Digital Lives of Refugees: Their Use of ICTs in Türkiye

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Arguably amongst the ways refugees can adapt to the society they migrate to is their knowledge and competence in the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). One of the ways that refugees who had to migrate from their countries due to compulsory reasons could make their lives easier in the country they migrated to was the use of The Internet with the developing technology. In this study conducted to investigate the digital lives of refugees in Türkiye, purposive sampling was used, and data were collected from the study group through an open-ended questionnaire. 14 participants participated in the open-ended questionnaire and the data were collected face-to-face. The data collected from the participants through open-ended questionnaires were analyzed using the content analysis technique. As a result of the study, it was found that digital technologies facilitate the lives of refugees in Türkiye. According to the results obtained from the research findings, it was found that all of the refugees have internet access, they use ICTs in their daily lives for communication and for keeping in touch with family and friends, and they want to improve themselves in ICT use. Based on these findings, the use of ICTs by refugees emerges as a situation in which they want to facilitate their life in Türkiye.

Introduction

New communication technologies, which emerged as a result of the change and transformation in the relationship between human and technology, are present in every aspect of our lives. The increase in internet usage rates all over the world is an indicator of this situation. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), which have developed thanks

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to technology, and the new generation communication tools that they have added to our lives live in parallel with humanity (Artut, 2014). The Internet has led to the emergence of new communication channels and updated societies regardless of social, cultural, economic, and political structure (Maigret, 2013). With the rapid spread of mobile phones and The Internet, countries have turned into network societies and the world into a global village, and the 21st century has been defined as the "age of networks" (Dijk, 2016). In the 21st century, where technology is developing rapidly, individuals need to participate in technology-supported applications in order to compete with those who use new technologies to improve their work and lifestyles. However, not everyone has equal access to ICT. One consequence of this situation is that individuals with limited access to ICTs are not able to participate effectively in society compared to those without limited access (Soomro, Kale, Curtis, Akcaoglu, and Bernstein, 2018). The differences in the use of these technologies and group use have led to the concept of digital divide (Erçetin, Akbaşlı, and Durnalı, 2018). The concept of the digital divide refers to the gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographical regions at different socio-economic levels with respect to their opportunities to access and use both ICTs and The Internet for a wide range of activities (OECD, 2001). Indeed, economic size and wealth are the determinants of the digital divide between countries (Norris, 2001).

Throughout history, individuals have had to leave their countries for better conditions and continue to do so. These individuals have often been forced to try to make a life in countries where they do not speak the language (Susever, 2021). As a result, especially for international refugees, the conditions of migration, the practices of the destination country towards refugees, access to information on activities and cultural characteristics, and maintaining contact with family and friends left behind are important factors (Ros, Gonzalez, Marin, and Sow, 2007). Refugees need to establish a new life in the destination country to replace the life they have lost/left behind, and in this sense, they need to live, work, develop social relations and gain social acceptance in the new place (Biner and Soykan, 2016). When refugees experience difficulties in some areas of social life in their new settlements, such as communication and inability to adapt to the system, technology has started to gain a place for itself with increasing internet access (Susever, 2021). Developing technology has also drastically changed communication methods and techniques. At the center of the change is The Internet world, which means materials used for communication in the digital environment and easily accessible in any environment where The Internet is available, and individuals and civil society actors have emerged as a determining factor in global events thanks to digital media (Koçakgül, Pazarbaşı, and Birinci, 2018).

The Internet, which has become an important element in everyday life, is as important as basic needs in the lives of refugees. In the growing refugee crisis, organizations providing humanitarian aid consider the use of The Internet, mobile phones and various online applications, which are among the platforms included in ICTs, as a part of humanitarian aid. These technologies, which have become an integral part of life, also help individuals who have to live far away from their homes and countries to overcome the traumatic process they are in (Tağ Kalafatoğlu, 2022). Social media, mobile devices and similar digital networked technologies form the infrastructure of "digital transitions". When refugees use social media and networked technologies, they both produce and rely on the digital infrastructure of information flows. The digital infrastructures through which refugees interact with each other and with others through new technologies are also readily available for their surveillance and security (Latonero and Kift, 2018). Some studies reveal that smartphones, which play an important role in keeping in touch with their loved ones, are the most important tool for refugees and the first thing they need when they arrive in camps in Europe is a wi-fi

password. In other words, refugees need internet connection before basic needs such as water and food (Alter, 2021).

Various communication opportunities are used in order to solve the problems experienced by refugees, to adapt to the society and to minimize conflicts (Koçakgül et al., 2018). For this, refugees use ICTs to be informed about the documents they need and to receive the necessary services in an unfamiliar country. Thanks to applications that will prevent them from getting lost in bureaucratic processes and at the same time facilitate their work, they can quickly solve problems such as food, health, and shelter. In addition to these, access to information necessary for social integration through the use of new communication technologies is of great importance for refugees (Tağ Kalafatoğlu, 2022). There are also studies showing that digital technologies have become the main tool for refugees to access information and resources that can help them navigate the complexities of life (Kaufmann, 2018). At the same time, through the use of ICTs, refugees are able to meet other refugees, exchange information, and access needed information such as jobs and housing (Tağ Kalafatoğlu, 2022). However, the lack of digital literacy and accessibility among refugees and the associated risks of technology use can negatively affect refugees' participation in society (Alencar, 2020).

ICTs are the most important communication media affecting the whole life of individuals from education to health, from communication to socialization. Being able to use these communication media correctly is also important for refugees who have to migrate from their countries for compulsory reasons in order to adapt to the social structure. In fact, ICTs help refugees who have to live in other countries to cope with some of the difficulties of the countries they migrate to. When refugees encounter any problem in the process of getting used to the country they migrated to, they may be hesitant to ask for help from the individuals of the country they live in. For this reason, when there is a problem situation in their daily lives, they get support from digital technologies where they can access information from anywhere at any time to solve it. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the digital lives of refugees living in Türkiye, the most welcoming country for refugees in the world. In line with this purpose, answers to the following research questions were sought.

(1) What are the purposes of refugees' use of digital media (ICT) in coming to Türkiye?
(2) How do refugees access Internet in Türkiye?
(3) How do refugees' use of digital media (ICT) in Türkiye and in their home countries compare?
(4) What are the benefits of ICTs for refugees?
(5) What are the trainings on ICTs that refugees demand?

Method

Research Design

Basic qualitative research, one of the qualitative research models, constitutes the design of this study. The basic qualitative research design, which is widely used in educational research, is also called "basic interpretive qualitative research". In this research design, the researcher focuses on how people make sense of situations or phenomena. In other words, the researcher tries to reveal and interpret these meanings (Merriam, 2009).

Participants

In the study with 14 participants, participants were coded as K1, K2, K3... K14 in order to ensure participant confidentiality. The demographic characteristics of the participants are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Demographic Characteristics

Participant Code	Nationality	Age	Number of People in Family	Duration Lived in Türkiye	ICT's Used	Per Day Technology Use	Age of Child Using Technology
K1	Ukraine	32	3	1 year	Mobile Phone / PC	4-5 Hours	7/14
K2	Russia	36	3	7 years	Mobile Phone	1-2 Hours	
K3	Russia	38	2	3 years	Mobile Phone / Tablet PC	2-3 Hours	
K4	Russia	48	1	6 months	Mobile Phone / PC	6 Hours	
K5	Russia	67	2	3 months	Mobile Phone / Tablet PC	2-3 Hours	
K6	Uzbekistan	32	5	1 years	Mobile Phone / PC	2-3 Hours	
K7	Iraq	20	6	1 years	Mobile Phone	1-2 Hours	14
K8	Iran	60	6	5 years	Mobile Phone / Tablet PC / PC	3 Hours	4
K9	Kazakhstan	49	2	2.5 years	Mobile Phone / Tablet PC	5-7 Hours	
K10	Morocco	34	2	2 years	Mobile Phone / PC	5-7 Hours	
K11	Afghanistan	64	3	2 years	Mobile Phone / PC	3 Hours	5
K12	Afghanistan	29	2	4 years	Mobile Phone / PC	10 Hours	7
K13	Afghanistan	42	6	3 years	Mobile Phone / PC	3 Hours	8/10/15/16
K14	Afghanistan	45	4	7 months	Mobile Phone / Tablet PC / PC	Over 10 Hours	13

The participants receive Turkish language education at the public education center to facilitate their living in Türkiye. Data collection from the participants took place at the course center where they went for Turkish education. As seen in Table 1, the ages of the participants ranged between 20 and 67. It is seen that the majority of the participants are from Russia and Afghanistan, and most of them have been living in Türkiye for more than a year. Except for one participant living alone, the family population of the participants ranged between 2 and 6. It is observed that all participants own a cell phone, and the majority of them own a computer as well as a cell phone, followed by tablet ownership. It is noteworthy that all but two of the participants have a second or even third technological device other than a cell phone. All participants have mobile internet connection on their cell phones and wi-fi internet access at home. Participants' daily technology usage time varies from a minimum of one hour to 11 hours or more. It can be said that the average daily technology usage time is around 3 hours. Apart from the participants themselves, it was observed that their children, whose ages ranged between 4 and 16, also used these technological tools at home.

Data Collection Tool

Data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire. Open-ended survey questions are the type of questions that the user can explain himself/herself most easily in the interview. The respondent answers the question by using his/her own words and expressions. In other words, the interviewee is free to respond to these questions in the style and subjectively (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013).

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyze the data collected through the open-ended questionnaire. Content analysis method is used to discover the worlds of symbols, thoughts, meanings, and ideas in texts such as documents, videos, audio, visuals, etc. Content analysis, which is an analysis method used to discover the meanings in the text, provides a cultural and non-generalized perspective (Neuman, 2012). Based on the descriptive and detailed data collected, the researcher is in an effort to discover themes related to the problem, to transform the data obtained into meaningful and systematic structures, that is, to create a theory or verify a theory based on these data (Baltacı, 2017).

Validity and Reliability

Within the scope of the study, participants were informed about the research. The interviews and data collection process were carried out on the basis of complete voluntariness and confidentiality. During the researcher observation process, preliminary information about the participants was collected and interview questions were prepared considering this information. The interview questions were prepared by experts in the field and common themes were determined based on consensus with the experts. Participant information was kept confidential throughout the study and the codes determined for the participants were used.

For the reliability calculation of the study, the formula of Miles & Huberman (1994: 64) formula was used.

Reliability = Agreement / (Agreement + Disagreement) X 100

As a result of the calculations made, the reliability of the research was found to be above 80% on the basis of interview questions.

Findings

In this section, the findings and interpretations obtained as a result of the data analysis are presented according to each sub-problem respectively.

Purposes of refugees' use of technology in coming to Türkiye

In the research on the digital lives of refugees in Türkiye, the purpose of technology use and participant codes are tabulated together and presented in Table 2 in order to answer the question "What are the purposes of technology use in the process of refugees coming to Türkiye?".

Table 2. Purposes of refugees' technology use in coming to Türkiye

The Purpose of Technology Use	Participant
Communication and communications	K1, K3, K4, K5, K6, K7, K8, K9, K10, K11, K12, K13, K14
Online school	K1, K7
Language learning	K1, K2
Shopping and e-commerce	K1, K2, K6, K8, K10
Acquiring information	K4, K2, K8, K9, K10, K11, K13, K14
Social Media (Instagram, Youtube)	K1, K2, K3, K4, K5, K6, K9, K10, K14
Spending time (watching TV series and movies, reading books)	K1, K2, K3, K4, K7, K12, K13

As seen in Table 2, it is seen that the most common purpose of using technology during coming to Türkiye is "communication ". The participants who used technology for "communication " stated that they mostly made video calls with their family and friends via Whatsapp and Telegram, and that they could receive news from their homeland at any time and that this made their lives easier. In addition, it was determined that technology is frequently used for "social media, obtaining information and spending time". Participants who use technology for "social media, obtaining information and spending time" stated that they can follow the developments all over the world, especially watch TV series and movies on The Internet to spend time, and also read books to complete the information they lack for the continuation of their education life. On the other hand, they stated that The Internet contributed significantly to their lives in order to spend time while they were unfamiliar with Türkiye and that life would be difficult without The Internet. Another purpose of use of refugees is "shopping and e-commerce". Participants who used The Internet for "shopping and e-commerce" stated that they were able to shop online without leaving home during the process of adaptation to Türkiye. Especially refugees from some countries stated that they learned to read and write after they arrived in Türkiye, and that they were shy in the process of communication with other people during this learning process, and that being able to shop online made them feel comfortable and safe. Some refugees also stated that they sell products over The Internet in order to sustain their lives and that they have their own online stores. It was observed that the least frequent use of technology was for "online school and language learning". Participants who used technology for "online school and language learning" stated that they received education by attending online courses over The Internet, received language training from platforms such as YouTube in order to learn Turkish language and complete their own deficiencies, and learned unfamiliar words by using translation programs such as translate.

Status of internet access of refugees in Türkiye

In the research on the digital lives of refugees in Türkiye, internet access status and participant codes were tabulated together in order to seek answers to the questions related to the sub-objective "What is the distribution of internet usage status of refugees in Türkiye?" (Table 3).

Table 3. Internet usage in Türkiye

Access to The Internet	Participant
Mobile internet	K1, K2, K3, K4, K5, K6, K7, K8, K9, K10, K12, K14
Home wi-fi usage	K1, K2, K3, K6, K7, K8, K9, K10, K11, K12, K13

As seen in Table 3, it is seen that refugees' access to The Internet in Türkiye is mostly through "mobile internet". It was observed that all of the participants used mobile internet and stated that The Internet is now an indispensable part of their lives and that they feel safe thanks to The Internet. Most of the participants use "wi-fi at home". Some participants stated that the monthly package fees of The Internet they use on their cell phones are expensive and that is why they also have internet connection at home.

Comparison of refugees' use of technology in Türkiye and their home countries

In the research on the digital lives of refugees in Türkiye, the use of technology and participant codes were tabulated together in order to seek answers to the questions related to the sub-objective "How does the distribution of technology use of refugees in Türkiye and in their homeland compare?" (Table 4).

Table 4. Comparison of technology use

Technology Use		Participant Code
In their home country	High cost	K4, K11, K12, K13, K14
	Low cost	K1, K5, K6, K10
	Internet network is fast	K1, K2, K3, K4, K5, K6, K9
	Internet network is slow	K7, K8, K10, K11, K12, K13, K14
In Türkiye		
	High cost	K1, K2, K5, K6, K10, K11, K12, K13
	Low cost	K14
	Internet network is fast	K1, K7, K8, K13, K14
	Internet network is slow	K2, K3, K4, K5, K6, K9, K10, K12

As seen in Table 4, refugees stated that the "Internet network is slow" in their home countries. Especially the participants from Iran, Afghanistan, Morocco and Iraq stated that The Internet infrastructure in their home countries is poor and The Internet network is scarce, therefore The Internet speed is very slow. In addition, participants from Iran stated that the use of some websites is limited in their homeland. Participants from countries such as Russia and Ukraine stated that The Internet infrastructure in their home countries is very good and they can use The Internet quickly. Participants who mostly stated that The Internet network is slow in their home countries stated that the cost of using The Internet is very high as well as the difficulties of using The Internet. However, some of the participants, especially those who stated that The Internet network is fast in their hometowns, stated that The Internet is not only fast and high quality but also low cost. According to the participants, the use of technology in Türkiye is

"costly and The Internet network is slow". Participants who used the fast internet infrastructure in their home countries stated that they had difficulties using The Internet in Türkiye and that The Internet was sometimes interrupted or even not working at all when using wi-fi at home. Despite all this, they said that their quotas run out quickly, especially when using mobile internet, and that the cost of internet is very high. Participants who had problems with internet usage and infrastructure in their home countries stated that The Internet network in Türkiye is generally fast and sometimes slows down. One of the participants stated that The Internet in Türkiye is not only fast but also the price they pay is low.

Benefits of ICTs for refugees

In the research on the digital lives of refugees in Türkiye, the benefits of ICT use and participant codes were tabulated together in order to seek answers to the questions related to the sub-objective "What is the distribution of the benefits of internet and technology use of refugees?" (Table 5).

Table 5. Benefits of ICT use

Benefits of ICT Use	Participant
Education	K1, K6, K10, K14
Entertainment	K1, K9, K14
Acquiring information	K2, K3, K4, K5, K9, K11, K12
Shopping	K2, K4, K6, K9
Communication with family and friends	K3, K4, K5, K6, K7, K8, K10, K11, K12, K13
Location usage	K6, K8

As seen in Table 5, refugees emphasized "communicating with family and friends" the most among the benefits of ICT use. The participants stated that they were happy to receive news from their family and to learn that their family and friends were doing well thanks to ICT. "Obtaining information" ranked second in the benefits of ICT use. Participants stated that thanks to ICT, they could follow daily events, especially read the news in their hometowns and be aware of the events happening all over the world. They also stated that they do research on The Internet about the topics they are curious about. On the other hand, they also stated that they get information about the cities and countries they want to travel to through The Internet. According to refugees, another benefit of ICT use is "Education and Shopping". The participants stated that The Internet was very useful especially in the process of learning the Turkish language. Because they said that they felt inadequate when they did not know the words they needed to communicate with other people in Türkiye, and that they completed their deficiencies thanks to online translation programs. In addition, the participants stated that being able to shop without leaving home and accessing price information about the products they will buy makes their lives easier. The participants stated that the other benefit of ICT use was "entertainment". In particular, they said that they watch funny videos on YouTube and social media over The Internet and that they have a pleasant time thanks to online games. Although proportionally small, "Use of location" was also seen to be one of the

benefits of ICT use. Participants stated that they could easily reach places they did not know, especially in Türkiye, thanks to the Location application.

Refugees' requested trainings on ICTs

In order to find answers to the questions related to the sub-objective "What is the distribution of the training requested by the refugees participating in the research regarding the use of ICT?", the requested training and participant codes were tabulated together (Table 6).

Table 6. Requested trainings on ICTs

Requested Training	Participant
Social media use (YouTube, Instagram)	K1, K3, K5, K6, K7, K8, K9, K10, K11, K12, K13
Redirected advertising	K1
Software	K2
E-commerce	K3, K6
Video editing	K5, K6
Basic computer training	K8, K11, K12, K13
Training programs	K14
No training required	K4

As seen in Table 6, the training that refugees demand the most in terms of ICT use is the use of "social media". As a matter of fact, the participants stated that they had deficiencies in the use of social media training and that they wanted to receive training. They also stated that they would like to receive training on shooting and editing YouTube videos. On the other hand, it was observed that "basic computer training" was also highly emphasized among the requested trainings. Participants stated that they had sufficient knowledge about the use of mobile phones, but that they lacked computer skills and therefore wanted computer training. The requested training was followed by "Video editing and e-commerce" training. Participants stated that they wanted to establish their own online stores, they wanted to learn how to trade on The Internet and how to edit videos for their online stores. Although proportionally low in number, it was observed that there were requests for "Directed advertising, Software, Training programs". Some of the participants stated that they had already received training on computers and wanted to improve themselves especially in software. The participant who stated that he wanted to receive directed advertising training on social media expressed that he wanted to advertise on social media by saying that he wanted to give sponsored advertisements. One participant stated that he wanted to receive training on training programs where he could learn useful information. One of the participants stated that he had sufficient knowledge about technology and computers, so he expressed his opinion as "There is no need for training".

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

As it is understood from the results obtained from this study conducted to investigate the digital lives of refugees living in Türkiye, all of the participating refugees use ICTs in their daily lives. According to Yazıcı and Ağar (2018), refugees who were separated from their own countries for compulsory reasons have developed positive attitudes towards technology because they are individuals who have experienced digital divide and digital deprivation. It was observed that refugees used ICT mostly to receive news from their family and friends back home during their stay in Türkiye. This result shows that refugees feel lonely and use ICT in order to overcome the adaptation process more easily. Susever (2021), in his study on refugees, concluded that each of the ICT tools and websites he examined were effective in the refugee crisis, supported the adaptation process of individuals by producing instant solutions, and provided advantages. Refugees frequently use ICT to get news from their loved ones and the world agenda through social media. In other words, it has been observed that refugees use ICT because they want to facilitate their adaptation to the society in Türkiye and they want to be constantly informed about their loved ones. In their study, Trauth and Howcroft (2006) found that ICTs closed social inclusion gaps in the refugee context before the widespread use of social media. Supporting the view in this study, AbuJarour and Krasnova (2017) stated that promoting the integration of modern ICTs such as social media facilitates refugees to connect with their families and supports them to cooperate with local communities.

On the other hand, it can be said that refugees frequently use ICT in their daily lives in order to be informed about the events in their homeland and to improve themselves during their stay in Türkiye. It was observed that refugees felt incomplete because they were far away from their hometowns and loved ones during their stay in Türkiye and technology made a great contribution to complete this deficiency. Some of the participants stated that they learned to read and write after coming to Türkiye. It was stated that this situation caused them to be hesitant to communicate with other people in the society. One of the purposes of refugees' use of technology is online shopping. It has been observed that refugees have some difficulties in getting used to Türkiye and communicating with other people, so they utilize technology in matters such as shopping. Another situation that shows that refugees have difficulties in communicating with other people is that they use the location application on their phones instead of asking people about places they do not know in Türkiye. Refugees also benefit from technology in areas such as language learning and education. This shows that refugees want to make living in Türkiye easier and are making efforts to improve themselves. According to AbuJarour and Krasnova (2017), education and language skills are vital for the successful integration of refugees into society and social cohesion. In their study on refugees, they observed that many refugees started to learn foreign languages using ICT technologies. They also found that refugees rely on ICT to communicate with the families they left behind, access geolocation services and learn languages. Reynolds et al. (2003) found that ICT has changed the nature of teaching and learning, thereby improving its quality.

Refugees also use ICT to watch TV series, movies, and entertaining videos. This shows that refugees have difficulty in spending time in Türkiye and they want to have fun. The fact that refugees want to improve themselves and use technology in a conscious way can be seen from the trainings they requested on the use of technology. Because among the requested trainings, it was observed that the majority of the participants wanted to receive basic computer training. On the other hand, some of the participants requested training on topics such as e-commerce, producing and editing YouTube videos. Again, some participants expressed that

they wanted training on topics such as social media use and advertising on social media. This situation shows that refugees want to live more economically comfortable in Türkiye by improving themselves. Çelik et al. (2018) found in their study that refugees have financial difficulties because they cannot fulfill their real professions. They also concluded that many refugees do not feel safe because they work individually in daily or temporary jobs. Cengiz et al. (2018), in their study on the daily life practices of refugees, concluded that refugees have a more intense participation in daily life with the reshaping of working life due to technological developments.

In conclusion, it is possible to say that digital technologies, especially The Internet, provide significant benefits to refugees' live in Türkiye. It is also seen that refugees are eager to facilitate their lives in Türkiye and receive support from ICT to improve themselves.

Based on the results of the research, it was determined during the researcher's observation that refugees have difficulties in communicating with Turkish citizens and are timid during their live in Türkiye. In order to eliminate this problem, educational activities where refugees can experience socialization can be developed. On the other hand, it has been revealed that refugees want to have sufficient knowledge and equipment on the use of technology. In this regard, training contents can be created with participants at different educational levels that will provide refugees with sufficient information and resources. Designing longitudinal studies on the use of ICT by refugees over the years is seen as an important issue in terms of contributing to state policies.

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