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DIGITAL DETOX: TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF TECHNOLOGY ADDICTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND DAILY ROUTINE

The purpose of this paper is to present problem of overwork faced by students when using digital devices for a long time every day in and out of the classroom during the Coronavirus pandemic in order to realize the necessity of digital detox. This study investigates the students' and their parents' point of view on the use of digital devices overtime during the time of crisis and how these technologies influence their understanding of necessity to overcome device dependence.

The challenge today is to understand, manage and regulate the processes of online-studying because it is absolutely clear that students have a progressive increase in time spent on computer activities, a strong increase in time spent socializing and studying out of university in the time of coronavirus pandemic.

This article presents the findings of an empirical research, in which 233 students and 187 parents participated in the anonymous questionnaire. In order to practically establish students' needs and wants, we conducted needs analysis at different departments of Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics. The analysis was held in form of a questionnaire proposed to students during the second semester of the academic year 2020–2021. The respondents were asked to answer questions of the questionnaire covering the frequency of using digital devices (including studying hours or working hours) and necessity of a tech break. In this study, both students and parents stated that digital detox could be necessary, especially in time of addiction relationship with technological devices.

The study confirmed the view that distance learning and distance work during the Coronavirus pandemic have increased the need for a digital detox, making it an essential necessity for different generations. Researchers believe that universities should include requirements into the sanitary and epidemiological rules and regulations to ensure healthy distance learning including the establishing the appropriate length of time for online classes. Students should limit the screen time while working from home to avoid health risks. The contribution of this paper comes as a result of data analysis obtained from a survey conducted in Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics.

Key words: *online learning, higher education, digital detox, digital devices, overwork, device dependence.*

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ЦИФРОВИЙ ДЕТОКС: ШЛЯХ ДО РОЗУМІННЯ ТЕХНОЛОГІЧНОЇ ЗАЛЕЖНОСТІ У ВИЩІЙ ОСВІТІ ТА ЩОДЕННІЙ РУТИНІ

Мета цієї статті – представити проблему перевтоми, з якою стикаються студенти при тривалому використанні цифрових пристроїв щодня на заняттях та у позаурочний час, щоб усвідомити необхідність цифрової детоксикації. Досліджується точка зору студентів та їхніх батьків на використання цифрових пристроїв понаднормово під час пандемії коронавірусної хвороби та як ці технології вплинули на їхнє розуміння необхідності подолання залежності від пристроїв.

Сьогодні проблема полягає в тому, щоб зрозуміти, керувати та регулювати процеси навчання в режимі онлайн, тому що абсолютно ясно, що студенти поступово збільшують години на комп'ютерну діяльність. Під час пандемії вони не тільки збільшили години за електронними пристроями у зв'язку з вимушеним переходом на дистанційне навчання, вони також витрачають значно більше годин на навчання після пар (лекцій, практичних занять) та спілкування у соцмережах та онлайн.

У цій статті представлені результати емпіричного дослідження, в якому 233 студента та 187 батьків взяли участь в анонімному опитуванні. Для того, щоб практично встановити потреби та бажання студентів, було проведено аналіз потреб, наявних у студентів, на різних кафедрах Київського національного торговельно-еконо-

мічного університету. Респондентам було запропоновано відповісти на запитання, які стосуються частоти використання цифрових пристроїв (з урахуванням годин на навчання / робочого часу) та необхідності відпочинку від цифрових пристроїв. У цьому дослідженні як учні, так і батьки підтвердили, що цифровий детокс може бути необхідним, особливо в період надмірного використання технологічних пристроїв.

Дослідження підтвердило думку, що різні покоління однаково потребують цифрової детоксикації під час дистанційного навчання (роботи). Дослідники вважають, що ЗВО необхідно включити до санітарно-епідеміологічних правил і норм вимоги, покликані забезпечити дистанційне навчання, що не завдає шкоди здоров'ю, у тому числі встановити тривалість відеозанять. Студенти повинні обмежувати час безперервної роботи з технічними засобами навчання, зокрема комп'ютерами, планшетами, іншими гаджетами, для уникнення ризиків для здоров'я. Внесок цієї статті є результатом аналізу даних, зібраних за допомогою опитування, проведеного в Київському національному торговельно-економічному університеті.

Ключові слова: *онлайн-навчання, вища освіта, цифровий детокс, цифрові пристрої, перевтома, залежність від електронних пристроїв.*

Introductions. Universities shutdown, COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown have been changed both the lifestyle and forms of learning of human beings around the globe. This virus made radical changes in education in Ukraine and has seriously affected the education system worldwide. The sudden transition from face-to-face to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ukraine meant the need for all participants in the educational process to quickly master or improve digital skills for the organization.

In a short time, the Government, the Committee on Education, Science and Innovation of the Verkhovna Rada, and the Office of the President launched the All-Ukrainian Online School (ВШО in Ukrainian), television lessons in all subjects for grades 5–11. Pupils could register on the All-Ukrainian Online School platform for free. The All-Ukrainian Online School has become a rapid technological solution and assistance, primarily to students and their parents. TV lessons supplemented or completely replaced quarantine lessons, especially in cases of inability to conduct distance lessons by teachers or in cases when students did not have consistent access to computers for online learning during the pandemic.

The All-Ukrainian Online School format also offered a passive approach to learning: students could only listen to information. There was no talk of receiving feedback from the teacher, the use of inverted classroom techniques or other methods of activity and active learning.

However, exclusively online learning adopted by universities to ensure education continuity, was based on using E-learning platforms and there were also some elements that might be considered obstacles in students' process of learning, such as working for long hours on a computer. Unlike schoolchildren, students did not have clear recommendations and instructions on how many hours a day to spend on the computer and other digital devices. Herein, we are interested in studying the learner's perception of online learning and students' understanding of necessity and possibility to giving up all digital devices for a digital detox.

Digital detox is a relatively new concept, appearing on websites around 2010. According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (unofficially Cambridge Dictionary), *digital detox* is a period of time during which you do not use mobile phones, computers, etc., because you usually use these devices too much (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary Online, 2021). According to the Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, *digital detox* is a period during which someone deliberately avoids using electronic devices such as computers, mobile phones, or tablets (Macmillan English Dictionary Online, 2021). From 2013, the concept is included in the Oxford English Dictionary (unofficially Oxford Dictionary): *digital detox* is a period of time during which a person refrains from using electronic devices such as smartphones or computers, regarded as an opportunity to reduce stress or focus on social interaction in the physical world (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2021).

"Detoxing" is often seen as a way to focus on real-life social interactions without distractions. Refraining from using digital devices, online and social media, people can let go and fill less stress. In this article digital device means an electronic device that can create, communicate, generate, send, share, receive, store, display, or process information, that contains an electronic visual display, informally a screen. Such electronic devices shall include, but not limited to, desktops, mobile telephones, smartphones, tablets, laptops, e-book devices and smartwatches.

People continued going on their digital devices after online classes or telework during the COVID-19 pandemic. That is why the idea of a "detoxing", "disconnecting" or *digital detox* has become increasingly popular. The British Council even started a Digital Detox podcast in 2019.

Aim. The purpose of this paper is to present problem of overwork faced by students when using digital devices for a long time every day in and out of the classroom during the Coronavirus pandemic in order to realize the necessity of digital detox. In other

words, our study investigates the students' point of view on the use of digital devices overtime during this time of crisis and how these technologies influence their understanding of necessity to overcome device dependence. In addition, we encouraged parents to reflect on their own use of technology during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to find out which of these two generations (students or their parents) needs a digital detox more. As a data analytics tool, GOOGLE Forms was used to analyze data and visualize it.

Materials and methods. Swedish researchers Thomée S., Härenstam A., Hagberg M. found that heavy technology use among young adults was linked to sleeping problems, depressive symptoms, and increased stress levels. "Frequent mobile phone use was associated with current stress, sleep disturbances, and symptoms of depression among the young adult men and women in cross-sectional analysis. Prospective analysis indicated that high frequency of mobile phone use could be a risk factor (or marker) for developing sleep disturbances in the men, and symptoms of depression in both the men and women, at 1-year follow-up" (Thomée et al., 2011: 7). Researchers Madeleine J. George, Michael A. Russell, Joy R. Piontak and Candice L. Odgers found that heavy daily technology use was associated with an increased risk for mental health problems among adolescents (ADHD). The study found that teens who used digital media frequently were more than twice as likely to develop symptoms of ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). At the beginning of the study, the teens showed no symptoms of ADHD. However, by the end of the two years, teens who used digital media frequently were far more likely to have symptoms of the disorder (George et al., 2017: 88).

Hayman and Coleman (2016) explore parents' anxieties about their children's use of the internet, social media and digital technology, helping parents to understand the negative and positive sides of the digital technology, set boundaries and establish rules for managing digital technology and the internet safely and positively. According to Hayman and Coleman, "Using digital technology, especially access to the internet and social media, has led to a rise in multitasking" (Hayman S., Coleman J., 2016: 53). While technology-heavy multitasking as a result of used ineffective strategies by media consumers in modern media communication has come to be an ordinary thing for many people, some psychologist claim that information overload in the information age can be detrimental. "Multitasking and constant switching between various tasks and feeds may mean we find it so much harder to concentrate on one thing for any length of time" (Hayman S., Coleman J., 2016: 53).

People who check their social media accounts, email and texts on a constant basis are called the "constant checkers". They do it almost obsessively. According to American Psychological Association's Stress in America survey, 43 percent of Americans are qualified as constant checkers and around 18% of Americans identify the use of technology as a very or somewhat significant source of stress (Stress in America, 2017: 1). It is a well-known fact that social media became mundane and routine things nowadays. But social communication also negatively affects a greater proportion of constant checkers than non-constant checkers. "More than two in five constant checkers (42 percent) say that political and cultural discussions on social media cause them stress, compared to 33 percent of non-constant checkers. Additionally, 42 percent say they worry about negative effects of social media on their physical and mental health (compared to 27 percent of non-constant checkers)" (Stress in America, 2017: 3).

Researchers such as Shrivastava and Anand has been found that over dependence upon gadgets affects our health, behavior and intellect; and what types of holiday packages under the category of digital detox, in turn, are offered by tour and travel companies (Shrivastava, A., & Anand, G., 2018: 23).

White T. R. presents the findings of a Digital Social Media Detox – an empirical, qualitative, one-day intervention, in which 25 college students were invited to leave all digital technology at home and participate in ten hours of face-to-face communication. "Those findings are offered to illuminate the potential effects of overuse of digital social media, the pedagogical challenges in a contemporary educational environment, and the social problems we face as a result. While there have been several studies that have documented the excessive use of social media tools and the ways in which educators are utilizing those tools in an academic environment, this project is unique and adds to a growing body of literature that documents face-to-face interaction between college students *without* the distraction of interconnectivity. Moreover, the study highlights the potential for internet addiction, and the consequences of distracted thinking and superficial learning, which can turn into pathological compulsion to only pay attention via social media tools. Most importantly, this study highlights how, despite the distracting "anxiety of disconnection," students can rediscover the pleasure of face-to-face connection" (White, 2013: 414).

Many studies have been conducted on assessing of overuse of digital social media and their effects on learning process (Alfawareh, H. M., & Jusoh, S., 2017; Kardefelt-Winther D., 2017; Ugur N. G., Koc T., 2015).

The challenge today is to understand, manage and regulate the processes of online-studying because it is absolutely clear that students have a progressive increase in time spent on computer activities, a strong increase in time spent socializing and studying out of university in the time of coronavirus pandemic.

Results and discussions. Through investigating students' and their parents' routine, we found what people seek to do with digital devices in free time: talk and communicate using mobile calls, texts, messages, pictures, pre-filmed videos or live video calls via Skype, Viber, Telegram, WhatsApp etc.; posts on social media sites (on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, TikTok, etc.). Also they surf the Internet, use GOOGLE for research when they are driven by self-interest or oriented toward education and work-related tasks. Moreover, they view films, TV programmes, videos, read books, newspapers and blogs, listen to podcasts and music, play games, gamble, do online shopping, take and share photos and videos, manage their home-banking. In the digitally connected household generations have to deeply understand that technology can develop a digital addiction and lead to procrastination.

In order to practically establish students' needs and wants, we conducted needs analysis at different departments of Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics. The analysis was held in form of a questionnaire proposed to students during the second semester of the academic year 2020/21.

233 students participated in the anonymous questionnaire. The respondents were asked to answer the questions of the questionnaire covering the frequency of using digital devices (including studying hours) and necessity of a tech break.

It was found out that most of the respondents use digital devices about 5–8 hours a day (49,8%) and 28,8% of participants use digital devices about 9–12 hours a day, 16,3 % of respondents use digital devices about 1–4 hours a day, 5,2% spend more than 12 hours exposed to digital devices.

Most of respondents (88,4%) agreed that they need a tech break from devices. 30,9% of respondents often need a digital detox, 57,5% sometimes feel they need digital detox and only 11,6% of respondents don't need a tech break.

All students confirmed that there has been significant growth in tech adoption among older generation since 2020 quarantine.

By studying digital detox and making the research more objective, we created the same anonymous questionnaire for parents of students. 187 parents took part in this study. Dealing with the question the frequency of using digital devices (including working hours/work load), most respondents (44,4%) voted for 5–8 hours a day. However, 31,6% of parents use digital devices about 1–4 hours a day. While 20,9% of parents say that they use digital devices about 9–12 hours a day, a good sign that least number of respondents (3,2%) use screens more than 12 hours a day.

In response to the question of necessity of a tech break, 89,8% of parents agreed. 54,5% of respondents confirm that sometimes they need a break from using digital devices, a slightly less number (35,3%) often need digital detox and only 10,2% of participants say that they are not interested in detoxing.

While generations differ in their use of various technologies, our small survey found that younger «constant checkers» also feel the necessity of digital detoxing (88,3%) as older generation who use the digital devices (89,8%).

Conclusions. This study reveals the students' perspectives, experiences, preferences and understanding of the importance of screen breaks due to the distance learning process that happened in the education process. The contribution of this paper comes as a result of data analysis obtained from a survey conducted in Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics. Despite the fact that everyone understands that digital devices have become indispensable, the study confirmed the view that distance learning and distance work during the Coronavirus pandemic have increased the need for a digital detox, making it an essential necessity for different generations.

In this study both students and parents stated that digital detox could be necessary, especially in time of addiction relationship with technological devices. Students feel overworked as digital intensity increases. Taking into account the problem of overwork among students, we can say about some side effects of working in front the computer, using digital devices for a long time everyday and the necessity for a digital detox. Also we believe that universities should have normative and legal acts establishing sanitary-epidemiological requirements to ensure healthy distance learning including the establishing the appropriate length of time for online classes. Students should limit the screen time (including computers, tablets, other gadgets) while working from home to avoid health risks. Whether you're an overworked university student checking your Instagram, Twitter and Telegram or a busy parent checking emails and Facebook, a digital detox is a great way to promote healthy and conscious family pastime.

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