

**DIGITAL BURNOUT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION PROCESS: EXAMINATION OF  
SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' OPINIONS****Raziye Ezgi KARATAŞLIOĞLU<sup>1</sup>****Berrin ÖZKANAL<sup>2</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT**

The main purpose of this study is to assess the perspectives of secondary school teachers regarding digital burnout within the context of distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study employed a qualitative research methodology, utilizing a semi-structured interview format to obtain the data. During the process of developing the semi-structured interview questions, a thorough review of the literature was conducted to ensure the creation of a reliable tool for data collection. The research study's sample comprises 21 teachers selected using the criterion sampling approach. The data derived from this sample were analyzed using the content analysis methodology. The findings of the study revealed that the participants' engagement with digital environments throughout the distance education process yielded both advantageous and disadvantageous outcomes. Several individuals encountered feelings of insufficiency inside digital contexts throughout the distance learning process. However, the subsequent impacts can be enumerated as follows: The topics of interest include digital aging, digital addiction, and mental fatigue. Within the parameters of the study, the findings unveiled the recommendations provided by the participants for mitigating digital burnout.

**Keywords:** Digital burnout, distance education, pandemic

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# DIGITAL BURNOUT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION PROCESS: EXAMINATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' OPINIONS

## ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, COVID-19 salgını sırasında uzaktan eğitim bağlamında ortaokul öğretmenlerinin dijital tükenmişliğe ilişkin bakış açılarını değerlendirmektir. Bu çalışmada nitel araştırma metodolojisi kullanılmış ve verileri elde etmek için yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formatı kullanılmıştır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme sorularının geliştirilmesi sürecinde, veri toplama için güvenilir bir araç oluşturulmasını sağlamak amacıyla kapsamlı bir literatür taraması yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın örnekleme, ölçüt örnekleme yaklaşımı kullanılarak seçilen 21 öğretmenden oluşmaktadır. Bu örneklemden elde edilen veriler içerik analizi metodolojisi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın bulguları, katılımcıların uzaktan eğitim sürecinde dijital ortamlarla etkileşimlerinin hem avantajlı hem de dezavantajlı sonuçlar doğurduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Birçok kişi uzaktan eğitim süreci boyunca dijital bağlamlarda yetersizlik hissiyle karşılaşmıştır. Bununla birlikte, sonraki etkiler aşağıdaki gibi sıralanabilir: İlgi çeken konular arasında dijital yaşlanma, dijital bağımlılık ve zihinsel yorgunluk yer almaktadır. Çalışmanın parametreleri dahilinde, bulgular, dijital tükenmişliğin azaltılması için katılımcılar tarafından sağlanan önerileri ortaya koymuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Dijital tükenmişlik, uzaktan eğitim, pandemi

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid and dynamic advancements in technology have significantly impacted the education system. The advent of digitalization has led to the replacement of traditional educational approaches and teaching methodologies with novel methods that are centered around digital surroundings. As a result of its swift adaptation to technological advancements and its susceptibility to their influence, distance education has undergone centralization through digitalization. Consequently, it has evolved into an educational approach that offers unrestricted access to individuals, free from constraints of time and space.

The available data pertaining to digitalization at a global scale indicates that a majority of individuals, specifically over 65%, utilize cellphones, while over 63% make use of the Internet. In comparison to the preceding year, there was a 1% increase in Internet usage, a 1.4% increase in social media engagement, a 2.2% increase in time spent on various music listening platforms, a 1.9% increase in podcast consumption, and a 1.4% increase in console gaming. Conversely, there was a 1.6% decrease in time allocated to reading printed media items and a 2% decrease in television viewing (WeAreSocial, 2022). The data indicates that the rate of digitalization has experienced a notable increase due to the rapid development and evolution of technologies. This phenomenon is readily apparent in the findings presented as a consequence of the conducted investigation. The unquestionable impact of distant schooling and the pandemic on the observed increase in this rate is evident. Based on the statistical data provided by the Ministry of National Education (MONE) on June 19, 2020, it was observed that the EBA platform garnered a total of 3.1 million clicks during the distance education initiative that commenced on March 23, 2020. Furthermore, the EBA mobile application recorded approximately 18 million downloads, while the active user base of the EBA application consisted of approximately 7 million students and 1 million teachers (MONE, 2020).

The impact of the pandemic-induced distance education process varies among individuals. Digital technologies and digital environments are predominantly utilized by educators, particularly teachers, in the facilitation of instructional delivery and provision of essential support to students and parents in the context of distance education. Virtual platforms and technology tools, such as EBA and Zoom, have emerged as integral components of instructors' everyday routines in this process. Educators delivered their instructional sessions via digital platforms such as Zoom and EBA, while also utilizing these platforms for engaging in various activities such as meetings, disseminating information, participating in training sessions, and attending seminars. The prolonged use of digital platforms during instructional sessions resulted in physical and cognitive repercussions due to the extended periods of sedentary behavior and lack of breaks from computer or tablet usage.

Educators were subjected to an increased level of exposure to digital components in an instructional framework that was previously unfamiliar to them, as observed during the implementation of distance learning. Hence, it is postulated that assessing instructors solely based on their professional burnout during the distance education period following the pandemic would be inadequate. Consequently, exploring their perspectives regarding digital burnout is believed to contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

According to Breytenbach (2015), the concept of digital burnout can be seen as a psychological condition that arises from the persistent availability and excessive use of digital technologies, leading to a state of overwork. Digital burnout can be defined as a form of burnout that arises as a result of extended and excessive utilization of digital gadgets (McCarthy, 2020). Digital burnout is a recently observed issue that is particularly prevalent within working groups (Quill, 2017).

The increased utilization of digital technology during the pandemic has been found to have a significant impact on the occurrence of digital burnout (Sharma et al., 2020). Although there are similarities in the signs and symptoms of digital-induced burnout and general burnout, the key distinction lies in the identifiable major cause of digital-induced burnout, which is continuous usage of digital devices (Marius, 2021).

Given the prevailing digital era, technological devices and digital platforms are engaged in a perpetual pursuit of innovation and staying abreast of evolving and dynamic technology. The utilization of digital tools has witnessed a surge among individuals, mostly driven by the indispensability of technical devices and the internet in both professional and personal spheres. Various types of transactions, including those conducted by official institutions and banks for purposes such as bill payments and applications, can be effectively executed in digital settings. The presence of social media has a notable impact on the utilization of digital tools and the duration of engagement with digital gadgets. Hence, the prevalence of digitalization has escalated in response to the defining attributes of the contemporary era.

Although digital tools and programs offer several benefits, it is important to acknowledge that they also come with certain drawbacks. As evidenced by a recent study conducted by Yiğit et al. (2022),

it was found that technostress and the suppression of individuals contribute to the exacerbation of digital burnout. The manifestation of digital burnout is characterized by various outcomes, including diminished productivity, fatigue, and decreased efficiency within the work environment. There exist instances wherein individuals encounter difficulties in accessing their digital devices, such as cell phones and laptops, struggle to maintain a harmonious equilibrium between the physical and virtual realms, and encounter challenges in interpersonal interactions. During these instances, individuals may experience a range of emotions and exhibit corresponding behaviours, including but not limited to tension, anxiety, dread, feelings of inadequacy, a sense of constriction, and difficulties with concentration. The idea of digital burnout is formed by the amalgamation of digital aging, mental tiredness, and digital addiction, which are identified as the outcomes of these affective states and behaviours (Erten & Özdemir, 2020). Digital addiction is a form of addiction that arises from the over utilization of digital media instruments. Digital addiction encompasses several forms such as internet addiction, cell phone addiction, social media addiction, and game addiction (Taşlıyan, et al, 2021). Digital addiction can result in a sedentary lifestyle as individuals become consistently engaged with screens, hence neglecting opportunities for physical activity and leading a more active lifestyle (Altınok, 2021). The purpose of this study is to elucidate the sub-behaviours and emotions encompassed under three primary categories of Erten and Özdemir's (2020) digital burnout scale. By doing so, it aims to facilitate the identification of digital burnout, enable experts to implement appropriate interventions, and make a valuable contribution to the area.

Behaviors exhibited by individuals experiencing digital addiction encompass a sense of unease in the absence of an Internet connection, persistent preoccupation with recently received notifications or messages, a feeling of vulnerability when separated from their digital devices, a sense of powerlessness in the absence of Internet access, and concerns regarding misplacing or forgetting their mobile phones, among others. The observed behaviours in individuals undergoing digital aging encompass a diminished capacity for sustained attention, an impaired ability to engage in productive activities, chronic fatigue, apprehension regarding potential cognitive decline, preoccupation with digital devices, physical discomfort associated with excessive checking of messages or notifications, perception of depressive symptoms, excessive immersion in virtual environments facilitated by digital tools, an inability to establish a harmonious equilibrium between the physical and virtual realms, and reduced verbal communication and environmental awareness.

Several behavioral manifestations have been noted in individuals experiencing mental fatigue. These include a sense of discomfort or diminished self-worth resulting from excessive utilization of digital tools. Additionally, affected individuals may exhibit an inability to emotionally engage with their surroundings, leading to a diminished sensitivity and tolerance towards others. Furthermore, heightened levels of impatience, irritability, and a perception of weakened interpersonal communication may also be observed.

The issue of digital burnout is a commonly encountered concern in contemporary society; nonetheless, there needs to be more scientific research on this topic within the existing literature. Given the substantial amount of time dedicated to digital environments and tools in the context of distance education, it remains uncertain if educators encounter digital burnout. The existing body of literature mostly focuses on the examination and exploration of the phenomenon known as professional burnout. There is a prevailing belief that it has significance for scholarly literature to thoroughly investigate the underlying factors contributing to digital burnout, alongside professional burnout experienced by educators, a critical aspect within the realm of education. Additionally, exploring potential strategies to mitigate such circumstances is deemed essential.

The objective of this study is to ascertain the perspectives of secondary school teachers regarding digital burnout in the context of distance learning. In accordance with the primary objective, inquiries were made to obtain responses to the subsequent inquiries:

1. Are there any situations where teachers feel inadequate in digital environments during distance education? If yes, what are they?
2. What are the effects of your overexposure to digital media?
3. What are the emotional changes teachers experience during the distance education process??
4. How do teachers feel when they cannot access digital tools
5. What are the teachers' views on digital burnout in the distance education process?
6. What are their recommendations for individuals experiencing digital burnout?

## **2. METHOD**

The present study employed a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is undertaken with the purpose of comprehensively examining phenomena within their natural context. The research design employed in this study was a phenomenological approach utilizing qualitative research tools. The phenomenology design was selected for the study in order to explore the underlying factors contributing to teachers' experiences of digital burnout. Phenomenological studies are research endeavours that center on the examination of individuals' lived experiences and the manner in which they perceive and interpret them (Creswell, 2007).

### **2.1. Study Group**

Criterion sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used to determine the group to be examined in this study. Purposive sampling method offers the opportunity to study in-depth in cases that are thought to have rich information. Criterion sampling consists of people with the characteristics determined by the determined problem. In purposive sampling, the researcher tries to interpret the connection between the situations related to the subject he/she is studying (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018).

In order to assess the extent of digital burnout resulting from distant education, this study has devised two selection criteria to identify the sample group. The stipulations encompass the following criteria:

1. Willingness to partake in the study on a voluntary basis;
2. Engagement in educational endeavors throughout the duration of distance learning.

The research participants consisted of 21 people working in a secondary school and actively participating in the role of teacher during distance education. The characteristics of the participants who voluntarily contributed to the study are given in Table 1: The methodology employed for data collection

**Table 1.** The Demographics of the study participants

Participant	Gender	Experience	Educational Level	Department
P1	Female	8	Bachelor's degree	Information technologies
P2	Female	10	Bachelor's degree	Science
P3	Female	20	Bachelor's degree	Pre-school
P4	Male	4	Bachelor's degree	Physical education
P5	Female	14	Graduate	Mathematics
P6	Female	23	Bachelor's degree	Turkish
P7	Female	17	Bachelor's degree	English
P8	Female	25	Graduate	Education of religion
P9	Female	23	Bachelor's degree	Social studies
P10	Female	6	Bachelor's degree	Education of religion
P11	Male	23	Bachelor's degree	Elementary school teaching
P12	Male	28	Bachelor's degree	Physical education
P13	Male	22	Bachelor's degree	Counselling
P14	Male	6	Bachelor's degree	Physical education
P15	Female	33	Bachelor's degree	Visual arts
P16	Female	18	Bachelor's degree	English
P17	Female	17	Bachelor's degree	English
P18	Female	23	Bachelor's degree	Turkish
P19	Female	12	Bachelor's degree	Science
P20	Male	7	Bachelor's degree	Physical education
P21	Female	9	Bachelor's degree	Mathematics

## 2.2. Data Collection Tool

The study's data were gathered through face-to-face interactions utilizing an interview form, which is a recognized tool for qualitative data collecting. According to Karasar (2005), interview approach can be categorized into three distinct types: organized, unstructured, and semi-structured. The questions included in this study were obtained via the implementation of a semi-structured interview technique. During the formulation of the inquiries, an extensive examination of the existing literature on burnout and digital burnout was conducted. Notably, the "Digital Burnout" scale, established by Erten and Özdemir (2020), was employed as a key resource. The pre-constructed questions were evaluated by

a subject matter specialist, and two educators from distinct disciplines were enlisted to test the clarity and comprehensibility of the questions. Following the required adjustments, the interviews commenced. The interview questions were comprised of three distinct sections. The initial segment of the study included pertinent details on the research, while also securing informed consent from participants who voluntarily chose to partake. Subsequently, the subsequent section encompassed the collection of demographic data pertaining to the individuals involved in the study. During the third phase of the study, the participants were presented with semi-structured questions.

### **2.2.1. Data Analysis**

The data from the study were subjected to analysis utilizing the content analysis technique. The data acquired by content analysis is subjected to coding, resulting in the creation of themes. The data is then organized within these topics to enhance comprehensibility (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The research data underwent coding by multiple researchers, resulting in the establishment of various categories that encompassed the coded information. The categories established by various researchers were compared and subsequently consolidated into mutually agreed upon categories. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that direct quotations play a crucial role in qualitative research since they accurately capture the views and perspectives of persons (Yin, 1994). Therefore, the participants' exceptional responses were directly cited in this study. Subsequently, the themes and sub-themes derived from the analysis phase were submitted to the expert faculty member, followed by an inter-coder reliability analysis done on the identified topics. During the research analysis phase, the confidentiality of the teachers' identity information was maintained, and each participant was assigned a numerical identifier such as "P1, P2, P3, ...".

## **3. FINDINGS**

This study aims to examine the viewpoints of secondary school teachers regarding their digital burnout during the process of distance education. The tables below provide the interview replies provided by the teachers.

### **3.1. Findings Regarding the Situations in which Participants Feel Inadequate in Digital Environments in the Distance Education Process**

The participants were asked about the situations in which they felt inadequate in the digital environment during the distance education process and the answers given by the participants are shown in table 2.

**Table 2.** Situations where participants felt inadequate in digital environments during distance education

Theme/themes	Codes	Participants
Situations related to inadequacy in digital environments	Inadequate use of digital platforms	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P19, P20)
	Being unprepared	P3, P12, P14, P15, P20, P2, P4, P16, P20
	Difficulty doing mathematical operations	P21
	Adaptation problem	P20
	Difficulties in time management	P17
	Problems with infrastructure	P12
Not feeling inadequate	Not feeling inadequate	P1, P7

Upon examination of table 2, it becomes apparent that the participants' experiences of inadequacy during distance education can be categorized into two distinct themes, alongside circumstances when inadequacy was not reported. The table provides participant codes that are associated with these themes.

Upon analysis of table 2, it becomes evident that the instances in which participants experienced a sense of inadequacy in digital environments during distance education primarily revolved around the utilization of digital platforms (such as EBA, Zoom, resource sharing, and homework submission), unpreparedness for the distance education process, and a feeling of inadequacy stemming from the absence of interaction. Furthermore, it was discovered that inadequacy in conducting mathematical operations on the screen on these platforms, adaption challenges, time management difficulties, and infrastructure-related issues were other factors contributing to the overall insufficiency. Nevertheless, it should be noted that two individuals expressed that they did not experience any feelings of inadequacy during this particular procedure. The participants provided descriptive statements on the situations in which they experienced feelings of inadequacy during distance education. Some of these statements are as follows:

“Yes, we felt really inadequate. EBA or Zoom, we did not have enough information about them. In fact, I think I had a hard time trying to install and open the zoom program while trying to do this at first. I struggled a lot with that.” (P13)

“I first encountered the program called Zoom for the first time. After installing the program on my phone for the first time, I had difficulties during the installation phase. And since we are not face to face with the students, I had a hard time guiding them in the digital environment.” (P4)

“Once I used zoom for the first time. It was difficult as I had not used it before. After I got used to it, I had a hard time on my own because my major is mathematics. Our lesson is about how to use the screen because it is about operations. Even writing the mathematical symbols was simply a problem. I



had a hard time at first. Although 20 people attended the lesson, there were very few students who actively participated and answered. In other words, I could not see whether the children understood the subject or not, because there was no interaction.” (P21)

“No, there isn't. Thanks to the projects I participated in the digital environment, I was able to master web 2 tools. So I had no problem digitizing that process.” (P7)

### 3.2. Findings on the Effect of Overexposure to Digital Media on Participants' Distance Education Process

Inquiry regarding the impact of prolonged exposure to digital environments during the distant education process was posed to the participants in the second query. This inquiry reflects the perspectives of the individuals regarding the phenomenon of digital aging. The responses provided by the participants in relation to this inquiry are displayed in table 3

**Table 3.** The Effect of overexposure to digital environments on participants throughout the distance education process

Theme/themes	Codes	Participants
	Development of digital literacy	P5, P9, P15, P20, P 21
Digital ageing (positive effects of overexposure to digital media)	Opportunity to participate in various courses and activities	P2
	Inability to manage time	P3, P4, P5, P7, P10, P11, P13, P14, P16, P17, P21
	Stress	P2, P3, P4, P7, P10, P11, P14, P16, P18, P19, P20
	Feeling of being restricted	P4, P5, P8, P10, P19, P20
Digital ageing (negative effects of overexposure to digital media)	Decline in communication	P2, P8, P11, P13, P14, P16
	Physical effects	P3, P5, P10, P19
	Inability to balance the virtual and real world	P2, P4
	Impatience	P2
	Feeling overwhelmed	P20
	Lack of concentration	P4
	Not being affected	P6, P12

The study reported that excessive exposure to digital surroundings throughout the distance education process yielded both positive and bad outcomes for the participants. Additionally, two participants expressed that they did not experience any discernible positive or negative consequences as a result of this circumstance. Upon examination of table 3, it becomes evident that excessive exposure to digital environments in the context of distance education yields positive outcomes such as the

cultivation of digital literacy and the provision of opportunities to engage in diverse courses or activities. Conversely, negative consequences arise, including challenges in time management, heightened stress levels, feeling of being restricted, diminished communication abilities, physical effects, difficulties in striking a balance between virtual and real worlds, impatience, feelings of being overwhelmed, and a lack of concentration. Based on the empirical evidence, it may be posited that a significant proportion of the participants exhibit signs of digital aging. The following are descriptive comments describing the effects of participants' excessive exposure to digital surroundings in the distance education process:

“I have successfully addressed the most of my deficiencies in digital matters pertaining to good influence. Subsequently, I enrolled in a multitude of courses. The digital transformation presented me with an opportunity. One drawback is that initially, I experienced a sense of being inundated with the complexities of digital technology, leading to feelings of depression and an inability to effectively navigate its usage. Consequently, this situation induced a state of tension.” (P20)

“The utilization of Web 2 tools facilitated my understanding and familiarity with them. Naturally, I experienced a sense of constraint within WhatsApp groups. The task of following up on homework assignments proved to be somewhat challenging. In addition to the aforementioned factors, the duration of time allocated to digital activities was excessive. The mobile device did not inadvertently detach from my grasp. The level of domestic resentments experienced a notable escalation. The reason for my weight increase can be attributed to my prolonged periods of sedentary behavior in front of the computer. In addition, there were observable physiological manifestations.” (P5)

“The individual experienced a notable sense of tension and isolation. The prevalence of screen usage resulted in decreased socialization among individuals. Additionally, I experienced adverse consequences, including ocular discomfort resulting from excessive screen exposure, bodily ailments associated with prolonged sedentary behavior, and weight gain attributable to a lack of physical exertion.” (P3)

“I refrain from making a definitive evaluation of digital distant education as either favorable or negative due to my appreciation for the technological advancements of the contemporary era. I hold a favorable disposition towards digitization, as I believe it represents the advent of the future. In my opinion, it is imperative for the education system and educators to adapt to technological advancements in order to align with emerging global norms.” (P12)

### **3.3. Findings Concerning the Emotions of the Participants When They Could Not Access the Digital Tools in the Distance Education Process**

The third inquiry sought to ascertain the emotional responses of the participants when they encountered difficulties in accessing digital tools. This particular question served as a means to gauge the participants' perspectives regarding digital addiction. The responses provided by the participants are displayed in table 4.

**Table 4.** The Emotional experiences of the participants when they encountered difficulties in accessing digital technologies

Theme/themes	Codes	Participants
Digital addiction	Powerlessness	P4, P8, P9, P10, P11, P14, P 20
	Feeling of emptiness	P2, P4, P9, P16, P19, P20, P21
	Restlessness	P2, P5, P7, P18
	Nervousness	P1, P14
	Stress	P1, P6
	Panic	P12
	Those who did not feel negative	P3, P13, P,15, P17

Upon analysis of the table, it becomes evident that the predominant emotions experienced by the participants during their inability to access digital resources in the context of distance education were primarily characterized by a sense of powerlessness, emptiness, and restlessness. Conversely, emotions such as tension, stress, and panic were seen to be less prevalent among the participants. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that a subset of the participants, namely four individuals, did not report experiencing any negative emotions or sentiments when they encountered difficulties in accessing digital tools. Based on the results, it can be concluded that a majority of the individuals exhibited symptoms of digital addiction. Several participants provided detailed accounts of the feelings they experienced when they encountered difficulties in accessing digital tools. The following remarks highlight their subjective experiences:

“Indeed, the mobile phone has emerged as an integral component of my daily existence. To elaborate, I frequently encounter numerous inquiries that pique my curiosity and prompt me to seek answers by posing them on online platforms. Consequently, when it fails to occur, it engenders a profound sense of emptiness within me.” (P9)

“I experience a sense of incompleteness in the absence of a mobile device. Despite my lack of utilization, I experienced a sense of obligation to own it. I experience a sense of discomfort when I am unable to access my digital devices.” (P2)

“The mobile phone has undeniably become an addictive device. For instance, in instances where I neglect to attend work, I experience a sense of incompleteness. The scenario at hand exhibits notable disparities. In contrast to other domains, my engagement in computer-related activities has significantly diminished since the commencement of in-person training sessions. However, the phone is considered to be an essential tool in modern society. I endeavor to approach the examination of my notifications and incoming communications in a methodical and organized manner. However, I am expending considerable effort in my endeavor. As an illustration, I assert my intention to abstain from engaging in telephonic communication for several hours on a daily basis over the course of a week. However, it is evident that whenever he emits a sound, a portion of my visual attention is directed towards the telephone device.” (P19)

“An incident of this nature occurred. Currently, the absence of digital tools does not have a detrimental impact on me as I do not heavily rely on them for my work. I utilized the aforementioned technology for the purpose of engaging in distance education; however, subsequent to that period, my level of connectivity to both mobile devices and the internet has significantly diminished. In order to mitigate negative emotions associated with the absence of internet and phone connectivity, I endeavor to cultivate a sense of emotional resilience.” (P13)

### 3.4. Findings Regarding the Emotional Changes Experienced by the Participants in the Distance Education Process

The fourth inquiry involved participants with extensive exposure to virtual and digital environments throughout distance education. They were asked about the emotional transformations they encountered during this process. The responses provided by the participants regarding their experienced emotional changes and their perspectives on mental exhaustion were subsequently documented. The data obtained from the participants' responses is presented in table 5

**Table 5.** Emotional changes experienced by the participants during the distance education process

Theme/themes	Codes	Participants
Mental fatigue	Decline in communication	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P13, P 18, P20, P21
	Feeling of tiredness	P1, P4, P5, P10, P18
	Isolation	P8, P18, P20, P21
	Quick temper	P2, P4, P8, P20
	Failure to socialize	P13, P14, P15
	Impatience	P2, P20
	Increased levels of anxiety, stress	P4, P21
	Depersonalization	P2, P20
	Family cohesion	P20
Absence of any change	P9, P10, P11, P12, P14, P16, P17, P19	

Upon examination of table 5, it becomes evident that the predominant emotional alterations observed are characterized by a decline in communication abilities. The following emotional changes occur in a sequential manner: an elevation in weariness, isolation, quick temper, failure to socialization, impatience, unease, stress, and anxiety has been noted. Based on the responses provided, it can be asserted that a significant proportion of the participants encountered mental exhaustion. Furthermore, eight subjects reported no discernible alteration. The participants provided descriptive accounts of the emotional transformations they encountered throughout the distance education process. These statements are outlined below:

“One has the propensity to experience rapid onset of anger. It might be argued that due to the prevalence of non-face-to-face communication, individuals possess the ability to interpret the intended meaning of an individual’s facial expressions. The level of communication has experienced a decline,

resulting in a sense of personal inadequacy. Nervousness may manifest as a consequence. I, too, experienced fatigue as a result of prolonged exposure to digital settings.” (P4)

“First of all, a very good question. So I guess I’ve come to like being isolated more. So, it was tempting to stay with myself and stay in the background a little more often. I can say that my communication has decreased even more. In that process, I felt very tired because of digital. I went through a lot of processes in that period, I can say that it was a bit difficult for me.” (P5)

“Yes, everything was in the digital environment at that time, rather than meeting face to face. Our communication has weakened. But we can say that the dimension of communication has also changed. We have now started to express ourselves through digital platforms and social media. Perhaps this may have affected social relations. I think there has been a sense of depersonalization due to the decrease in communication between people.” (P7)

“In other words, after the distance education, there was no such change in me. Everything continued where it left off. I am a person who can socialize, so I did not experience any change in my communication.” (P11)

### 3.5. Findings Regarding the Opinions of the Participants about their Digital Burnout in the Distance Education Process

During the fifth inquiry, the participants were provided with pertinent details regarding digital burnout in the context of distance education, and afterwards queried about their personal encounters with digital burnout. The responses provided by the participants are displayed in table 6.

**Table 6.** Participants' views on digital burnout in the distance education process

Theme/themes	Codes	Participants
	Stress	P5, P6, P8, P19
	Anxiety	P4, P14, P20
	Feelings of inadequacy	P3, P18
	Loss of concern	P2
	Disordered sleep	P10
Those experiencing digital burnout		
	Using digital the right way	P13, P15, P16, P17, P21
	Use it as a positive tool	P9, P11, P12
Those who do not experiencing digital burnout		
	Love digitalization	P1, P7

Upon analysis of table 6, it becomes evident that a significant number of participants in the post-distance education phase report experiencing digital burnout. This phenomenon is attributed to various factors, including stress, worry, feelings of inadequacy, lack of interest, and disrupted sleep patterns. Several participants expressed that they do not encounter digital burnout during this process due to their affinity for digitalization and their utilization of digital tools in a proficient and constructive manner.

Based on the available data, there is a minimal disparity observed between the number of participants who perceive themselves as experiencing digital burnout and those who do not perceive any symptoms of digital burnout. The responses provided by the participants in relation to their experience of digital burnout are as follows:

“Actually, I didn't experience digital burnout, I don't. Because I love digitization, I love application. Because for me, a part of my life is digital. In fact, when I discover a digital tool that I just learned, I get stressed if I can't do it.” (P7)

“In other words, if there are 10 results, 6 of them were seen in me at that time. More than half. I think my digital burnout level was above the middle at that time.” (P5)

“I did not experience digital burnout in that process. For example, I took a lot of seminars in the digital era. Sometimes I took three or four seminars a week. I have experienced a lot of cultural occupancy and I am very happy with this occupancy. You know, they always criticize the digital era like this, but I think it is very useful when used correctly.” (P15)

“I am very familiar with technology and digital, I am very prone, I like it very much, but I like my use of technology rather than technology using my time. I use digital as a positive tool. I use it when I need it and leave it when I don't. I have such an arrangement in my own life. If I wasn't like this, I could also experience the consequences of digital burnout in my life.” (P12)

“Then let me say this. Fatigue was at once extreme. As I said stress, I was stressed because I couldn't control some things. Especially regarding the program of the content. My sleep problem was at its peak, my sleep pattern was completely disrupted. I had a loss of interest; I didn't enjoy anything I watched. If I can't give a ratio about my digital burnout level in distance education, I could say it is in the 50% 60% band. There was definitely an experience.” (P20)

### **3.6. Findings Regarding the Suggestions Given by the Participants for Coping with Digital Burnout**

In the sixth inquiry, the participants were prompted to provide suggestions on strategies for managing digital burnout.

**Table 7.** Suggestions given by the participants to cope with digital burnout

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Implementing time management	P1, P2, P3, P6, P8, P9, P10, P11, P13, P14, P17, P18, P19, P21
Take up hobbies	P2, P3, P5, P6, P8, P10, P16, P20
Participating in social activities	P2, P3, P4, P13, P17, P 19
To be conscious	P1, P3, P7, P9
Getting help from domain experts	P9, P11, P12
Reading book	P6, P17, P21
Doing sports	P17, P20
Digital detox	P5, P19

Upon analysis of table 7, it becomes evident that the prevailing recommendations put forth by the participants include the adoption of effective time management strategies and the cultivation of personal interests and hobbies. Additionally, other notable suggestions encompass engaging in social activities, fostering self-awareness, seeking guidance from domain experts, engaging in literary pursuits, participating in physical activities, undertaking a digital detox, and utilizing digital tools in a manner that yields positive outcomes. The following expressions are provided:

“In other words, the time spent with digital tools can be shortened. in a systematic way. If we spend five hours, we can reduce it to four and then three. Apart from this, we can turn to social activities.” (P2)

“For example, I muted many notifications on WhatsApp. At least I rarely look at incoming messages. For example, I look at some platforms once a week. How can we say it? They can find other occupations, take up hobbies. It's like creating a routine and looking at the phone in the evenings rather than looking at the phone every hour.” (P10)

“First of all, if there is such a thing, they should get help, consult a specialist and get help. Secondly, if we were able to identify the cause of this digital burnout, get away from it a little bit, take a break. It is necessary to go to the root of this reason why he is experiencing this situation. Time management can be considered.” (P11)

“In other words, a digital addiction is now a disease of our age. First of all, you have to admit that you have a problem. If she can't stop this behavior, she needs help. I think you should consult an expert. This is a serious situation because it is a really serious situation that affects a person's life, behaviors, decisions and reduces their quality. Maybe it wasn't there before, but I'm taking it under the category of a disease. I don't know if it is currently included in this category or not. In other words, I think that just as people go to the doctor when they get sick, they should go to the relevant specialist and apply the treatment he said.” (P12)

“I think definitely staying away for a certain time, like a detox, with everything we communicate remotely, on the phone or any digital device, at a certain point. Don't really spend your time productively away from it. Anything enjoyed in that process can be done. In other words, it is not a free time, but spending time with the family at work, anything you enjoy is something you add to yourself. Or like leaving the phone on the way out. Time management can be created.” (P19)

#### **4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

This study shows the findings obtained by examining the viewpoints of secondary school teachers regarding digital burnout in the context of distance education.

During the distance education experience, a portion of the study's participants expressed sentiments of inadequacy in digital environments. Instances linked to inadequacy have been observed,

particularly concerning the utilization of digital platforms. These challenges encompass a range of factors, including the utilization of educational platforms such as EBA and Zoom, the sharing of resources, the submission of homework, a sense of unpreparedness, limited interaction, challenges in performing mathematical operations on screens, difficulties in adapting to the digital environment, struggles with time management, and issues related to infrastructure. A subgroup of the participants indicated that they did not encounter feelings of inadequacy throughout the process of distant instruction. The results given in this study are consistent with the concerns highlighted in the research undertaken by Bakioğlu and Çevik (2020), which sought to examine the viewpoints of scientific instructors towards distant learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The aforementioned concerns involve a range of obstacles that are related to infrastructure, communication, engagement, planning, uncertainty, and the utilization of the EBA platform. Demir and Özdaş (2020) conducted a study that examined the difficulties faced by educators in the context of distance education within the Covid-19 pandemic. Their research shed light on various issues pertaining to infrastructure, communication, involvement, planning, uncertainty, and the EBA platform, which were found to be consistent with previous findings.

An additional finding derived from the study suggests that the participants' interaction with digital environments during the distant education process produces both beneficial and detrimental consequences. One could posit that a considerable number of the participants encountered unfavorable consequences due to this methodology. The present environment encompasses various unfavorable scenarios, such as inadequate communication resulting from inefficient time management, elevated stress levels, a feeling of constraint, diminished verbal articulation, and social seclusion. Moreover, it is worth noting that individuals may encounter somatic manifestations, including but not limited to headaches, neck discomfort, and ocular distress. Furthermore, fluctuations in body mass may give rise to various physiological repercussions. The challenges associated with achieving equilibrium between the physical and virtual domains, as well as the experiences of frustration, being overwhelmed, and reduced concentration, are also widely seen. The provided findings demonstrate similarities to the results obtained from a study conducted by Kandemir and Nartgün (2022), which aimed to explore teachers' viewpoints on the phenomena of fatigue associated with distance education, characterized by physical discomfort experienced by individuals. However, it was seen that this methodology produced positive results for specific individuals. The advent of digital literacy has afforded individuals the opportunity to partake in a diverse array of courses and activities, yielding numerous advantageous outcomes. This discovery provides a clearer understanding of the viewpoints held by the participants regarding the process of digital aging. Based on the replies supplied, it can be deduced that a significant portion of the participants hold the perception that there are discernible consequences associated with digital aging.

An additional finding of the research suggests that the participants experience many emotions, including panic, anxiety, tension, restlessness, powerlessness, and emptiness, as a result of their incapacity to utilize digital tools. The results given in this study are consistent with the findings of Geçgel and Taşgın's (2022) research, which examined the extent of digital burnout among Turkish



individuals aspiring to become teachers. The findings of the study indicate that the lack of internet connection and limited availability of digital resources among teacher candidates result in negative feelings, whereas over utilization of digital tools adds to the phenomenon of digital burnout.

Upon analysis of the research data pertaining to emotional fluctuations experienced during the distance education process, a noteworthy observation has emerged indicating that a considerable proportion of participants have reported a loss in their communication skills. The decline is accompanied by a range of emotional changes, such as exhaustion, isolation, heightened irritability, a desire for social connection, impatience, restlessness, stress, increased anxiety levels, detachment from events, and improved family communication. The obtained findings demonstrate resemblances to the sensations of stress and exhaustion as documented in a research study conducted in 2018. The primary objective of this study was to ascertain the particular situations in which psychological counselors confront burnout (Arslan, 2018). The results of this study suggest the existence of cognitive fatigue, as indicated by the reported changes observed in the majority of participants, which are consistent with the symptoms commonly associated with mental exhaustion.

During the distance learning process, a specific group of research participants experienced digital burnout, whereas another group did not. The level of discrepancy between the two groups is negligible. Individuals who are impacted by digital burnout may exhibit symptoms including heightened levels of worry, increased tension, reduced interest, and a sense of inadequacy. The results of this study are consistent with the research undertaken by Şirin et al. (2021), which sought to examine the levels of digital burnout experienced by physical education teachers. The findings of the study indicate that educators who dedicate a larger portion of their time to digital environments experience increased levels of stress.

The findings of the study conducted based on the recommendations provided by the participants to address digital burnout are outlined as follows: Effective time management strategies include implementing time restrictions while engaging with digital devices, cultivating diverse interests, seeking guidance from subject matter experts, and practicing mindful usage of digital technologies. Upon analyzing the responses provided by the participants, it becomes evident that the recommendations predominantly lie beyond the realm of digital solutions. The findings presented in this study align with the research conducted by Ardiç and Polatçı (2008) about burnout. Specifically, Ardiç and Polatçı (2008) also identified strategies at the individual level, such as acquiring knowledge on time management and engaging in hobbies, as potential coping mechanisms for burnout.

The prevalence of digital addiction, digital aging, and mental tiredness among secondary school teachers in the context of distant education has been noted. It can be posited that the teachers involved in the study undergo digital burnout subsequent to the distance education process.

## 5. IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations can be proposed. It is worth mentioning that there is a limited body of research on the phenomenon of digital burnout within our nation. In light of this rationale, it is imperative to undertake a comprehensive investigation encompassing quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methodologies to examine the phenomenon of digital burnout among instructors and students. Conducting research with different methods on the digital burnout of individuals working in different professions. In contemporary times, a plethora of diverse educational applications can be effectively implemented within digital surroundings. Consequently, individuals allocate an increased amount of time to engaging with digital media. In order to mitigate the potential occurrence of digital burnout among students and teachers, institutions should implement several steps. These actions may include guiding individuals towards engaging in hobbies, promoting knowledge about the issue, emphasizing the importance of effective time management, and encouraging conscientious utilization of digital resources. Furthermore, it is possible to provide support services to persons who are encountering digital burnout.

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## Geniřletilmiř Trke zet

Gnmzde zellikle dijitalleřme ile birlikte geleneksel řekilde srdrlen eēitim yaklařımları yerini dijital ortamlara baēlı yeni teknolojilere bırakmıřtır. Bu yaklařımlardan biri olan uzaktan eēitim, teknoloji merkezli eēitim yntemlerinden biri olarak kalite ve kullanılabilirliēini ve dolayısıyla nemi artmaktadır. Pandemi ile beraber yařanılan uzaktan eēitim srecinin bireyler zerinde farklı yansımaları bulunmaktadır. zellikle ēretmenler uzaktan eēitim srecinde hem derslerini anlatırken hem de ērenci ve velilere gerekli ynlendirmeleri saēlarken oēunlukla dijital araları ve dijital ortamları kullanmaktadır. Bu srete EBA, Zoom vb. sanal platformlar ve teknolojik aralar ēretmenlerin gnlk yařamlarının nemli bir unsuru haline gelmiřtir. ēretmenler derslerini Zoom, EBA gibi platformlar aracılıēı ile iřlemiř ve gerekleřtirilen toplantı bilgilendirme, eēitim, seminer gibi faaliyetleri de aynı platformlar zerinden takip etmiřlerdir. Dersleri sresince bu platformlarda geirdikleri zaman boyunca bilgisayar veya tablet bařından uzun sre hi kalkmamaları da bazı fiziksel ve biliřsel bazı sonulara neden olmuřtur. ēretmenler uzaktan eēitim sresince daha nce deneyimlemedikleri bir eēretim modelinde dijital gelere normalden daha fazla maruz kalmıřlardır. Bu yzden pandemi sonrasındaki uzaktan eēitim srecinde ēretmenleri sadece mesleki tkenmiřlikleri aısından deēerlendirmenin yeterli olmayacaēı dřnlp dijital tkenmiřlikleri aısından da grřlerinin incelenmesinin alan yazınına katkı saēlayacaēı dřnmektedir.

Bu alıřmanın amacı ortaokul ēretmenlerin uzaktan eēitim srecinde yařadıēı dijital tkenmiřlik ile ilgili grřlerini belirlemektir. Bu temel ama doērultusunda ařaēıda yer alan sorulara cevap aranmıřtır:

1. Uzaktan eēitim srecinde ēretmenlerin dijital ortamlarda kendilerini yetersiz hissettikleri durumlar var mıdır? Varsa bunlar nelerdir?
2. Dijital medyaya ařırı maruz kalmanın etkileri nelerdir?
3. ēretmenlerin uzaktan eēitim srecinde yařadıkları duygusal deēiřimler nelerdir?
4. ēretmenler dijital aralara eriřemedikleri zaman ne hissediyorlar?
5. ēretmenlerin uzaktan eēitim srecinde dijital tkenmiřliēe iliřkin grřleri nelerdir?
6. Dijital tkenmiřlik yařayan bireylere nerileri nelerdir?

### Yntem

Bu alıřma nitel arařtırma yntemi ile gerekleřtirilmiřtir. Nitel arařtırmalar olayların gereki bir ortamda btncl řekilde incelenmesine ynelik olarak yapılmaktadır. Arařtırma deseni ise nitel arařtırma yntemlerinden olgu-bilim (fenomenoloji) alıřması olarak gerekleřtirilmiřtir. Arařtırmada, ēretmenlerin dijital tkenmiřlik duygularının nedenleri arařtırıldıēı iin olgu-bilim deseni tercih edilmiřtir.

alıřma grubunun belirlenmesinde amalı rnekleme yntemlerinden lt rnekleme kullanılmıřtır. Arařtırmanın genel amacı, uzaktan eēitim sonrasında yařadıēı dijital tkenmiřlik dzeyleri ile ilgili deēerlendirme yapmak olduēu iin rnekleme grubunun seilmesinde belirleyici

olması gereken iki ölçüt belirlenmiştir. Bu ölçütler: Yapılan çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılmak ve uzaktan eğitim süresince eğitim öğretim faaliyetlerinde görev almış olmaktır.

Araştırmanın verileri nitel veri toplama araçlarından biri olan görüşme formu kullanılarak ve yüz yüze toplanmıştır. Soruların hazırlanmasında tükenmişlik ve dijital tükenmişlikle ilgili alan yazın taranmış ve özellikle Erten ve Özdemir (2020) tarafından geliştirilen “The Digital Burnout” ölçeğinden yararlanılmıştır. Önceden hazırlanan sorular, bir alan uzmanı tarafından incelenmiş ve farklı branşlardan iki öğretmene soruların anlaşılabilirliği için pilot uygulama yapılmıştır. Gerekli düzeltmeler sonrasında görüşmelere başlanmıştır. Görüşme soruları üç bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk bölümde araştırma hakkında bilgi verilip gönüllü katılım onayı alınmıştır; ikinci bölümde katılımcılarla ilgili demografik bilgiler yer almaktadır. Üçüncü bölümde ise katılımcılara yarı yapılandırılmış sorular yöneltilmiştir.

Araştırmanın verileri içerik analizi teknikleri kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma verileri farklı araştırmacılar tarafından kodlanmış ve kodları kapsayan kategorilere ulaşılmıştır. Farklı araştırmacılar tarafından ulaşılan kategoriler karşılaştırılarak üzerinde uzlaşılan kategoriler oluşturulmuştur. Analiz aşamasında son olarak, elde edilen tema ve alt temalar, alanda uzman eğitim üyesinin görüşüne sunulurken elde edilen temalar hakkında kodlayıcılar arası güvenilirlik analizi gerçekleştirilmiştir.

## **Sonuç ve Tartışma**

Ortaokul öğretmenlerinin uzaktan eğitim sürecindeki dijital tükenmişlikleri ile ilgili görüşlerinin incelendiği bu çalışmada şu sonuçlara ulaşılmıştır: Katılımcıların bazıları uzaktan eğitim sürecinde dijital ortamlarda yetersizlik duygusu yaşamışlardır. Yetersizliğe ilişkin durumların; EBA, Zoom, kaynak paylaşımı, ödev gönderme gibi süreçleri de içeren dijital platformların kullanımında yaşanan zorluklar, hazırlıksızlık hissi, etkileşimin az olması, ekranda matematiksel işlemleri yaparken zorlanma, uyum problemi, zaman yönetimi açısından zorlanma ve altyapı ile alanlarda olduğu görülmüştür. Bazı katılımcılar ise uzaktan eğitim sürecinde kendini yetersiz hissetmemiştir.

Araştırmada ortaya çıkan bir diğer sonuç, katılımcıların uzaktan eğitim sürecinde dijital ortamlara fazla maruz kalmalarının hem olumlu hem de olumsuz etkilere neden olmasıdır. Bu süreçten katılımcıların çoğunluğunun olumsuz olarak etkilendiği söylenebilir. Bu olumsuz durumlar; zamanı yönetememe, stres, kısıtlanmışlık hissi, daha az konuşma ve yalnızlaşma sonucu iletişimde zayıflama; baş, boyun, göz ağrıları, kilo değişimi ile oluşan fiziksel etkiler, gerçek dünya ve sanal dünya arasında bir denge kuramama, sabırsızlık, bunalmışlık hissi ve konsantrasyon eksikliğidir. Bu sonuç katılımcıların dijital yaşlanma ile ilgili görüşlerini ortaya çıkarmaktadır.

Araştırmanın bir başka sonucu, dijital araçlara ulaşamamanın katılımcılar üzerinde panik, stres, gerginlik, huzursuzluk, güçsüzlük ve boşluk hissi gibi duygular oluşturduğudur.

Araştırmada uzaktan eğitim sürecinde yaşanan duygusal değişimlerin neler olduğuna ilişkin sonuçlara bakıldığında katılımcıların çoğunluğu iletişimlerinin zayıfladığını ve bu değişimi yorgunluk hissi, soyutlanma, çabuk sinirlenme, insanlarla birlikte vakit geçirmeyi özleme, sabırsızlık, tedirginlik, stres, kaygı seviyesinde yükselme, olaylara karşı duyarsızlaşma ve aile içi iletişimin artması gibi

değişimlerin takip ettiği ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu sonuç mental yorgunluğu ortaya çıkarmakta ve katılımcıların çoğunluğunun belirttiği değişimlerin mental yorgunluk olduğu görülmektedir

Araştırma kapsamında gerçekleştirilen ve katılımcıların dijital tükenmişlikle baş edebilmek için verdikleri önerilerle ilişkin sonuçlar ise şöyledir; dijitaleri kullanırken süre sınırı koyma gibi zaman yönetimi, çeşitli hobilerin edinilmesi, alan uzmanlarından yardım alma ve dijitalerin kullanımında bilinçli olmaktır. Katılımcıların yanıtları incelendiğinde genel olarak önerilerin dijitalerin dışında olduğu görülmektedir

Uzaktan eğitim sürecinde ortaokul öğretmenlerinin çoğunluğunda dijital bağımlılık, dijital yaşlanma ve mental yorgunluğun neden olduğu etkiler gözlenmekte olup, araştırmaya katılan öğretmenlerin uzaktan eğitim süreci sonrasında dijital tükenmişlik yaşadıklarını söylenebilmektedir.

**Anahtar kavramlar:** Digital burnout, Distance education, Pandemic