronavirus, the mass and cruel burning of the corpses in the middle of the street in some countries, the horrifying images are seen in hospital environments were watched by billions of people in fear and obscurity on digital media. This has led to an increase in other psychological problems in people who are already anxious (Usher et al., 2020, 317).

People tend to feel anxious and insecure when significant changes occur, even under normal circumstances. In pandemic situations such as infectious disease, when the cause, progression, or consequences of the disease are unclear, rumors grow and various psychological problems begin to emerge (Ren et al., 2020, 654). During this sudden COVID-19 pandemic, the mood at the global level has been fear and uncertainty. This mood has created an intense strain on people (Khan et al., 2020, 654; Rajkumar, 2020, 3). Considering that many people lost their relatives or were exposed to the news of the disease, risked losing their own life, and experienced social and emotional deprivation, it was an expected situation to experience high levels of anxiety (Allen et al., 2020, 234).

The sleep quality of individuals has been affected negatively by these psychological feelings experienced during the pandemic process (Xiao et al., 2020, 85). In an online survey done in Italy, sleeping disorders had increased with digital media usage during the pandemic (Cellini et al.,

2020, 125). Another internet-based study found a negative relationship between digital media use and sleep disorders, anxiety, and stress (Chao et al., 2020). A study reported that the increased use of digital media among the participants, it was stated that sleep quality and quality of life were deteriorated (Léger et al., 2020, 2). It has been reported that these problems are caused by repeated exposure to negative news about the pandemic through digital media (Pappa et al., 2020, 905).

It is not a new situation that situations such as being exposed to digital media for a long time and constantly following the news from digital media negatively affect human psychology. The same situations have been experienced in previous similar pandemics. For example, during the H1N1 outbreak, increased information-related uncertainty and feelings of uncontrollability were associated with higher anxiety levels and sleep disorders (Taha et al., 2014, 152). Likewise, a survey conducted with a nationally representative sample of United States residents during the 2014 Ebola outbreak revealed associations between greater exposure to Ebola-related news and increased levels of distress, worry, and sleep disorders (Thompson et al., 2017, 518). Considering the pandemic situations experienced now and before, it has been seen that it is inevitable to experience various psychological problems with prolonged exposure to digital media during social isolation and quarantine processes (Gao et al., 2020, 7). These findings support the hypothesis that repeated digital media exposure during the coronavirus outbreak may be associated with psychological distress (Garfin et al., 2020, 356).

Physical Health Effects

The excessive use of digital technologies and digital media during the pandemic can also increase the risk of physical problems. The most important of these is eye strain. Digital technologies, such as handheld tablets, smartphones, and computers, can hold a person's attention for long periods. This may lead to digital eyestrain. Symptoms of digital eyestrain can include blurred vision and dry eyes. Eyestrain may also lead to pains in other areas of the body, such as the head, neck, or shoulders. Taking regular breaks away from the screen may reduce the likelihood of digital eyestrain (Johnson, 2020). The American Optometric Association recommends applying the 20-20-20 rule to prevent digital eye strain. This rule includes after every 20 minutes of screen time, take a 20-second break to look at something at least 20 feet away (Silver, 2017).

Another major physical health issue is poor posture. Many people may experience poor posture while using digital technologies such as computers and mobile devices. Over time, this may lead to musculoskeletal issues. In a study in which the results of 5-year research was found that there was a positive relationship between long-term cell phone use and neck or back pain in young adults (Gustafsson et al., 2017, 210). Correcting posture problems while using digital technology can lead to improvement in neck and back pain. For this; while using digital technologies, the person should not sit in the same position for hours, should stand up and stretch regularly, and take short breaks every hour.

Reduced physical activity resulting from long-term use of digital technologies is also an important physical health problem. Most digital technologies involve inactivity. Longer use of these technologies leads to important chronic problems such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes (Makowsky et al., 2021, 10). Finding ways to take breaks from sedentary technologies may help promote a more active lifestyle (Lowe, 2021).

Zoom Fatigue

The coronavirus pandemic, which started at the end of 2019, continues to be a storm all over the world. The education process is also an issue caught in the middle of this storm. The Covid-19 pandemic has completely changed the way we view and interpret education (Bozkurt and Sharma, 2020, 125). With the closure of educational institutions and the interruption of face-to-face education to prevent social contact, the education of 1.6 billion students, which corresponds to approximately half of the students from all education levels, has been interrupted (UNESCO, 2020a). In line with the principle that education is a fundamental human right (UN, 1948), distance education applications have been applied by many educational institutions to compensate for the interruption of education due to the pandemic. The use of a video conferencing system, which is one of the digital media tools used in this distance education method, has increased worldwide with the pandemic and has become an almost mandatory application (Chiodini, 2020, 247). Videoconferencing was a critical tool that allowed schools and many businesses to continue working during shelter-in-place. In this process, training, meeting, conference, seminar, and home working systems have now completely switched to video conferencing systems. The most used video conferencing program in the digital environment is Zoom. Zoom has now

become an indispensable part of our lives. Zoom in particular helped hundreds of millions of people by making video conferencing free and easy to use (Lowenthal et al., 2020, 387). A prime example is a rapid rise in the use of Zoom, a video conferencing app, from approximately 10 million daily Zoom meeting participants in December 2019 to 200 million in March 2020. The following month, this figure had risen to 300 million. The UK cabinet and 90,000 schools in 20 countries were among new users of the app (Zoom revenue and usage statistics, 2021).

It has also been observed that this new and frequently used form of communication causes some problems in individuals. Examples of these are given as feeling quite tired despite spending all day on the computer with video training and meetings, needing to rest after the zoom meeting, or not wanting to meet with anyone after the meeting. These symptoms experienced as a result of zoom interviews, which have become an important part of our lives are named Zoom fatigue by Stanford University researchers. Although the researchers stated that this fatigue can be experienced in all video calling platforms, they preferred to call it Zoom fatigue. Zoom fatigue is defined that as a feeling of exhaustion from participating in video conference calls (Fauville et al., 2021, 265). It has been stated that zoom fatigue is generally due to four main reasons. These are an extraordinary amount of eye gaze at a close distance, limited physical mobility, constant viewing of self-video, and increased cognitive load for senders and receivers. To prevent this situation, suggestions were turning off your video in long-term interviews, moving at your desk, and leaving more for stretching (Bailenson, 2021, 25). Researchers felt it was important to create a scale to test these assumptions and a scale was developed to measure Zoom fatigue by Fauville et al. Until now, there is no research result on this scale except for scale validity and reliability. A previous study demonstrated that video conferencing increased cognitive load, compared to voice calls.

Not everything is bad, there are also positive effects of digital media on people in lockdown. Digital media is here to stay and can be a tool that is useful and efficient. The following positive functions can be served by digital media (Gupta, 2021).

a) Connection: Digital media, especially social media, if you can't interact face to face with people, can be a great way to stay in touch with friends and family during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, digital media can help us meet and find new people with similar interests. It makes the pandemic process bearable, which is quite boring.

b) Self-promotion/Marketing: Digital media can be a good way to promote your brand or company and to raise awareness of your interests, hobbies, or business ventures during the COVID-19 process. If used effectively in this process, it can be a way to improve your financial position and help future opportunities.

c) Positive Feedback: Digital media, especially social media, can positively affect our psychology. When you discover or achieve anything during the pandemic process, sharing it via social media and receiving encouragement and praise can positively affect your psychology.

d) Buying Anything: Since we cannot go out due to social isolation during this process, we can order food and other materials which are daily needs, without leaving the house, using digital media applications. This constitutes one of the most important measures to prevent the spread of disease risk.

e) Health & Well-being: In improving both their physical and psychological well-being, many individuals have found digital media helpful. For examples include applications, websites, and online forums that promote self-care and a healthy lifestyle and provide accurate information and strategies to help individuals create and maintain emotional wellbeing during the COVID-19 process (Swarnam, 2021, 148).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is indisputable that digital media plays an important role in the COVID-19 outbreak. In this process, it is used especially for increasing social solidarity, reducing chaos, educating the public on preventive measures and reducing the medical burden in health institutions, getting news, continuing the education process, communicating, and more. It has not only provided a new dimension to our lifestyle, but has also led to the development of communication skills, and worldwide accessibility. Surely digital media has downsides. But, when we use it carefully, we can see the innumerable benefits it offers.

Digital media has also provided a thousand ways of entertainment and recreation in this process. Amidst the criticism that it allows little or no physical exertion, digital media includes apps and devices created to provide many physical and fitness improvements. So, the basic rule is keeping a healthy balance between real and virtual life. We need to learn how to use it effectively instead of getting used by it. To have these

features, it should be ensured that people's digital literacy levels are sufficient. In this process, we have better understood the importance of giving education on digital literacy to society through digital media.

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