Connectist: Istanbul University Journal of Communication Sciences

E-ISSN: 2636-8943

İSTANBUL UNIVERSITY PRESS

Research Article

From social to digital inequalities: The use of new media by the poor in Eskişehir, Turkey

Toplumsal eşitsizliklerden dijital eşitsizliklere: Eskişehir, Türkiye'deki yoksulların yeni medya kullanımı

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Received/Geliş tarihi: 14.06.2022
Revision Requested/Revizyon talebi: 15.06.2022
Last revision received/Son revizyon teslimi: 09.12.2022
Accepted/Kabul tarihi: 02.11.2022

Citation/Atıf: Sutluoglu, T., Gokalp, E. (2022). From social to digital inequalities: The use of new media by the poor in Eskişehir, Turkey. *Connectist: Istanbul University Journal of Communication Sciences, 63,* 151-178. https://doi.org/10.26650/CONNECTIST2022-1130969

Abstract

This study focuses on the problem of digital inequalities and examines how having new media and the ability to use it are affected by age, gender, and socio-economic status over a sample of individuals living in Eskişehir where high levels of social deprivation can be found. This mixed-design study, based its data 415 questionnaires and 39 semi-structured interviews and was conducted in Eskişehir's Emek, Gündoğdu, and Sevinç neighborhoods, where most residents experience poverty. Quantitative methods are highly important in terms of revealing the accessibility and ownership aspects of the issue in studies on digital inequality. The study will attempt to use qualitative data to complete the general framework drawn by the quantitative data and present how social inequalities are reflect in online attitudes within the sample of the poor. Thus, the study aims to contribute to the literature on digital inequalities both in terms of methodology and sample. The results of the study show that second-level and third-level digital inequalities are both feed by inequalities in offline life and also feed them. New media play an important role in overcoming the walls built by low educational levels and economic constraints. On the other hand, socio-economic status affects thoughts about digital media, the skills and practices of using them, and the quality of the benefits gained by using them. This sample includes people who abandoned education at a very early age, and in this sample, marriage at a young age is common and poverty prevails, with an evident relationship existing between digital inequalities and social origin.

Keywords: Digital inequalities, new media, socio-economic status, poverty, Turkey

Öz

Dijital eşitsizlikler sorununa odaklanılan bu çalışmada, yeni medyaya sahip olma durumunun ve onları kullanma becerilerinin yaş, toplumsal cinsiyet ve sosyo-ekonomik statüden nasıl etkilendiği Eskişehir'de yaşayan yoksul bireyler örneğinde incelenmiştir. 415 anket ve 39 yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeye dayanan karma desenli bu araştırma, insanların çoğunluğunun yoksulluk yaşadığı Emek,

Gündoğdu ve Sevinç mahallelerinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Nicel yöntem, dijital eşitsizliğe ilişkin araştırmalarda, sorunun erişim ve sahiplik boyutunun ortaya konulabilmesi açısından oldukça önemlidir. Bu çalışmada, nitel veriler ile nicel verilerin çizdiği genel çerçeve tamamlanmaya ve toplumsal eşitsizliklerin çevrimiçi davranışlara nasıl yansıdığı yoksullar örnekleminde ortaya konulmaya çalışılmıştır. Dolayısıyla, Türkiye'deki dijital eşitsizlikler alanyazınına hem yöntemsel açıdan hem de örneklem alanı itibarıyla katkı sağlanması amaçlanmıştır. Araştırma sonuçları, ikinci düzey ve üçüncü düzey dijital eşitsizliklerin hem çevrimdışı yaşamdaki eşitsizliklerden beslendiğini hem de onları beslediğini göstermektedir. Yeni medya, düşük eğitim düzeyi ve ekonomik kısıtlılıkların ördüğü duvarların aşılabilmesi noktasında önemli bir işlev görmektedir. Buna karşın sosyo-ekonomik statü, yeni medyaya yönelik düşünceleri; onları kullanma becerileri ve pratiklerini; onları kullanmakla kazanılan faydaların niteliğini etkilemektedir. Eğitim hayatının çok erken yaşta terk edildiği, genç yaşta evliliğin yaygın olduğu ve yoksulluğun hâkim olduğu bu örneklemde, dijital eşitsizliklerin toplumsal kökenle ilişkisi net bir şekilde kendini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijital eşitsizlikler, yeni medya, sosyo-ekonomik statü, yoksulluk, Türkiye

Introduction

Which lives do digital technologies affect, and to what extent? The question, 'how digital inequalities are affected by and affect traditional forms of inequality such as gender, age, class, and education,' which was shaped by following the former inclusive question, is the main starting point of this research. The research aims to reveal both where the poor are positioned in terms of access divide, their status of having new media, their practices regarding these media, and the tangible benefits they obtain using the media. The study discusses how the first-level, second-level, and third-level digital inequalities appear in a sample of the poor in Eskişehir, Turkey.

While statistical data indicate that the population with access to the internet is constantly increasing (Internet World Stats, 2021), many studies show that economic criteria are no longer the only determinants of possessing media tools (Jackson et al., 2003; Ergur et al., 2009; Tondeur et al., 2010; Ergül et al., 2012; Bal, 2015; Wong et al., 2015). It is evident that the new media tools and environments, which penetrate every field of daily life, provide the opportunity to be involved in interaction processes at the global level by ensuring that social conditions such as old age, gender, lack of education, poverty and disability, which restrict the individual, are overcome at a certain level (Ergur et al., 2009). On the other hand, age, gender, education and class-based forms of inequality substantially change how and for what purposes new media is used. Digital inequality is a multidimensional problem that emerges in different ways according to geography, cultural and political structures and produces different consequences.

van Dijk (2006) notes that the problem deceptively seems to be almost solved for observers who look at the issue in terms of public policy, especially because more and more people access computers and the internet in rich and developed countries. Furthermore, even if the divide based on access to tools seems to be closing in developed countries, inequalities based on usage and digital skills are increasing. Internet usage is associated with several variables such as age, educational status, household income, and whether the place of residence is rural or urban (Negreiro, 2015; Perrin & Atske, 2021; Vogels, 2021). In this respect, the concept of digital inequalities that we refer to in our study has a multidimensional meaning content that covers the processes of two-way interaction between the possession of new media, practices of using them and the tangible benefits obtained by using them and the traditional forms of inequality, such as gender, age, class, and education.

This study with mixed method also aims to contribute the literature of digital inequalities in terms of its sample which enables to see how digital inequalities consolidate in the intersection of gender, age, class, and education. As will be mentioned in the following section, there is a significant transformation in digital inequality studies from 1990s to present. The in-depth conception provided by qualitative method makes it possible to portray the second and the third level components of digital inequalities in more details. How much the poor access to the new media, how they use it, and tangible gains they acquire from it enables to assess the issue as a whole with the mixed method.

First-, second-, and third-level digital inequalities

In the first period when the digital divide that was included in the literature in 1999 was discussed, in other words, the "first-level digital divide", the gap between those who physically accessed information and communication technologies, especially the internet, and those who could not was indicated. As of the 2000s, when internet usage became increasingly common, the concept of digital divide, which only refers to the distinction between accessibility and inaccessibility, has started to be replaced by the concept of digital inequalities, which provides a more appropriate scope to explain the multidimensionality of the problem, in the literature. This subject was discussed by different researchers under the headings of "From the 'Digital Divide' to 'Digital Inequality'", "From Unequal Access to Differentiated Use" and "Reconceptualizing Digital Social Inequality" (DiMaggio & Hargittai, 2001; Jung et al., 2001; Hargittai, 2002; Jackson

et al., 2003; DiMaggio et al., 2004; Selwyn, 2004; Halford & Savage, 2010). There are various reasons for the studies evaluating the problem through the distinction between accessibility and inaccessibility to be considered inadequate over time. Some of them are as follows: They evoke the delusion that inequality can be easily overcome (Selwyn, 2004), do not show differences in usage skills (Hargittai, 2002), and lead to technological deterministic evaluations that disregard the social consequences of usage and the social context in which technology develops (Jung et al., 2001). The 'digital divide' approach is inadequate not only because it proposes a technological solution to the problem of digital inequality with cultural, ecological, and economic dimensions and presents the internet and possession of a personal computer as a "magical" formula to overcome inequalities (Narin, 2021, p. 100), but because it assumes that social segments on the disadvantaged side of the gap are homogeneous (Arun & Elmas, 2020) and those who have equal access to technology benefit equally from the opportunities it offers (Özsoy, 2020). However, there are studies reporting that access to information and communication technologies functions as an additional mechanism that contributes to the reduction of poverty in rural areas of India and Mexico (Jensen, 2007; Tiwari, 2008; García-Mora & Mora-Rivera, 2021). In their research conducted in the Mexican countryside, García-Mora and Mora-Rivera (2021) revealed that the level of poverty was lower in households with internet access compared to households without internet access. However, the authors emphasize that access to all communication technologies, especially the internet, should be considered a basic human right that 'helps' to exercise fundamental rights such as education, health, and freedom of expression. Internet access alone is not a mechanism to reduce poverty; it is a way of preventing the existing social inequalities from deepening in the long run. Therefore, García-Mora and Mora-Rivera (2021) recommend the promotion of public policies that both improve internet access and enhance digital literacy skills. Briefly, the digital divide approach cannot solve skill inequalities and problems related to the quality of tangible gains obtained through usage. Moreover, in developed countries, the relative closure of the divide in access to technology has brought about the need for focusing on usage skills and differences (van Dijk, 2006; Negreiro, 2015; Perrin & Atske, 2021; Vogels, 2021). As of the 2000s, it was highlighted that the questions 'Who has access to them?' and 'Who uses them?' were insufficient, and it was also important to view digital skills that differed among individuals who had access to the digital world, and the differences here were mentioned by Hargittai (2002) as a "second-level digital divide".

According to the "second-level digital divide" (Hargittai, 2002), digital skills differ among individuals with access to digital tools. "Third-level digital inequality" (van Deursen & Helsper, 2015), on the other hand, is related to the results of technology use and the tangible benefits obtained from it. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" and the types of capital associated with habitus have become an important source of reference for research on second- and third-level digital divide. Habitus is the internalization and embodiment of "basic social life conditions in a way to turn into predispositions" (Swartz, 2015, p. 49). As Bourdieu says,

> Habitus are generative principles of distinct and distinctive practices – what the worker eats, and especially the way he eats it, the sport he practices and the way he practices it, his political opinions and the way he expresses them are systematically different from the industrial owner's corresponding activities. But habitus are also classificatory schemes, principles of classification, principles of vision and division, different tastes. They make dsitinctions between what is good and what is bad, between what is right and what is wrong, between what is distinguished and what is vulgar, and so forth, but the distinctions are not identical. Thus, for instance, the same behavior or even the same good can appear distinguished to one person, pretentious to someone else, and cheap or showy to yet another (Bourdieu, 1998, p.8).

Bourdieu (1997) distinguishes between three forms of capital (associated with the concept of habitus) that can determine the social position of people. The first is economic capital, which refers to financial resources; the second is social capital, which refers to social ties; the third is cultural capital, which refers to talents, tastes, and preferences related to fine arts. In his work titled "Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste" (1984), Bourdieu mentions the connection of culture with social class as follows:

> Similarly, listening to the most 'highbrow' radio stations, France-Musique and France-Culture, and to musical or cultural broadcasts, owning a record-player, listening ro records (without specifying the type, which minimizes the differences), visiting art galleries, and knowledge of painting--features which are strongly correlated with one another--obey the same logic and, being strongly linked to educational capital, set the various classes and class fractions in a clear hierarchy (with a reverse distribution for listening to variety programmes). In the case of activities like the visual arts, or playing a musical instrument, which presupposes a cultural capital generally acquired outside the educational system and (relatively)

> independent of the level of academic certification, the correlation with social class, which is again strong, is established through social trjectory (which explains the special position of the new petite bourgeoisie) (Bourdieu, 1984, p.14).

Furthermore, Bourdieu (1977, pp. 179-183) mentions the type of symbolic capital. Symbolic capital both depends on the possession of these types of capital – in other words, it can exist under different types - and can increase or decrease according to the way it is used. For example, symbolic capital, such as prestige or fame acquired by being attached to a family or a name, can be easily converted into economic capital and regarded as the most valuable form of accumulation in some societies. In his study titled "Reconsidering Political and Popular Understandings of the Digital Divide" (2004), Neil Selwyn states that differences in the skills of using new media may be related to the different types of capital suggested by Bourdieu. In this context, Bourdieu develops a new typology using the types of capital: (1) Economic capital required to access and purchase new media tools; (2) Cultural capital required to use them; (3) Social capital covering technological contact and support networks. In the conclusion section of his study, Selwyn (2004, p. 357) underlines that imagining an online world in which inequalities in the offline world are not reflected is an indicator of technological naivety. Ragnedda (2018) referred directly to Bourdieu's concept set with the concept of "digital capital" and approached the digital capital weakness in a way covering all three levels of digital inequalities. Ragnedda also refers to Weber's (1998) emphasis on "life chances" and states that digital capital is a "bridge capital" that provides the interaction between online and offline life opportunities. According to Ragnedda's (2018) concept of digital capital, the benefit obtained by using the internet depends on the interaction of individuals' existing capital and digital capital. While some users can convert their online activity into tangible benefits such as a higher-paying job over time, such a result cannot be mentioned for other users. Calderón Gómez (2020), in his research focusing on the third-level digital divide, emphasizes that although a more nuanced view of Bourdieu's model of capital is needed in today's society where traditional social bonds have been eroded, the concept of capital is still useful for understanding the reproduction of inequalities. Research results of Calderón Gómez (2020) indicate that young people with higher economic and cultural capital and more diverse social networks are advantageous in benefiting from opportunities in the digital world.

Aim and Methodology

The aim of this study is to contribute to the literature on digital inequalities both in terms of methodology and sample.

Aim

The literature on the subject indicates that the forms of offline social inequality resulting from gender, age, class, and education level affect digital inequalities, and digital inequalities also reinforce offline social inequalities (Hargittai & Walejko, 2008; Witte & Mannon, 2010; Ragnedda & Muschert, 2015; van Deursen & van Dijk, 2015; van Deursen & Helsper, 2015). This study, which examines the said cycle of inequality in the sample of poor individuals in Eskişehir, is a part of wider research that addresses the usage practices of the poor, including traditional media. However, this article focuses only on the following research questions.

R1: What is the level of computer, mobile phone, and internet access of the poor?

R2: Is internet usage associated with gender, age, educational status, and parents' educational status?

R3: How do gender, age, and education levels affect online practices?

R4: What tangible contributions do the interactions of the poor with the new media make to their lives?

Method

In this study, the mixed research method, using the research techniques of qualitative and quantitative methods together, was adopted. In the study, the explanatory sequential design was adopted. The quantitative stage was followed by the qualitative stage. Moreover, for this study, both types of data have equal methodological input and equal importance in terms of their contribution to the research analysis.

The sample of this study consists of the poor living in Eskişehir. The sample was determined by the purposive sample selection technique, one of the non-probability sampling techniques. Emek, Gündoğdu, and Sevinç neighborhoods in Odunpazarı district of Eskişehir, which

were thought to reflect the average characteristics of the low income and status group in the best way, were selected via the purposive sampling technique. The names of these neighborhoods were given by the district municipality authorities. A second sub-sampling was performed in the sample selection, and only individuals with a monthly household income of 4,500.00 TL (USD 916.74) or less from three neighborhoods were included in the study. In this study, poverty was discussed within the scope of an approach suitable for Bourdieu's conceptualization of economic, cultural, and social capital.

The study findings are based on 415 questionnaires and 39 face-to-face interviews held between July and November 2018. The questionnaires were applied in Emek and Gündoğdu neighborhoods. Before the questionnaires were applied, the neighborhood mukhtars were informed about the field study and asked for the names of the streets where the poor households resided extensively. In line with the information obtained, the quantitative stage of the study was completed with 228 women and 187 men aged between 14 and 80 years. The questionnaire consists of a total of 42 questions, including multiple-choice, open-ended, and Likert-type questions. In the scope of this article, only the questions about demographic information, possession of a computer, home internet subscription, possession of a smartphone, tools used to access the internet, and internet usage were included.

Sevinç neighborhood was included in the study during semi-structured interviews. The interviews held in Sevinç village proceeded with the snowball technique after a few households were indicated by the village mukhtar. Semi-structured interviews were held with a total of 39 people, including 22 women and 17 men. The ages of the interviewees ranged between 16 and 72 years. The interview questions were designed for the purpose of obtaining detailed information about the demographic characteristics and cultural capital of the interviewees, their practices and skills in using new media, and some questions emerged in the flow of the interviews. The interviews took about 40-45 minutes on average.

The data obtained from 415 questionnaires were analyzed with the SPSS software. The deciphered qualitative data of semi-structured face-to-face interviews were coded and classified by combining similar samples. Codes were grouped under broader themes. Qualitative and quantitative data were interpreted together in compliance with the mixed research design.

The demographic characteristics of the individuals who participated in the survey and semi-structured interviews are as follows. Of the participants surveyed, 54.9% were

female, and 45.1% were male. Their ages ranged between 14 and 80 years, 61% were married, and 33% were single. The monthly average income was 2,366.06 TL.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Individuals Participating in the Survey

	Participants
Gender	**n=415**
Female	54.9
%Male	45.1
TOTAL	100
Mean age	**n=414**
Arithmetic mean (X)	36.73
Lowest-highest value	14-80
Standard deviation (SD)	16.041 (mode=17)
Marital status	**n=415**
Married	61
% Single	33
Spouse deceased	4.3
Divorced from spouse	1.7
TOTAL	100
Average monthly household income TL	**n=415**
Arithmetic mean (X)	2366.06
Lowest-highest value	0-4500
Standard deviation (SD)	893.172 (mode=1604)

Of the participants, 6.8% were unemployed, 9.7% were retired, and 19.1% were students or preparing for university. Of them, 26.4% were included in the workforce, and 38% were housewives. While the total proportion of women stating that they contributed to the income of the house (employed+retired) was only 8.8%, the proportion of men in the same groups was 69.7%. More than half of the participants (58.8%) who were not students or preparing for university received secondary school education or below. While 17.1% of the participants were high school/vocational high school or technical high school graduates, 4.9% were higher school or university graduates.

Concerning parents' education levels, it is seen that primary school graduates constitute the highest proportion. While the proportion of those whose mothers are primary school graduates is 48.8%, the proportion of those whose fathers are primary school graduates is 53%. The total proportion of those whose mothers graduated from secondary school and below is 89.3%, whereas the proportion of those whose fathers graduated from secondary school and below is 84.7%. Those whose parents graduated

from high school and above constitute 10.6% (2.1% mothers and 8.5% fathers) of the participants.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Individuals Participating in the Interviews

Gender	Age	Marital status	Education	Occupation	Neighborhood
Female	16	Single	High school student	Student	Emek
Male	16	Single	High school student	Student	Gündoğdu
Female	33	Married	Primary school graduate	Housewife	Sevinç
Male	39	Married	Primary school graduate	Construction worker	Sevinç
Male	35	Married	Primary school graduate	Unemployed	Sevinç
Female	32	Married	Secondary school graduate	Housewife	Emek
Female	35	Married	Primary school graduate	Housewife	Emek
Male	17	Single	High school student	Student	Gündoğdu
Female	46	Married	Primary school graduate	Charwoman	Gündoğdu
Male	17	Single	High school student	Student	Emek
Female	60	Married	Literate without a diploma	Housewife	Gündoğdu
Male	25	Married	Secondary school graduate	Artisan	Gündoğdu
Female	25	Married	Secondary school graduate	Housewife	Emek
Male	19	Single	College student	Student	Gündoğdu
Male	41	Single	Secondary school graduate	Retired	Emek
Female	15	Single	High school student	Student	Gündoğdu
Male	44	Married	High school graduate	Retired	Gündoğdu
Male	40	Married	Primary school graduate	Factory worker	Gündoğdu
Female	28	Married	Secondary school graduate	Housewife	Gündoğdu
Female	15	Single	High school student	Student	Emek
Male	49	Married	Primary school graduate	Construction worker	Gündoğdu
Male	26	Married	Secondary school graduate	Factory worker	Emek
Female	32	Married	Illiterate	Housewife	Sevinç
Female	40	Married	Illiterate	Housewife	Sevinç
Female	26	Married	Primary school graduate	Housewife	Emek
Female	36	Married	Primary school graduate	Housewife	Emek
Female	38	Married	Primary school graduate	Housewife	Gündoğdu
Female	34	Married	Primary school graduate	Housewife	Gündoğdu
Male	17	Single	High school student	Student	Emek
Male	17	Single	High school student	Student	Emek
Female	28	Married	Literate without a diploma	Housewife	Sevinç
Male	- *	Married	Primary school graduate	Construction worker	Sevinç
Female	39	Married	Illiterate	Housewife	Sevinç
Male	17	Single	Secondary school graduate	Industrial worker	Emek
Female	51	Separated from the spouse	Primary school graduate	Charwoman	Emek
Female	- *	Married	Primary school graduate	Housewife	Sevinç
Female	39	Married	Illiterate	Housewife	Sevinç
Female	39	Married	High school graduate	Housewife	Sevinç
Male	72	Married	Primary school graduate	Retired	Sevinç

* Age information not provided.

Of the interviewees aged between 16 and 72 years, 22 were female, and 17 were male. One of them stated that she lived separately from her spouse, although they were married. Eleven interviewees were single, and 27 interviewees were married. Four were illiterate, and 2 were literate without a diploma. Fifteen interviewees were primary school graduates, 7 were secondary school graduates, and 2 were high school graduates. Three women were students, and 17 were housewives. Two of them expressed that they cleaned houses for a living. Six of the male participants were students, 6 were workers (plasterer, dozer operator, welder, etc.), and 3 were retired. One of them stated that he was unemployed. Fourteen participants earned the minimum wage (1,603.12 TL) and less (1 with a green card) as their monthly income, 10 earned between 2,000-2,500 TL, and 9 earned 2,600 TL and more. The remaining 6 individuals stated that they did not have a net monthly income.

This study, based on a doctoral thesis completed in 2020 at Anadolu University, Institute of Social Sciences and data collected between July and November 2018, was supported by Anadolu University Scientific Research Projects [Grant 1706E361].

Findings

In this section, the findings obtained in the study are presented under three main headings: (1) Poor Lives but Connected Lives, (2) Internet Usage, (3) The Relationship Between Digital Inequalities and Social Origin.

Poor lives but connected lives

Under this heading, findings on why the poor consider new media access and possession and use of new media important are discussed:

Computers, mobile phones, and internet access

About 2/3 of the poor households in the sample did not have desktop computers, laptops, and tablet computers. The proportion of households with desktop computers was 34.2%, the proportion of households with laptops was 28.3%, and the proportion of households with tablet computers was 29.1%. Of the sample, 50.5% had an internet subscription at home. More than half (75.2%) of the sample covering all age groups possessed smartphones.

The study results revealed that the smartphone (55.8%) was the most used device to access the internet. The smartphone was followed by desktop computer (17.7%), laptop computer (14.9%), and tablet computer (11.6%), respectively. Both quantitative and qualitative findings showed that the practice of accessing the internet from home changed. The widespread use of smartphones and the availability of internet access tariffs offered by every phone operator reduced the need for home internet. Indeed, the participants' statements indicate that the need for desktop computers has decreased after the use of smartphones. A 39-year-old mother living in Sevinç village stated that they canceled the home internet they had used for four years since children could access the internet for study purposes through mobile data:

> We have a computer at home …. I bought it on installment. Because he has a cell phone now, the computer is not used. (male, age 39)
>
> When the tablet computer was bought, they [children] left it [desktop computer]. (female, age 46)
>
> Participant (female, age 15): There is a computer but it is not actively used at present.
>
> Interviewer: What do you use when you study?
>
> Participant: I, the phone...

In poor households in Eskişehir, smartphones have become the primary means of internet access. Desktop computers are either not used or little used. On the other hand, possession of a desktop computer and internet access in poor households in Eskişehir are also associated with the presence of children and young people of school age, and this association is discussed under the next heading.

Computer and internet access in households with school-age children

The findings support the literature suggesting that access to new media is high in households with children of school age (Hoffman et al., 2000; Ofcom, 2021). The study by Hoffman et al. (Hoffman et al., 2000) also highlighted that the level of access and use of new media was particularly high in households with children under the age of seventeen. In the study, parents mostly showed their children as the reason for possessing

a computer and internet access from home. In poor households, the desire to meet the needs of children prevailed regardless of their socio-economic conditions. There is also an effort to protect children against external dangers behind this desire:

> I have not gotten the internet connected for almost three or four years, but I do not know what kind of games he [my son] plays in internet cafes. Therefore, we have decided to get the internet connected to the computer at home. At least, he will be in front of our eyes. (female, age 32)

> I already bought it [laptop] only for the children to play with it. (male, age 35)

Although parents show the existence of children as the reason for new media tools in the household, it can be mentioned that the internet is used by all family members and rather for 'personal' purposes. Similar findings were encountered in the study examining the media usage practices of the urban poor in Eskişehir (Ergül et al., 2012). The reasons why smartphones and the internet are considered important and indispensable by poor household members are discussed under the following heading.

New media's rank among necessities

The possession of new media is important for the poor, regardless of the current circumstances (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Ergül et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2015). What the poor people interviewed in this study stated about access to digital technologies reminds us of Banerjee and Duflo's (2011) article titled "More Than One Billion People Are Hungry in the World". In this article, the authors emphasize that there may be more significant things in the lives of the poor than food. The reason why they had such thoughts is what they observed in the Moroccan countryside. Poor families have communication tools such as television and mobile phones. There is a similar case in the sample of the poor in Eskişehir, and it is evident that new media tools such as smartphones are considered vital:

> I had a niece. We held her wedding. She got married. She tells her husband, 'You will buy me a brand-new cell phone!' 'I will have a computer and internet at home!' Why? 'Without them, there is no life!' …. They used to say to me, 'You will buy white goods, a sofa set, a car, a house!' Now, she says, 'I will have a mobile phone, a computer, and internet at home!' I mean, this is the reality. (male, age 39)

> It is indeed important in this era! It is important in this era since everything, I do not know, even our breathing now depends on a cell phone …. However, when you have a smartphone, you learn everything from it. I mean, everything. The only thing we cannot do with it is that we cannot eat or drink. Other than that, we do everything with it …. When there is no connection, it is all like New Era and Ancient Era. (male, age 35)

> I care more about the phone than eating or drinking because my family is not here. (female, age 40)

> If you were the head of a house or the woman of the house and if your child asked for something, would you go and get it or not? Whether or not I have it [money], I buy it. (male, age 40)

These findings create an optimistic impression regarding internet access at first glance, but the problem of access to new media continues to exist, as quantitative findings indicate. It was observed that the internet was used jointly in different poor households with kinship ties in Sevinç village. The cost of internet bills and the insufficiency of internet infrastructure services are also stated as access-related problems.

> Currently, we do not have it [internet]. Bills are quite heavy. (female, age 35)

> Bills [internet] are really heavy. We do not have kids who will go to high school. (female, age 32)

Accordingly, the problem of access is still a part of the digital inequality issue for some people living in the poor neighborhoods of Eskişehir. The differences in usage influenced by socio-demographic factors such as gender, age, and education level are discussed under the following headings.

Internet usage

The table (Table 3) showing whether internet usage is significantly correlated with some selected variables is presented below:

Table 3: Correlation of the Ability to Use the Internet with the Selected Variables: Chi-Square Test Results

	Ability to use the internet			
	n	x^2	sd	p
Gender	415	1.605	1	.205
Age	414	180.698	4	**.000**
Education	410	99.519	4	**.000**
Mother's education	365	62.422	2	**.000**
Father's education	371	90.531	2	**.000**
Significant for: α: .05.				

Despite a significant correlation between internet usage and age ($x^2_{(4)}$ =180.698 p.000<.05), education level ($x^2_{(4)}$ =99.519 p.000<.05), mother's education level ($x^2_{(2)}$ = 62.422 p.000<.05), and father's education level ($x^2_{(2)}$ = 90.531 p.000<.05), there is no correlation according to gender ($x^2_{(1)}$ =1.605, p.205>.05).

Of the sample, 75.7% can use the internet. Although there is no significant difference between the ability to use the internet and gender, the proportion of men (78.6%) who know how to use the internet is higher than that of women (73.2%). As the age increases, the proportion of those who know how to use the internet decreases, and as the education level increases, the proportion also increases. As the education levels of parents increase, the rate of knowing how to use the internet is seen to increase. The rate of knowing how to use the internet is higher in individuals whose parents are secondary school graduates or have higher education levels.

The relationship between digital inequalities and social origin

Demographic factors such as class, gender, age, and education level play a significant role in the emergence of digital inequalities (Hoffman et al., 2000; Zillien & Hargittai, 2009; van Deursen et al., 2017; Özsoy et al., 2020). When these variables come together, the individual may experience more inequality than the forms of inequality produced by each variable alone. The concept of "intersectionality," which Collins and Bilge (2016) used with a more political content by following Kimberlé Crenshaw's studies, seems functional for the phenomenon we are trying to emphasize under this heading. When these types of inequality come together intersectionally, the individual may experience more inequality than the forms of inequality produced by each variable alone. For example, according to the authors, race, class, gender, age, disability or ability, ethnicity, nationality, and religion are mutually constructed or intersecting systems of power (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 27).

In line with this literature information, the quantitative findings of the study showed that demographic factors were decisive on the state of knowing how to use the internet. Especially concerning the age factor, the studies conducted both in Turkey and different regions of the world show that the rates of using a computer and the internet decrease as the age increases (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2015; Küçük & Koçak, 2019; TURKSTAT, 2021). On the other hand, digital inequalities are a more complex problem that involves horizontal inequalities such as gender and education (Kim et al., 2016; Arun & Elmas, 2020; Binark et al., 2021). Age groups are categories that not only have biological characteristics but are also sociologically constructed (Arun & Elmas, 2020). The same also applies to gender categories. Socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, education, and income holistically determine the class-related position of the individual in society. Indeed, it has been elucidated that women who are illiterate or only literate in Turkey are not interested in sophisticated tastes and relevant cultural activities, and low cultural capital has turned into a preventive function for this social segment (Arun, 2014). Our study revealed that married women with low educational capital set a symbolic distance between them and social and cultural activities, which can be explained by Bourdieu's concept of "habitus". Habitus, which is decisive on the judgments about what is "reasonable" or what is "unreasonable" for people's current positions in the social world (Swartz, 2015, p. 148), enables evaluating dreams and expectations according to the probabilities of success that may be valid for people belonging to the same group or class. This is not a conscious but a practical evaluation, and this practical evaluation functions with a structure consisting of experiences, daily events, and ethical rules such as "such things do not suit us," as Bourdieu states (Bourdieu, 1977, as cited in Swartz, 2015, p. 151):

> Now, I have kids. There is no life, but my husband and I take the kids to a picnic (female, age 28)

> Of course, we do not have such a social life! We commute between home and school... <Talking about taking the children to school>. A housewife... <She laughs together with the neighbor>. More precisely, my husband did not let me go anywhere when the children were young, I did not learn any place. Just this year, I could learn how to get to and from the hospital by tram. But with my son. (female, age 36)

> I wish I were that lucky! <She laughs>. Where did that come from?! <She laughs>. I wish! <She laughs>. Only in this house, with those till the evening. <She shows the children and continues laughing.> We keep fighting... (female, age 32)

The qualitative findings of our study indicated that digital inequalities were also fed by class, gender, and educational capital. Cultural capital equipment acquired through education affects not only computer and internet usage practices but also the level of need for and thoughts about these tools. The need for computer and internet access itself arises as "the result of learning, the product of a certain habitus" (Ergur et al., 2009, pp. 100-101). The responses of some young participants indicate this. Selwyn (2004) points to the weakness of cultural capital, which is included in Bourdieu's typology developed using the types of capital and involves formal technology education:

> We used it [computer] for lessons at school. There was nothing else. (male, age 26)

> My husband taught me, that is how I learned it …. When I put the kids to sleep, I open a lullaby for them. (female, age 25)

> We are primary school graduates; we do not understand such things. (female, age 36)

However, poor young people who continue their education have a direct and close relationship with the new media:

> I can do whatever I want with the phone! I install navigation on my phone, and suddenly it becomes a trip computer. Or I install a music app, it becomes a music player. Or when I open a news site, it becomes a television for me. (male, age 17)

The elements of abandoning education early, poverty, getting married at a young age, and having at least one child are a threshold that draws the boundaries of youth. These elements deprive the individual of the practice and excitement of life, which involves a minimum level of dynamism, participation in cultural and social activities, and stepping out of the socialization environment the individual lives in. The same elements also draw the boundaries of the relationship with the new media. The findings of the study conducted by Cotten et al. (2014) with secondary school students also reveal that the socio-economic status (SES) levels of schools determine students' computer usage. According to the study, the age of starting to use a computer regularly differs in line with the SES level. Therefore, as the studies in Turkey indicate, it is not biological characteristics such as gender and age alone that determine the relationship of the individual with communication technologies but class-related positions as a

whole (Arun & Elmas, 2020; Özsoy et al., 2020; Binark et al. 2021). The inverse relationship between age and knowing how to use technology, indicated by quantitative data, does not match the qualitative findings under any circumstances.

The relationship between the purpose of internet usage and social origin

In their study titled "Internet Inequality from a Cultural Perspective," Witte and Mannon (2010, p. 114) report that high-income and well-educated Americans perform multidirectional online activities compared to poorer individuals with lower education levels, and those 'specific' online activities can be seen as a part of an elitist lifestyle from which the poor and the uneducated are excluded:

> Today's well-off, well-educated consumer looking for a new dishwasher doesn't just go to a couple of stores and pick the best model he or she sees. Rather, he or she "Googles" a product type, compares several models by features and prices, opens another browser tab and checks his or her available credit balance online, and orders the product online …. Thus, online activities leave different footprints on the lives of Americans and these footprints may vary with class position and social status. (Witte & Minnon, 2010, pp. 99-100)

The common emphasis of this and similar research is that the existing social inequalities are reflected in the online environment regarding access and usage skills, and the possible benefits of the online environment cause new offline inequalities. Our study demonstrated that the purposes of the poor to use the internet did not differ. The online activities carried out 'frequently' and 'always' are listed as 'listening to music' (44.5%), 'using e-school', 'e-appointment/e-government applications' (37.7%), 'following the news' (36.6%), 'watching movies-series' (26.3%), 'using internet banking' (20.1%), 'writing complaints or comments about purchased products and services' (11.4%), and 'shopping' (9%). In this case, the internet is mostly used for 'listening to music' (44.5%), 'using e-school', 'e-appointment/e-government applications' (37.7%), and 'following the news' (36.6%). The answer 'never' is mostly given for 'shopping' (60.2%), 'using internet banking' (67.4%), and 'writing complaints or comments about purchased products and services on the internet' (72.8%). Online behaviors can be perceived as clues about users' offline experiences, in other words, who they really are. In this context, mobile banking transactions are a practice that not only requires a better level of digital skills but also includes contact with offline social life. Therefore, the online practices of

married men, who are the main income provider of the household, are more diverse and more connected to social interaction processes. The benefits they obtain using new media are again limited to the framework drawn by their class-related positions:

> I drive a cab in my spare time. Finding maps and looking for addresses is easy there. I use it for that. And I also follow current news and stock market data. (male, age 41)

> If it [internet] did not exist, for example, I did not know about my past, which I now see on e-government …. But now, you can even see an execution directly [on the internet]. You can directly see the tax debt. You can see everything …. I can do anything. Whether it is about banking or the needs of my kids. (male, age 35)

> It [internet] facilitates our work. He [my husband] is looking for a job. He has already found two-three job opportunities on the internet before. (female, age 40)

According to Ragnedda's (2018) concept of digital capital, individuals turn their existing capital into online activities. In our study, using e-government applications or maps is an important example of the relationship between online practices and digital capital. These practices can be associated with men's participation in the workforce as the main income providers of the household and their connection with the social world outside the home. It was observed that many female users within the study area were not even aware of the existence of these practices. Being involved in the workforce, being involved in educational life, and being visible in the public sphere affect online practices. Poor housewives' online practices that are not multidirectional are mostly related to home life, which is their private space. Internet usage to look for handicraft samples and recipes stands out as an example of such online practices:

> If I am curious about a handicraft sample or a recipe, I check it there. It helps me. I used to go to a neighbor and ask her before. (female, age 56, housewife, questionnaire 240)

> For example, I can research anything that comes to my mind there [on the internet]. I do a lot of research, especially on recipes or, I do not know, religious matters. Because there is a lot we do not know. It is quite helpful for my daughter's studies. It really keeps my son busy. When I have work to do, it keeps him busy. <She laughs> …. If you say social media, I am not addicted, but I like research. (female, age 35)

> I mean, positively, you know, I have had a lot of friends …. We have groups. For example, I saw my primary school friends here again. (female, age 51)

When Witte and Minnon's (2010) approaches in the Weberian perspective, which addresses certain online practices as upper-class practices, are considered, it cannot be expressed that poor women have 'sophisticated' online practices. On the other hand, it would be wrong to claim that these practices make no tangible contribution to women's lives. A different study on the urban poor in Eskişehir evaluated the internet as a kind of 'window' or 'back door' enabling poor housewives to step into the public space (Ergül et al., 2012). Looking for handicraft samples on the internet or socializing in WhatsApp groups is highly valued by women, and new media tools and environments take them out of their limited social circles. On the other hand, the benefits they obtain using new media are limited to the boundaries drawn by their class-related positions, as is the case with men. Hence, the tangible benefits of technology usage should be evaluated in relation to the individual's class-related position.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study, which attempted to reveal the problem of digital inequalities in the sample of poor individuals living in Eskişehir, Turkey, show that the poor attach importance to accessing new media, but access problems still exist and are deepened in their usage practices. The findings obtained in this study were evaluated under three headings addressing (1) access, (2) usage, and (3) social origins of usage.

We thought that it would be appropriate to discuss similarities and differences between ethnographic media research conducted with a similar group in the same city and the results of our research before proceeding with this evaluation (Ergül et al., 2012). The said research, whose field study was completed in 2008-2010, shares many common results with our research. The most important result is the emphasis laid on the lack of analyses that do not address the basic needs of the poor in detail and do not discuss the relationship of the individual with the media in daily life and within the scope of the requirements of the age. This lack emerged most strikingly in the results given under the heading 'New Media's Rank Among Necessities' in our study. As in the past, new media tools continue to protect their vital importance, which keeps increasing, for the (poor) individual. Another point to concentrate on is that the proportions of households possessing computers (57%) and modems (47%) were considerably high in a similar sample in past years. This supports our afore-mentioned inference emphasizing the importance of new media in the poor's world, on the one hand, and forming a basis

for discussion for our study findings that reveal the relationship between usage differences and social origin, on the other hand. In the study mentioned, it was reported that diversified internet usage practices that would eliminate information poverty were not observed in poor households because online time was only and mostly spent on social networks, chatting and music download websites. On the other hand, the internet also offered different opportunities for the poor by allowing them to struggle with poverty, e.g., to look for a job, and be involved in new forms of socialization. The presence of non-diverse online practices is also an important finding of our research. In their study titled "The Cultural Consumption Practices of Older Homemakers in the Field of Television," Arun et al. (2017) stated that the owners of a voluminous capital tended toward more exclusive cultural products such as culture and art, discussion, documentary and news programs, and the same segments consumed the products of the groups who were hierarchically at a lower level. Omnivorousness, in other words, the combined consumption of programs corresponding to elite, popular and ordinary tastes is the monopoly of more voluminous cultural capital owners. However, those in the more ordinary and popular group of liking do not have such a consumption pattern. The authors express that the higher ones move downward at times, and thus the consumption parents are diversified, while the consumption patterns of the lower ones are more monotonous due to their class-related positions (pp. 395-397). This result indicates that a similar trend may apply to the consumption of online environments. Therefore, we suggest a comparison between different classes for future research.

Our study results support the literature suggesting that demographic factors such as gender, age, and education level play a significant role in the emergence of digital inequalities. The findings show, as Arun & Elmas (2020) emphasized in their recent research, that possession of new media and skills to use them is a class-related issue directly associated with a social origin. According to the results, cultural capital equipment acquired through education affects computer and internet usage practices, the level of need for and thoughts about these tools. The need for computer and internet access emerges as "the result of learning" (Ergur et al., 2009, pp. 100-101). While poor young people who continue their education lives have a direct and close relationship with new media tools and environments, the case is different for individuals who abandoned their education lives and got married at a young age. Education life includes poor young people in global interaction processes. Gender, economic limitation, and low education level determine the nature of the relationship with new media. Moreover, our research supports the literature suggesting that offline social inequalities and online inequalities feed each other. The online practices of married men, the main income providers of the

household, are more diverse than married women. However, the difference cannot be evaluated only by gender. Digital inequalities are experienced in the 'intersectionality' of different inequalities, as emphasized by Collins & Bilge (2016). The use of applications such as mobile banking and e-government is associated with the contact of men with offline social life. Non-diverse online practices of poor housewives are mostly related to home life, which is their private space. The involvement of poor women and men in online interaction processes through the internet is important, but the benefits of using new media are limited to the framework drawn by their class-related positions.

As a result, it is important to support the reductionist approaches that precisely draw the boundaries of the divide with qualitative research that clearly reveals the usage differences in terms of revealing the different dimensions of digital inequalities. Our study also revealed that digital inequalities experienced by individuals in the middle/middle-upper income and status group and digital inequalities experienced by individuals in the low income and status group should be discussed via comparative studies. Thus, it will be possible to make clearer identifications on the interaction between horizontal inequalities such as gender, age, geographical location, profession and class and digital inequalities.

Endnotes

1. In a qualitative study conducted with 18 educated and urban social network users in Turkey on the problems arising from using personal data in social media, a current component of digital inequality, Gökaliler and Saatcioglu (2020, pp. 154-161) report that 55.5% of the participants approve the privacy policies without reading them and feel uncomfortable while sharing their information since they think malicious third parties can reach their stored personal data. Therefore, all participants exercise self-control when it comes to sharing their personal information.

2. For the different articles based on Bourdieu's theory, see North et al., 2008; Zillien & Hargittai, 2009; Gencel Bek & Aygün, 2014.

3. Bourdieu makes use of Weber's concepts of "class" and "status group" and re-conceptualizes the relationship between these two in his own social class analysis (Swartz, 2015). For Bourdieu, social classes are also defined according to their relations with culture (Jourdain & Naulin, 2016).

4. Ragnedda et al. (2020) developed a Digital Capital Index to measure digital capital in their study titled "Measuring Digital Capital: An Imperical Investigation". Also, for a study conducted with 1075 participants across the country to reveal the media repertoires and digital capital levels of the elderly population aged 65 and over in Turkey, see Binark et al., 2021.

5. In addition to social inequalities, the different phenomena existing in social reality continue to exist in 'new' forms in online environments, where they can find space for expression. The results of the quantitative study conducted by Yıldırım and Yazgan (2022) with 411 university students elucidate that aggression tendencies are 're-produced' in the digital environment.

6. The indicative USD exchange selling rate published by the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey on 31.07.2018 was taken as a basis (Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey, 2018).

7. The fact that the mukhtar does not only correspond to an administrative position in areas where the traditional neighborhood culture is maintained but also meets the position of a reliable and elected community leader has been important for the trust relationship established between the researcher and the participants.

8. The status of Sevinç neighborhood officially changed from a village to a neighborhood with Metropolitan Law No. 6360. However, it actually maintains its 'village' identity. To separate it from Emek and Gündoğdu neighborhoods included in the study field, Sevinç neighborhood will be mentioned as 'Sevinç village' from this point onward.

9. The net minimum wage in 2018, when the field study was conducted, was 1,603.12 TL. The monthly household income of 83.4% of the participants is 3,210 TL or less. Of this rate, 32.3% is comprised of those with a monthly household income of minimum wage and below. The monthly household income of the remaining 16.6% is between 3,210 TL-4,500 TL.

10. The total rate of those involved in workforce is 26.4%. More than half of this rate corresponds to workers, with 19.9%.

11. Some examples are as follows:
    I am not getting it because I am not working currently. (male, age 35)
    Our monthly household income is uncertain because none of the family members work continuously. (male, age 19)
    Well, we do not have anything regular …. For about two months, God knows, my husband has not been working. (female, age 40)

12. Since the responses given to this question were analyzed as 'multiple response categories', the percentages reflect the distribution of responses, not questionnaires.

13. Considering overall Turkey in the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT) research, it is seen that the rate of households with internet access over mobile broadband was 79.4% in 2018 and 88.5% in 2021 (TURKSTAT, 2018; 2021).

14. For an example of research showing that the diversity of consumed cultural products and consumption channels largely depends on the cultural capital of the individual and is a result of the unequal distribution of not only economic capital but also cultural capital, see. Arun, 2014. The symbolic distance set by the female participants with low educational capital in our study between themselves and social and cultural activities is also discussed above.

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.
Conflict of Interest: The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.
Grant Support: This work was supported by the Scientific Research Projects of Anadolu University under [Grant 1706E361].
Author Contributions: Conception/Design of study: T.S., E.G..; Data Acquisition: T.S.; Data Analysis/Interpretation: T.S., E.G..; Drafting Manuscript: T.S., E.G..; Critical Revision of Manuscript: T.S., E.G..; Final Approval and Accountability: T.S., E.G.
Acknowledgments: The authors would like to express their gratitude to Dr. Hakan Ergül for his careful reading and commenting on this article. The authors also would like to thank the anonymous reviewer(s) of the article for their valuable contributions.

Hakem Değerlendirmesi: Dış bağımsız.
Çıkar Çatışması: Yazarlar çıkar çatışması bildirmemiştir.
Finansal Destek: Bu araştırma Anadolu Üniversitesi Bilimsel Araştırma Projeleri Komisyonunca kabul edilen 1706E361 no.lu proje kapsamında desteklenmiştir.
Yazar Katkısı: Çalışma Konsepti/Tasarımı: T.S., E.G..; Veri Toplama: T.S.; Veri Analizi /Yorumlama: T.S., E.G..; Yazı Taslağı: T.S., E.G..; İçeriğin Eleştirel İncelemesi: T.S., E.G..; Son Onay ve Sorumluluk: T.S., E.G.
Teşekkür: Yazarlar, bu makaleyi dikkatle okuyup yorum yaptığı için Dr. Hakan Ergül'e şükranlarını sunarlar. Yazarlar ayrıca değerli katkıları için makalenin isimsiz hakem(ler)ine teşekkür eder.

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