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Research Article

The Relationship Between Digital Footprint Awareness and Digital Footprint Experiences: An Intergenerational Comparison[a]

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ABSTRACT

Digital footprint is one of the basic facts of digital life. Digital footprints are collections of data representing an entity that remains in electronic databases as a result of a person's online sharing or offline actions being monitored. When the relevant literature is examined, it is seen that the studies are aimed at providing benefits to users, users cannot benefit from data protection laws, and digital footprint awareness is measured. Digital footprint awareness is important for protection against risky online activities such as exposure to high technology, cyberbullying, internet or gaming addiction, exposure to pornography, and meeting strangers through online chat. Digital footprint awareness and experiences are important in terms of reducing the risks encountered in virtual environments, profiling individuals in their career lives and bilateral relations, and establishing their online reputations.

This study aims to contribute to the literature by analyzing digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences through digital nativeness, digital hybridity and digital immigration. In this context, the aim of the study is to examine the relationship between digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences and to determine whether digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences differ between generations. In the study, the survey method, which is one of the quantitative research methods, was used to collect data. Data were collected from 420 people through convenience sampling, online survey and face-to-face survey distribution to individuals living in the central districts of Konya. SPSS 22 and AMOS 24 programs were used in the analysis of the data. According to the research results; a low-level, negative and statistically significant relationship was found between digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences. In addition, it was determined that digital hybrids had higher digital footprint awareness than digital natives.

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1. Introduction

The agricultural society, industrial society, and the subsequent information society have transformed and developed both the lifestyles and business lives of societies. The digital age, which has left its mark on the 21st century, emphasizes a world where products and services are digitized, people are integrated with artificial intelligence, and people move between digital spaces and online reality. With the digital age, new concepts have emerged in the world.

One of the concepts that has made a name for itself in the digital world is the digital footprint. Societies have been affected by technological developments in every period from the past to the present. While societies continued to maintain the culture of agricultural society, people were introduced to the digital communication age with the internet entering the digitalization process. Digitalization is one of the important phenomena of the restructuring of individuals and groups in many areas of social life around digital communication and media infrastructures.

A digital footprint is a simple, easily accessible trace of information left on the screen by almost all users in the world, with all kinds of permissions, by touching, keyboard, or mouse, with the development of the internet. Being aware of the dangers and threats contained in the footprints left in digital environments; digital footprint awareness, which means acting carefully and cautiously when using digital environments, can also reduce negative digital footprint experiences. This awareness is very important for generations living in the digital world and forming the digital society.

In digital society, there are three generations that accept the reality of the digital world and adapt to it. These generations include digital natives born in 2000 and after, digital immigrants born before 1970, and digital hybrids born between 1970-1999.

Although the number of studies on digital footprints is increasing, it is observed that not enough research has been done on the protection of digital footprints. The conceptualization of digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences and the relationship between them are among the neglected areas in the literature. There is a need for a more detailed framework to understand digital footprint awareness and to be conscious of digital footprint experiences. No study has been found in the literature that comparatively addresses digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences in the context of three main generations. In this respect, this study is thought to contribute to the literature.

The aim of this study is to conceptualize digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences and to fill this gap by analyzing the relationship between them. Therefore, this study aims to determine digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experience states and to analyze intergenerational differences.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Digitalization Process

Although digitalization is not a new phenomenon, the challenges and opportunities that come with it are constantly changing (Almeida et al., 2020: 97). The term digitalization first appeared with its first contemporary use in an article published in the North American Review in 1971 (Brennen & Kreiss, 2016). Another definition of digitalization is "the restructuring of many areas of social life around digital communication and media infrastructures" (Brennen & Kreiss, 2016).

The most important factors driving social change and causing serious turning points are digitalization and industrialization (Tofan, 2022). The reason why digital society is considered a technological society is that information and communication are fundamental concepts. In this society, information can be bought, sold, and also stored. Information turns into a commercialized valuable commodity (Cornu, 2011: 2). Although digital society is used with similar terms as information society, it can be said that digital society is an advanced form of information society. The period intertwined with technology is called the digital age. The

digital age,"""society without accustoming it to time and space, ensuring the continuity of mobile life in the digital realm (Başarmak, 2021). In the era called the digital age, the digital tools people use cause changes in every aspect of life (Saykili, 2019: 2). The digital age is a period where information rapidly increases and is used through technology, especially the internet (Bozkurt, 2017).

2.2. Digital Footprint Awareness and Digital Footprint Experiences

People's daily internet usage, IP addresses, needed webpage addresses, fingerprints, DNA, reflections of face, voice, signature, the profile a person creates on social media, shares made on this profile, and self-introduction by taking photos, comments, shares, and likes can create a digital footprint (Shamsutdinova, 2020: 48-50). A digital footprint is the transfer of all kinds of personal permissions, by writing on screens, touching, using tools like keyboards and mice, in an electronic environment. A digital footprint refers to the traces people leave consciously or unconsciously in online environments. Sharing text and photos, sharing emails, sharing personal information, and many other things can leave a trace (Akkoyunlu, 2016).

A digital footprint refers to the information and data that people produce through purposeful action, i.e., the desired goal, or passive recording in their online movements, which consist of large data research derived from their current movements (Thatcher, 2014: 1769). The purposeful action and passive recording mentioned here are active and passive traces, which are types of digital footprints. Passive traces are traces created through interaction with a base that provides data to location files, such as mobile phone networks. Active traces are made by individual users (Girardin et al., 2008: 37).

Making online personal data accessible without the individual's intentional intervention is called a passive digital footprint. For example, data such as home sales, court records, and newspaper accounts found on the internet are public records. These records include personal data such as mobile phone numbers and political affiliations. These are traces that develop without the conscious intervention of the person (Madden et al., 2007: 3). Active footprints are data recorded by users, while passive footprints are data unconsciously recorded by users. Actions performed without the knowledge of individuals (such as opening an account or webpage, making social shares, resharing previous posts) are all searches that appear as advertisements, revealing hidden and concealed information. Hidden footprints represent passive digital footprints, while explicit footprints represent active digital footprints (Karabatak & Alanoğlu, 2022: 32). Examples of active footprints include "social media posts, emails, blog content, and visual shares" (Avansas, 2021).

The traces left on the internet may not always be positive. To create and maintain a positive digital identity, people need to be able to manage their digital footprints. The digital footprint is mostly used to track employees' online movements in the work environment. Therefore, digital footprint management is of serious importance (Kalbande, 2019: 1). The rapid change in digital visual culture is among the reasons for the continuous exponential increase of the digital footprint. Digital footprints generally consist of visual content such as photos and videos, in addition to the texts and sounds that people use and share. The fact that visual data has such a wide scope brings many problems with it. Users who benefit from visual data need to be able to manage digital processes to avoid digital system manipulations. The concept of digital footprint management needs to be understood in society and popularized at an early age (Mayda, 2022: 1037).

To manage their digital footprint, people need to be able to use online tools with sufficient proficiency. Individuals who spend time online, use technological devices such as phones and computers, and communicate online with their families and social circles, need to manage their digital footprints to minimize potential future problems. For people to properly manage their digital footprint, they must be aware of digital footprint awareness and literacy concepts

(eTwinning, 2016; Alay & Taksi Deveciyan, 2023: 1448).

Digital footprint awareness is defined as "the awareness of what and how a person perceives with all their sensory organs while interacting with another person or the environment." In digital environments, it is frequently used by people for activities aimed at meeting personal needs, such as online shopping, online banking, debt payment, socializing through sharing on social media, and online and offline games (Sürmelioğlu & Seferoğlu, 2019: 49). Many digital records are collected regardless of whether the user is aware of these actions. In a digitized life, the level of awareness is an important issue because it is crucial to be aware of the responsibilities regarding the functioning of digitized life and to inform individuals in the right direction for this purpose. In this context, 'digital awareness' is a current concept frequently used today (Karakuş, 2022: 13-14).

With evolving communication environments, digital footprints have become an extremely important issue for individuals. Digital footprints can become a situation that shapes individuals' profiles and builds their online reputations in both their career lives and interpersonal relationships (Koçyiğit, 2022: 1). In this case, individuals' lives in the digital environment are under consideration. Digital footprint experience or life is defined as the experience of traces left by every text, audio, photo, video, and information that the user shares and clicks after encountering, hearing, and acquiring things on the internet (Sürmelioğlu & Seferoğlu, 2019).

2.3. Generations

Networks and the internet, strengthened by rapidly changing and developing information technologies, are causing changes in the structure of society. The cultural and social changes experienced during this period lead to various differences among people. Just as there are generations that accept and adapt to the reality of the digital world, there is also a generation that rejects and opposes the reality of the digital world. Generations do not have the same interest and skill in technology. These differences consist of three main categories: digital natives, digital immigrants, and digital hybrids (Akyıl, 2021; Giddens, 2012; Karabulut, 2015).

2.3.1 Digital Natives

The concept of digital natives was first introduced by Mark Prensky (2001). Born in 2000 and later, digital natives place digital tools and environments at the most important part of their lives, see technology as a necessity of daily life rather than an obligation, and are the first generation to exist in this digital world with their abilities, having their own language, born with today's technology, and growing up with new technology. For this generation, digital activities resemble their native languages. They are accustomed to having digital toys and tools always with them. Since they enjoy spending time on the internet, they fill their time with games rather than serious work. Because they grew up in a digital environment, they think differently from other generations and develop information. Since digital natives speak "digital language" as their native language, there is a large gap between the digital native generation and the previous generation. It can be said that they are the children of the 21st century who can perform all daily tasks that can be done with new technologies (Cornu, 2011: 2; Kakırman Yıldız, 2012: 822; Karabulut, 2015: 16; Prensky, 2001: 2).

When looking at the existence of the digital native generation in the literature, the young individuals of the digital native generation are those with advanced knowledge and skills in information technologies. They have different learning styles that differentiate them from previous generations due to their upbringing and experiences with technology (Bennett et al., 2008: 777). Because this generation grew up within technology, they can apply knowledge spontaneously, knowing its value. This generation, born into technology, does not need special lessons to learn computers. They do not need to read user manuals. They intuitively and skillfully master electronic devices, informatics, and computers, i.e., technology-related topics and tools (Cornu, 2011). In the literature, there are different

concepts associated with this generation, such as "Generation Z (Howe and Strauss, 2000), Net Generation (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005), N Gen, D Gen." However, the most descriptive one is the concept of "Digital Natives." Digital natives are equipped individuals who have the ability to look, think, and use their own language technologically when using computers, mobile phones, or video games (Autry & Berge, 2011: 461-463).

Digital natives are intuitive learners born in or after the digital age and always have an active phone or another connected device. They are a generation comfortable with multitasking, able to switch tasks quickly, transfer information rapidly, highly social, and multimedia-oriented (Digital Immigrants vs Digital Natives: Closing the Gap, 2015; Riegel & Mete, 2018: 51).

2.3.2. Digital Immigrants

Older generations born before 1970, who feel more alienated from the world surrounded by digital technologies compared to newer generations, are called "digital immigrants" (Prensky, 2001). They are also defined as the Baby Boomer generation (those born between 1946 and 1964) (Autry & Berge, 2011). Older Boomers represent a more socially dependent generation, good at using information and even answering problems beyond the information presented. Older Boomers are more likely to be digital immigrants (Ransdell et al., 2011: 931).

Individuals who came of age before digitalization are defined as immigrants (Kuehn, 2012: 129). Older, less educated internet users are defined as digital immigrants (Hoffmann et al., 2014: 155-161). Digital immigrants are older people who learn digital media with great effort (Loos, 2012: 2).

For digital immigrants, digital technology is a tool used to perform their tasks. (Shahrokh et al., 2019: 3) Learning the language of technology for digital immigrants is likened to learning a second language. This generation seeks a way to learn a second language. After a person learns a new language, they can master it, but it is quite difficult to encounter an immigrant who has lost their native accent. There are people who use the language of technology, which they learned as a second language, with a thick or heavy accent, or just enough to get by. Digital immigrants want to use the language of technology as their native language, but they prefer to print out their emails instead of reading them on screen, share the site itself instead of sending the URL via email, or use user manuals instead of learning by using software programs (Toledo, 2007: 86-87).

Digital immigrants prefer to communicate via phone calls and emails or to perform their tasks (Molnár et al., 2017: 90-91). They use their preferred tools, mobile phones, desktop or portable computers. However, they prefer not to use them in possible situations. Even though it is easier to make appointments and payments online, they prefer to do these face-to-face or read real books instead of reading practical virtual books.While some struggle with shopping from online stores or using automated cashiers that scan groceries, they enjoy face-to-face shopping at the supermarket and chatting with cashiers. Even though digital immigrants use technological devices and home appliances, they ask their children or grandchildren for help instead of trying to solve "computer problems" themselves (David, 2022: 160).

2.3.3. Digital Hybrids

Digital hybrids are the name given to generations born between 1970-1999. As the third generation, the concepts of digital nomad (Palfrey and Gasser) and digital tourist (Taledo) have been proposed. Digital hybrids are a combination of the behaviors of digital natives and immigrants (Kakırman Yıldız, 2016: 947). Like digital immigrants, printed sources are also important among digital hybrids. They may not have been born into the world of technology like digital natives, but Google is often used for initial scanning purposes. There is a large gap between digital natives and digital immigrants. Digital hybrids are the intermediate stage that connects these two generations. Although digital hybrids resemble digital natives, they are not that similar. While hybrids try to use all technological resources, they cannot use them as effectively and actively as digital

natives (Kakırman Yıldız, 2016; 948). Young adults who turn 21 just before or just after the beginning of the millennium constitute the millennial generation or Generation Y (Pirie & Worcester, 1998: 8). Digital hybrids, who encountered technology later (Büdün Aydın, 2023: 1681), are also described as creative, solution-oriented, socially conscious, and team-oriented (DeVaney, 2015: 11).

3. Literature Review

When the literature on digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences was examined, the following results were obtained in domestic and foreign studies in the literature:

Camacho et al. (2012) epistemologically addressed topics such as identity construction, impression management, friendship, network structure, and privacy awareness to increase undergraduate students' awareness of digital footprints and emphasized the necessity of conducting research on SNS. The research presents both quantitative and qualitative data showing how students shape and perceive their identities.

In this study by Zimerman (2012), after providing information about the structure of digital natives, a comparison was made with individuals born before 1980. Differences in search techniques were observed between young and old groups. It was concluded that there are significant differences in the thought patterns of individuals belonging to different age groups.

The findings of a study by Furini (2014) revealed that digital native and digital immigrant users were not concerned about privacy and ignored many features of location-aware services. It was observed that digital natives attached more importance to location awareness than digital immigrants. Furthermore, it was concluded that users' concerns about these services could improve if they were willing to share their personal locations as long as their personal interests continued.

In the study conducted by Azucar et al. (2018), the predictive power of the digital footprint on the Big 5 personality traits and the behavioral changes of these personalities were measured. The findings concluded that the accuracy of the predictions was consistent across the Big 5 personality traits, and this accuracy increased when the analyses included demographic information and multiple types of digital footprints.

Koidl et al. (2018) investigated whether nearly 300 participants were aware of their digital footprints on social media. The study presents the experimental design and results, as well as general challenges, to motivate further discussion on users' awareness of social media use.

Arya et al. (2019),aimed to examine the use of marketing adaptability of branded mobile applications (apps) to understand the relationship between consumers and their commitment to branded apps. The findings also confirm that comprehensive consumption values are the most important factor in the adoption of branded apps.

A small-scale, qualitative study on children's understanding of the concept of digital footprint was conducted by Buchanan et al. (2019). It was found that children aged 10-12 are at an appropriate age to develop and educate a positive digital footprint. Another finding is that children manage their digital footprints in strategic ways. As a result of this study, it is recommended that parents be educated about digital footprints.

In the study by Sürmelioğlu and Seferoğlu (2019), a data collection tool titled "Survey on the Use of Digital Environments" was used to determine higher education students' digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences. The results of the research showed that students had high digital footprint awareness but low digital footprint experiences.

The aim of the study by Wook et al. (2019) is to determine the digital footprint and awareness levels in new media. Social media brings out problems rather than advantages of new-age technologies. This study concluded that most users are aware of the

negative aspects of their digital footprint but are still unaware of the security implications of internet use.

The study by Guinchard (2020) also aims to reveal the flaws of the NHS X (National Health Service) project created by governments. The study concluded that the NHS X application lacked transparency, the small amount of information provided was ambiguous, and it did not fully comply with data protection laws. Another flaw is that the private sector's digital footprints are used to track people, regardless of what governments do.

The study by Kumar and Raj (2020) investigated the digital footprint experiences, digital footprint awareness, and attitudes towards online education of higher education students (teachers and students). The results of the research revealed that participants had moderate digital footprint experiences and high digital footprint awareness. It was reported that students in the older age group had higher levels of digital etiquette. While students have strong confidence in electronic literature, they reflect a moderately positive attitude towards online education.

The aim of the study conducted by Tengku Wook et al. (2020) is to evaluate user experience to validate user needs in digital footprint awareness applications developed with a triangulation technique that includes three user experience testing methods: predictability, thinking aloud, and observation to receive feedback and suggestions from experts. The study results show that a significant aspect of user satisfaction from the application is the use of attractive colors, clear and appropriate texts, and clear and systematic instructions that reduce the user's cognitive strain.

According to the findings of this study by Feher (2021), universal forms of online personalization often follow conscious decisions; this means that people control 70% of their digital footprints. The remaining 30% leads to undesirable consequences such as identity theft and kidnapping due to unconscious decisions.

The aim of the study by Taş and Bülbül (2021) is to determine the digital footprint awareness level of social media users. As a result of the research, it was observed that the participants' awareness levels were high, there was no difference in the variables of age and place of residence, and there were differences between groups in terms of the variables of time spent on the internet and computer usage proficiency.

The study conducted by Yılmaz Soylu et al. (2021) aimed to examine the digital footprint awareness of middle school students according to grade level, gender, and time spent on electronic devices and environments.It has been observed that female students have a higher awareness of their digital footprint in terms of personal information sharing and online games compared to male students. As a result of the research, the digital footprint scale was found to be a valid and reliable tool that can be used by researchers, educators, administrators, and parents.

The research conducted by Afyon (2022) aimed to determine the digital footprint awareness levels and experiences of Sakarya University Faculty of Communication students. According to the findings, it was concluded that the participants had a high level of digital footprint awareness. It was observed that the participants' digital footprint experiences were low. Female students have higher digital footprint awareness than male students.

In the study conducted by Çalışkan and Aktın (2022), a total of 6 different conceptual categories were reached as a result of the analysis of middle school students' metaphors. These are; digital personal data traces, digital object, digital permanent record data repository, historicization of digital information, digital tracking, and digital identity recognition tool categories. According to the findings, the categories with the most metaphors produced were personal data traces, digital tracking, digital objects, and digital permanent record data storage. When the explanations of the metaphors were examined generally, it was concluded that the concept of digital footprint is not fully known by middle school students.

The study conducted by Gökdemir (2022) aimed to transfer the traditional phenomenon of privacy to the dimension of digital privacy and to discuss the pros and cons between the individual and the third party. As a result of the research, there is a possibility that content shared today may be used against the individual in the future and put them in a difficult situation. Therefore, no application should be fully trusted, and not every content should be shared in virtual environments.

The aim of the study conducted by Karabatak and Alanoğlu (2022) is to reveal the relationships between faculty members' gender, internet usage time (daily usage time and years of usage), online environment usage, digital footprint experiences, and digital footprint awareness. As a result of the findings, it was revealed that faculty members have high digital footprint awareness and low negative digital environment experiences. It was observed that female faculty members had significantly higher digital footprint experiences and awareness than male faculty members. It was found that faculty members mostly used online chat tools, social networks, and e-mail services, and least used blogs, learning management systems, and Wiki. Faculty members stated that their digital media shares reflect their true thoughts and that they do not regret these shares, and that they share their writings in the digital environment after checking them.

The study conducted by Sanin (2022) aims to develop a digital footprint awareness scale for middle school students and to examine the relationship between digital footprint awareness and information security awareness. According to the findings of the research, a high relationship was found between digital footprint awareness and information security awareness. Participants who are conscious about social media use and data sharing have a high rate of applying this. Among the research results, the lowest relationship was found between attacks and threats and privacy.

The study conducted by Karal and Kaçmaz (2023) aims to examine high school students' digital footprint awareness and digital life situations. As a result of the research, it was observed that the participants' digital footprint awareness was at a moderate level, and their digital footprint experiences were low.

In the study conducted by Koçyiğit and Özkul (2023), when digital footprint awareness was evaluated, participants' age, education level, gender,a significant difference was found between socio-demographic characteristics such as marital status and digital footprint awareness levels. It was observed that women's overall digital footprint awareness average was higher than men's, participants aged 46 and over had the lowest awareness, and participants aged 32-38 had the highest awareness.

The aim of the study conducted by Taş and Bülbül (2021) is to determine the effect of individuals' digital footprint awareness on their decision-making styles when purchasing products online. As a result of the findings, it was observed that participants were aware that their online activities could affect them, they made decisions as they wished, there were differences between genders in some sub-dimensions, but generally there was no difference in any sub-dimension. There are differences in digital footprint awareness among the demographic characteristics of the participants. Furthermore, in the analysis conducted within the scope of demographic variables, it was concluded that there is a relationship between digital footprint and conscious awareness, and between digital footprint and some sub-dimensions of consumer decision-making styles. The path coefficient between gender and perfectionism was not found to be statistically significant. It was observed that the digital footprint awareness level of the participants did not show a significant difference in terms of the internet usage duration variable.

The study conducted by Uyanık Erkılıç (2024) mapped social media data with digital footprints. The aim of this study is to examine the behaviors and travel trends of tourists visiting the Cappadocia region between 2005-2022, and to determine the most popular places for tourists as a result of changes in tourist density over the years. As a result of

the research, it was determined that economic crises, terrorist attacks, epidemics, etc. these factors affected the tourist mobility and visitor density of the region.

Based on these studies in the literature, the main problem of the research emerged as the idea of addressing the relationship between digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences from the perspective of intergenerational differences.

4. Data, Methodology and Analysis

4.1.Subject and Problem of the Research

The subject of this research is to determine the relationship between digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences, and whether there is an intergenerational difference in terms of digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences. The main problem of this research is: "Is there a relationship between digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences?" and "Do digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences show a difference in terms of generations?" Within the framework of this main question, the following research questions were created.

-Is there a relationship between digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences?

-Does digital footprint awareness differ in terms of demographic variables?

-Do digital footprint experiences differ in terms of demographic variables?

-Does digital footprint awareness differ in terms of generations?

-Do digital footprint experiences differ in terms of generations?

4.2. Aim and Importance of the Research

This research aims to examine the relationship between digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences, and to determine whether digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences differ among generations. In line with these aims, the digitalization process has been addressed. In this process, the concept of digital footprint and generations are included. This research is important because it is the first study in the literature to compare digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences in terms of three digital generations.

4.3.Research Method

This research aims to determine the digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experience statuses of individuals living in Konya province, categorized as digital natives (born in 2000 and after), digital hybrids (born between 1971-1999), and digital immigrants (born in 1970 and before), and to analyze intergenerational differences in these scales. The survey method, a quantitative research method, was used. Data was collected through online surveys via convenience sampling and face-to-face survey distribution.

4.4. Population and Sample

Individuals living in the central districts of Konya province (Selçuklu, Karatay, Meram) constitute the research population. The sample consists of individuals from different generations (digital natives, digital immigrants, and digital hybrids) living in these districts. According to 2023 population data, 695,771 people live in Selçuklu district, 375,919 people in Karatay District, and 347,341 people in Meram District (https://www.nufusu.com/ilceleri/konya-ilceleri-nufusu). According to these data, the population consists of 1,419,031 people. According to Yazıcıoğlu and Erdoğan (2004: 50), 384 people represent the population with a 0.05 sampling error. In this study, a total of 439 individuals from different generations were reached.

4.5. Ethics Committee Approval

The study titled "The Relationship Between Digital Footprint Awareness and Digital Footprint Experiences: An Intergenerational Comparison" adhered to scientific research and publication ethics. Ethics committee approval for the study was obtained from the Necmettin Erbakan University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research Ethics

Committee Presidency with the date 09/06/2023 and number 2023/259.

4.6. Data Collection Tools

In this research, a survey form created from the Digital Footprint Awareness and Digital Footprint Experiences scales developed by Sürmelioğlu and Seferoğlu (2019) was used. The survey used in the scope of the research consists of two parts. The first part contains statements regarding the demographic information of the participants. In this section, questions such as participants' personal characteristics, gender, marital status, age range, computer usage skills, and daily internet/computer usage time were utilized. The second part includes statements related to a 12-item scale questioning "Digital footprint awareness" status and statements related to a 16-item scale questioning "Digital footprint experience" status. In the research, answers to the statements were sought according to a 5-point Likert scale.

4.7. Data Analysis

Surveys were delivered to participants face-to-face and online. The obtained data results were analyzed using SPSS 22 and AMOS 24 programs. Data collected from 439 participants were first subjected to outlier analysis, and 19 survey forms were not included in the analyses. Analyses were then proceeded with the remaining 420 data, and frequency, validity, reliability analyses, normality test, difference tests, and correlation analyses were performed.

4.8. Research Model and Hypotheses

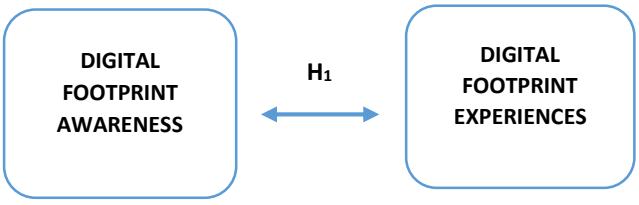

Figure 1. Research Model

H_1: There is a negative and significant relationship between digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences.

H_2: Digital footprint awareness shows a significant difference according to demographic variables.

H_{2a}: Digital footprint awareness differs according to the gender variable.

H_{2b}: Digital footprint awareness differs according to marital status.

H_{2c}: Digital footprint awareness differs according to generations (age variable).

H_3: Digital footprint experiences show a significant difference according to demographic variables.

H_{3a}: Digital footprint experiences differ according to gender.

H_{3b}: Digital footprint experiences differ according to marital status.

H_{3c}: Digital footprint experiences differ according to generations (age variable).

5. Findings

This section presents the analyses and findings based on the data obtained from the survey participants to determine the relationships between individuals' digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences, and the differences according to demographic characteristics.

5.1. Demographic Information of Survey Respondents

This section includes frequency analyses conducted to determine the demographic information of the survey respondents. First, information regarding the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table1. *Distribution of Participants by Demographic Characteristics*

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Marital Status	Frequency	Percent	Generation	Frequency	Percent
Female	257	61,2	Married	201	47,9	Digiital Natives	139	33,1
Male	163	38,8	Single	196	46,7	Digital Hybrids	189	45,0
Total	420	100,0	Other	23	5,5	Digital İmmigrants	92	21,9
			Total	420	100,0	Total	420	100,0

When examining the distribution of participants by gender, 61.2% of the participants are female and 38.8% are male. According to these data, it is understood that the majority of the participants are female. When looking at the distribution of participants by marital status, 47.9% are married, 46.7% are single, and 5.5% chose the "other" option. When examining the age ranges of the participants, 33.1% were born in 2000 and later, 45.0% were born between 1971-1999, and 21.9% were born in 1970 and earlier. According to the relevant data, the majority of participants are those born between 1971 and 1999, in other words, the generation of digital hybrids. Furthermore, while digital hybrids and digital natives constitute the vast majority of participants (78.1%), it is understood that only about one in five participants is a digital immigrant.

5.2. Validity Analysis

5.2.1. Factor Analysis for Digital Footprint Awareness Variable

This section presents the confirmatory factor analysis for the digital footprint awareness variable. To confirm the factor structure of the digital footprint awareness scale, confirmatory factor analysis was performed using AMOS 24.0, and "to achieve an ideal model fit, modification correction paths were established between some error terms in line with modification indices, and the factor structure model was created according to the drawn covariances."

"The regression values on the arrows in the factor structure model obtained after confirmatory factor analysis show the power of observed variables to predict latent variables, in other words, factor loadings (Karagöz, 2017, p. 481)." It is observed that the factor loadings of the statements related to the digital footprint awareness scale vary between 0.61 and 0.82. "Factor loading values above 0.71 are considered 'excellent', between 0.63-0.70 'very good', between 0.62-0.55 'good', between 0.54-0.45 'acceptable', and between 0.44-0.32 'weak', while statements with factor loadings below 0.30 are not considered (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018, p. 509)." According to the values in factor analysis, the relevant factor loadings are statistically sufficient and the relevant values are statistically significant (p=0.00). From these findings, it is understood that the statements are correctly loaded onto the scale. This finding indicates that the relevant statements are correctly loaded onto the scale.

Furthermore, when looking at the fit values in the confirmatory factor analysis, the values show acceptable fit,only the RMSEA value remained above the threshold (≤0.08), but some authors suggest that a value below 1 may be sufficient (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018; Kaplan, 2000). Considering both these data and the factor loadings, the factor structure is confirmed. In this context, the structure in the model will be used in the analysis related to the digital footprint awareness scale.

5.2.2. Factor Analysis for the Digital Footprint Experience Variable

Under this heading, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed using AMOS 24.0 to confirm the factor structure of the Digital Footprint Experience Scale.

According to the analysis performed, items with factor loadings below 0.45, statistically insignificant, and reducing reliability were

removed. Accordingly, items with factor loadings below the mentioned threshold; item 14 ("Shares on online tools affect me positively."; factor loading: 0.044, p=0.405), item 13 ("My shares in digital environments reflect my true thoughts."; factor loading: 0.043, p=0.413), item 10 ("The content of my search results in digital environments appears as advertisements to me in digital environments."; factor loading: 0.073, p=0.170) and item 15 ("I think I positively influence other people on online tools."; factor loading: 0.086, p=0.108) were sequentially removed from the model, and analyses were repeated after each removal. At this stage, the fact that all four items removed from the analyses were reverse-coded items can be considered an indication that participants did not fully understand these items and did not read them carefully.

Since the desired fit index values and composite validity values could not be reached after these operations, despite being statistically significant, items with factor loadings below the relevant threshold and also determined to reduce scale reliability were removed: item 1 ("An account was opened in my name in digital environments without my knowledge."; factor loading: 0.324), item 16 ("I am concerned that people on online tools may have negative thoughts about me."; factor loading: 0.384) and item 12 ("I am concerned that the content I upload in digital environments may negatively affect my professional life."; factor loading: 0.377) were sequentially removed from the model, and analyses were repeated after each removal. After all these operations, modification adjustments were made to achieve ideal model fit, and the factor structure model was created by drawing covariances.

When examining the values on the arrows in model, it is observed that the factor loadings of the statements related to the digital footprint experience scale range from 0.46 to 0.77. "Factor loading; values above 0.71 are considered 'excellent', between 0.63-0.70 'very good', between 0.62-0.55 'good', between 0.54-0.45 'acceptable', and between 0.44-0.32 'weak', while statements with a factor loading below 0.30 are not considered (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018, p. 509)." According to the values in model, it is seen that the relevant factor loadings are statistically sufficient and the relevant values are statistically significant (p=0.00). From these findings, it is understood that the statements are correctly loaded onto the scale. This finding indicates that the relevant statements are correctly loaded onto the scale.

Furthermore, when looking at the fit values in the confirmatory factor analysis, it is seen that the values show acceptable fit, and when considering both these data and the factor loadings, the factor structure is confirmed. In this context, the structure in the model will be used in the analysis related to the digital footprint experience scale.

5.3. Reliability Analysis

"Cronbach's Alpha values were calculated to determine the reliability or internal consistency of the data collection tool, in other words, the scales." The relevant values are given in Table 2.

Table 2. *Reliability Values of the Scales*

Scale/ Variable	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	CR	AVE
Digital Footprint Awareness	12	0,953	0,936	0,545
Digital Footprint Experiences	9	0,916	0,834	0,380

"The Cronbach's Alpha value expresses the fit value dependent on the correlation between items. The relevant value indicates the reliability levels of the items in the scales. While a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 and above is considered highly reliable for a scale; in social sciences, in cases where the number of items is small, a reliability value of 0.60 and above is also stated to meet the reliability condition (Sipahi et al., 2008)." In this regard, as seen in Table 2, the Cronbach's Alpha value of the digital footprint awareness scale is 0.936, and the Cronbach's Alpha value of the digital footprint experience scale is 0.834. According to these values; the scales are

statistically reliable. In addition, "CR and AVE values" were calculated for convergent validity. "According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the CR value should be above 0.60; and the AVE value should be above 0.50." According to Table 2, it is seen that the CR and AVE values are also within acceptable limits. Although the AVE value for the digital footprint experience variable is below the acceptable limit of 0.50, it was decided to include it in the research, considering that the factor loadings and reliability values of the relevant scale are above the acceptable limit. Consequently, it is seen that the research variables provide both structural validity and convergent validity.

5.4. Descriptive Statistics

This section contains descriptive statistics for the research. Table 3 presents descriptive statistics covering the perceptions of individuals who answered the survey regarding digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences.

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics for Variables*

Variables	X	SS	Min.	Max.
Digital Footprint Awareness*	3,76	0,86	1,08	5,00
Digital Footprint Experiences**	1,46	0,56	1,00	3,56

* * On the scale; 1="Strongly Disagree" and 5="Strongly Agree".
** On the scale; 1="Never" and 5="Always".
X= Arithmetic Mean; SS= Standard Deviation.
n=420

When examining the descriptive statistics for the variables, it is seen that the average digital footprint awareness is 3.76 (X=3.76±0.86) and the average digital footprint experience is (X=1.46±0.56). "In the context of the 5-point Likert scale, the average values for the relevant variables are '1.00-2.33' low level, '2.34-3.66' medium level, and '3.67-5,"00' is considered a high level", it is understood that the digital footprint awareness of the individuals participating in the research is at a high level; while their digital footprint experiences are at a low level. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of the scale statements for digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences of the individuals participating in the research.

5.5. Examination of the Normality Distribution of Data

To determine whether the data are normally distributed and which tests should be used in the analysis of the data, the data must be subjected to a normality test. First, skewness and kurtosis values, which are frequently used in testing univariate normality, were examined.

Tablo 4. *Skewness and Kurtosis Values for Variables*

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
Digital Footprint Awareness *	-1,127	1,231
Digital Footprint Experience **	1,787	2,990

**On the scale; 1="Strongly Disagree" and 5="Strongly Agree".
** On the scale; 1="Never" and 5="Always".
n=420

When the data in Table 4 are examined, it is seen that the skewness and kurtosis values for all variables are between -3 and +3. According to Groeneveld and Meeden (1984), Moors (1986), Hopkins and Weeks (1990), and De Carlo (1997), these values are considered sufficient for normal distribution. Accordingly, it can be said that the variables are within the limits of normality.

5.6. Difference Tests

This section includes analyses examining whether the average values obtained from the participants' responses regarding digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences differ according to the demographic characteristics of the participants.

5.6.1. Difference Tests by Gender

Table 5 presents the t-test data conducted to determine whether there is a difference in digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experience variables according to the gender of the individuals participating in the research.

Table 5. *Comparison of Variables by Gender*

VARIABLE	Gender	N	X	SS	t	P
Digital Footprint Awareness	Female	257	3,84	,817	2,44	,015
	Male	163	3,63	,902		
Digital Footprint Experiences	Female	257	1,39	,497	-3,08	,002
	Male	163	1,57	,631		

As seen in Table 5, it is understood that the average values for digital footprint awareness (t=2,44; p<0,05) and digital footprint experience (t=-3,08; p<0,05) variables differ statistically significantly according to the gender of the individuals participating in the research. In this case, hypotheses H2a and H2b are supported.

When looking at the average values to determine whether there is a significant difference between the groups, it is seen that women's digital footprint awareness (X=3,84±0,817) is at a higher level compared to men's digital footprint awareness (X=3,63±0,902); on the other hand, women's digital footprint experience levels (X=1,39±0,497) were found to be at a lower level compared to men (X=1,57±0,631)

5.6.2.Difference Tests by Marital Status

Table 6. *Comparison of Variables by Marital Status*

Variable	Marital Status	N	X	Sd	F	p	Difference between groups (Tamhane's T2)
Digital Footprint Awareness	Married (1)	201	3,73	2/417	10,09	,000	1-3; 2-3
	Single (2)	196	3,87				
	Other(3)	23	3,04				
Digital Footprint Experiences	Married (1)	201	1,41	2/417	2,17	,116	-
	Single (2)	196	1,52				
	Other(3)	23	1,48				

Table 6 presents the data for the Anova test conducted to determine whether there is a difference in the average digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experience variables among individuals participating in the study, based on their marital status.Since the variance for the digital footprint awareness variable was not homogeneously distributed (Levene=15.097; p=0.000<0.05), Tamhane's T2 test was performed to determine significant differences between groups. Accordingly, it was determined that the digital footprint awareness of individuals who stated their marital status as "other" (X=3.04) was lower than that of married (X=3.73) and single (X=3.87) individuals.

According to Table 6, it is understood that the average values for digital footprint awareness differ statistically significantly according to the marital status of the participants (F=10,09; p<0,05); while the average values for digital footprint experience do not differ statistically significantly (p>0,05). In this case, hypothesis H2b is supported; however, hypothesis H3b is not supported.

5.6.3. Difference Tests by Age Range (Generations)

Table 7. *Comparison of Variables by Age Range Difference Tests*

VARIABLE	Age Range (Generation)	n	X	Sd	F	p	Difference between groups (Tamhane's T2)
Digital Footprint Awareness	2000 and later (1)	139	3,86	2/417	67,55	,000	1-2; 1-3; 2-3
	1971-1999 (2)	189	4,06				
	1970 and earlier (3)	92	2,98				
Digital Footprint Experiences	2000 and later (1)	139	1,51	2/417	,798	,451	-
	1971-1999 (2)	189	1,43				
	1970 and earlier (3)	92	1,48				

Table 7 presents the data for the Anova test conducted to determine whether there is a difference in the average digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experience variables among individuals participating in the study, based on their age ranges.

According to Table 7, it was found that the average values for digital footprint awareness showed a statistically significant difference (F=67.55; p<0.05) based on the age ranges of the participants; however, the average values for digital footprint experience did not show a statistically significant difference (p>0.05). In this case, hypothesis H2c is supported, while hypothesis H3c is not supported. Since the variance for the digital footprint awareness variable was not homogeneously distributed (Levene=43.856; p=0.000<0.05), Tamhane's T2 test was performed to determine significant differences between groups. Accordingly, it was determined that the digital footprint awareness of individuals born in 1970 and earlier (X=2.98) was lower than that of individuals born between 1971-1999 (X=4.06) and individuals born in 2000 and later (X=3.86); furthermore, the digital footprint awareness of individuals born between 1971-1999 (X=4.06) was higher than that of individuals born in 2000 and later (X=3.86) and individuals born in 1970 and earlier (X=2.98). In other words, it is observed that the digital footprint awareness of digital natives participating in the study is higher than others, while the digital footprint awareness of digital immigrants participating in the study is lower than others.

5.7. Correlation Analyses

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experience perceptions of individuals participating in the study. The findings for this analysis are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. *Correlation Coefficients for Variables*

VARIABLES		(1)	(2)
Digital Footprint Awareness (1)	R	1	
Digital Footprint Experiences (2)	R p	- ,122* ,012	1

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (p<0.05).
** n=420; r=correlation coefficient; p=significance

"The correlation coefficient can take values between -1 and +1. As the absolute value of the coefficient approaches 1, the strength of the relationship between the two variables increases, and as it approaches 0, the strength of the relationship decreases (Karagöz, 2017, p. 343). A correlation coefficient 'r value' indicates a low-level relationship between 0.10 and 0.29, a moderate-level relationship between 0.30 and 0.69, and a high-level relationship between 0.70 and 1.00 (Büyüköztürk, 2002)." In line with this, according to the Pearson correlation analysis findings shown in Table 8, there is a low-level, negative (r=-0.122) and statistically significant (p=0.012<0.05) relationship between digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experience.In other words, as individuals' digital footprint awareness increases, their perceptions of digital footprint experiences decrease; and as individuals' digital footprint awareness decreases, their perceptions of digital footprint experiences increase. Within the framework of this finding, the basic hypothesis H1 of the research was accepted.

5.8. Results Regarding Hypothesis Tests

Table 9 shows the analyses and results conducted to test the research hypotheses. According to Table 9, 6 of the total 9 hypotheses of the research were supported, 1 was partially supported, and 2 were not supported.

Table 9. *Test Results of Research Hypotheses*

HYPOTHESIS	Analysis	Result
H1: There is a negative and significant relationship between digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences	Correlation	Supported
H2: Digital footprint awareness shows a significant difference according to demographic variables.	t-test Anova	Supported
H2a: Digital footprint awareness differs according to gender variable	t-test	Supported
H2b: Digital footprint awareness differs according to marital status variable.	Anova	Supported
H2c: Digital footprint awareness differs according to generations (age variable).	Anova	Supported
H3: Digital footprint experiences show a significant difference according to demographic variables.	t-test Anova	Partially Supported
H3a: Digital footprint experiences differ according to gender variable	t-test	Supported
H3b: Digital footprint experiences differ according to marital status variable	Anova	Not Supported
H3c: Digital footprint experiences differ according to generations (age variable).	Anova	Not Supported

6. Conclusion and Evaluation

All movements and activities performed on the internet cause people to leave digital footprints. A digital footprint refers to the trace left by all actions people perform on the internet. The digital footprints left also contain risks. The information contained in this digital footprint is the responsibility of the users. The presence of users of all ages shows how important digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences are in controlling risks. Due to the uncertainty of user age limits, more effective solutions are needed to reduce the risks encountered in virtual environments. How aware are people of these traces they leave, or how do these traces affect their lives? This study aims to contribute to the literature by examining digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences through digital natives (born in 2000 and after), digital hybrids (born between 1971-1999), and digital immigrants (born in 1970 and before).

The study attempted to determine the relationship between digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences, and whether there is a difference between generations in terms of digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences. The study aimed to reveal the profile of individuals from different generations (digital natives, digital immigrants, and digital hybrids) living in the central districts of Konya province (Selçuklu, Karatay, Meram). The results were interpreted based on the responses of the users who participated in the study.

As a result of the study conducted by Sürmelioğlu and Seferoğlu (2019), it was observed that students had high digital footprint awareness and low digital footprint experiences. The results of this study are similar to the conducted study. As a result of the study conducted by Karal and Kaçmaz (2023), it was observed that the participants had moderate digital footprint awareness and low digital footprint experiences. In the study conducted by Kumar and Raj (2020), digital footprint experiences among participants were moderate,"""digital footprint awareness was found to be at a high level. In this study, digital footprint experiences were found to be at a low level, similar to the study by Karal and Kaçmaz (2023). A similar point with the study by Kumar and Raj (2020) is that the digital footprint awareness of the individuals participating in the research is at a high level.

The first important finding of this research, "a negative relationship between digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences," can be explained as follows: People acting carefully in the digital environment, being aware of the footprints they leave in the digital environment and the risks and threats these may cause, will reduce their negative digital footprint experiences. For example, the risks of facing legal sanctions and the likelihood of family and professional life being negatively affected by these shares will decrease.

This research shows that there is a negative and significant relationship between digital footprint awareness and digital footprint

experiences, and that digital footprint awareness varies according to generations (age variable). It is observed that there is a significant difference in digital footprint experiences according to demographic variables and that digital footprint experiences vary according to generations (age variable). It is a striking finding that the digital footprint awareness of digital hybrids is higher than that of digital natives. The study by Koçyiğit and Özkul (2023) also shows similarities with the results of this study, as digital hybrids have higher digital footprint awareness than others, and digital immigrants have lower digital footprint awareness than others. In the study conducted by Sevilen (2023), while there were not many differences in the social media habits of generations, there were significant differences between generations Y and Z in terms of digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experience. It was found that generation Y had a relatively higher level of awareness than generation Z; and generation Z had a higher rate of experience than generation Y. In this study, it is observed that the digital footprint awareness of digital hybrids is higher than others, and the digital footprint awareness of digital immigrants participating in the research is lower than others. The study shows similarities with Sevilen (2023)'s study.

The second important finding of this research, "digital hybrids (born between 1971-1999) having higher digital footprint awareness than digital natives," can be associated with the fact that digital hybrids, due to their age, are a working, productive generation with high responsibilities and expectations in life. This generation has to act more carefully in the digital environment due to the risk of losing their job, reputation, career, and earned income. This situation can increase the digital footprint awareness of digital hybrids. Digital natives, on the other hand, are a generation that is still in education, has fewer responsibilities in life, is more prone to making mistakes, is bolder, and acts more freely due to their youth. Therefore, it can be said that they act more carelessly in terms of leaving a digital footprint. The low awareness of digital immigrants can be associated with this generation, born in 1970 and before, using the internet mostly for spending time, socializing, and adding meaning to life. This generation can mostly be referred to as retirees or those who have married off their children and use the internet to spend time at home. Therefore, it can be said that they act more unconsciously while browsing these platforms and may not know or may ignore the consequences of their shares and comments.

In this study, while women's digital footprint awareness was found to be at a higher level than men's digital footprint awareness;on the other hand, it has been determined that women's digital footprint experience levels are lower than men's. In the study by Karabatak and Alanoğlu (2022), it was observed that female participants' digital footprint experiences and awareness were significantly higher than male participants'.

In this study, the result that women's digital footprint awareness is higher than men's shows similarity with the conducted study. Yılmaz Soylu et al. (2021) found that female students' digital footprint awareness in terms of dimension was higher than male students'. Similarly, in this study, it was observed that women's digital footprint awareness was at a higher level compared to men's digital footprint awareness. In this respect, it shows similarity with the study.

The third important finding of this study, "Women having a higher level of digital footprint awareness and a lower level of digital footprint experiences compared to men," can be explained as follows: Women, due to their meticulous and detailed nature, act more carefully in their actions, have more developed empathy, are more careful in their sharing and comments, and this may have been effective in increasing their awareness while reducing negative experience.

The following answers were given to the research questions posed at the beginning of the study through the findings:

1. There is a negative and significant relationship between digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences.

2. Digital footprint awareness shows a significant difference according to demographic variables.

3. Digital footprint experiences show a significant difference according to demographic variables. The results are partially supported.

4. The average values of digital footprint awareness show statistically significant differences across generations.

5. The average values of digital footprint experiences do not show statistically significant differences across generations.

Considering the findings obtained at the end of the research and the literature review regarding the variables; some suggestions have been made regarding digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences across generations:

- Digital hybrids (1971-1999) may positively influence the digital footprint awareness of digital immigrants. Digital hybrids can support their parents, who are digital immigrants, in this regard. However, digital immigrants need to develop a range of skills regarding using digital technologies and understanding their risks, practical technical skills required to use and access the internet, and the ability to interact critically and safely online. They need to consider how to improve their digital footprint awareness and keep up with developments.

- Commercial organizations can easily select the target audience and create a profile with personal information shared by users on social media sharing sites. It is still unclear to what extent social media sharing sites can protect users' personal information. Government agencies can develop data protection laws to protect users' information on social media sharing sites. Education can be provided to inform users about this. It would be more appropriate to determine the level of education according to generations.

- It has been stated that most users are unaware of the concept of digital footprint. Today, people need to have more information about the concept of digital footprint. They need to improve themselves by receiving training on digital footprint management and digital literacy knowledge and skills.

- Training can be increased to raise the digital footprint awareness of digital natives. Education can be provided to raise the digital literacy and awareness levels of children in preschool age. However, the biggest responsibility in this process falls on parents. Parents, mostly digital hybrids, while raising their own digital awareness, should not ignore the risks and threats their children face, and should not allow children to browse the internet unsupervised,In this sense, they should ensure that their children carefully and meticulously benefit from useful content.

-Basic computer skills can be taught at preschool level, coding, digital literacy, and information technology training at primary school level, and artificial intelligence training at advanced levels depending on abilities. Thus, both the Ministry of National Education and YÖK can update their curricula and add new courses that can develop digital literacy skills.

The fact that the study was conducted only in Konya province, and that the data were collected cross-sectionally and using a convenience sampling method, are among the limitations of the research. Researchers who will conduct studies in the future can apply the purpose, method, and analysis used in this research in different regions and cities with different scales or by using qualitative methods (interviews, in-depth interviews, and focus group methods). In addition, the concept of digital footprint can be associated with other variables. There are 6 theses on the concept of digital footprint in the National Thesis Center. It can be said that there will be an increase in studies on this subject due to the increasing importance of digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences and the continued relevance of the digital footprint concept in this period of very high internet usage. It can be considered that this research, which attempts to examine digital footprint awareness and digital footprint experiences across generations, will serve as a resource for other studies on the relevant topic and help develop new perspectives.

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