ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Intermediary Role of Searching for Meaning in Young Adults in the Relationship Between Loneliness and Digital Game Addiction

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Main Points

- In the present study, the mediator role of young adults' search for meaning between the level of digital game addiction and loneliness was investigated over a sampling of university students.
- Findings showed that the search for meaning mediates the relationship between digital game addiction and loneliness.
- High existential anxiety levels about the meaning of life in young adults increase the level of digital game addiction.

Abstract

In the present study, the intermediary role of searching for meaning in the relationship between loneliness and digital game addiction in young adults was examined. The study was designed as a correlational survey and model testing using path analysisThe sampling for this study, consisted of a total of 1476 participants—of which 1152 were female and 324 were male. The "Personal Information Form," "Game Addiction Scale," "Meaning of Life Scale," and "Social-Emotional Loneliness Scale" were used as the data collection tools. The results of structural equation modeling show that the data fit perfectly with the model. The model that was designed was validated. It was found that social loneliness and emotional loneliness predict the meaning and purpose of life at a negative and significant level. Also, the meaning and purpose of life predicted excessive focus and suspense, deprivation and seeking, emotional change, and contemplation at a negative and significant level. It is recommended to conduct awareness studies and value education regarding the meaning and purpose of life in the fight against digital addiction for young adults and adolescents.

Keywords: Digital game addiction, emotional loneliness, search for meaning, social loneliness

Introduction

Social communication and interaction are among the most basic requirements of individuals of all ages. Loneliness, which has become a characteristic feature of today's people (May, 1997, p. 26), is a multifaceted emotional state (de Jong Gierveld, 1998, p. 121) posing a threat to the social integrity of a person (Kozaklı, 2006, p. 15) and causing pain and psychological distress (Geçtan, 1994, p. 86).

Two types of loneliness were defined in studies (de Jong Gierveld & Van Tilburg, 2010; Kalınkara & Sarı, 2019). The first one is "emotional loneliness," which means the absence of private and close relations after the loss of a spouse or a close friend; the second is "social loneliness," which means the absence of social communication networks such as neighbors or friends and exclusion without social acceptance (Bernard & Perry, 2013; Diehl et al., 2018). It can be argued that it would be more accurate to interpret the state of "being alone in crowds," which has become a characteristic of today's people, in terms of not having the necessary close relations, sincere friendships, and friendship bonds rather than being merely alone.

Loneliness, in which a person feels unrecognized, lonely, and excluded, is associated with many psychological and physical disorders (Li et al., 2021; Mushtaq et al. 2014) so much so that all of the very different experiences and emotional states, such as loneliness experienced as the alienation from one's own society and the loneliness experienced as a result of being excluded by the environment, are all expressed with the word "loneliness." Although a person's preference for solitude by his own will often leads to positive productive outcomes, the prevailing views in the society are that the desire to be alone is not a matter of choice, and those who have to be alone are "losers in life" (Geçtan, 1994, p. 86).

Previous studies showed that loneliness is associated with addiction, suicidal tendency, lack of life satisfaction and self-esteem, unhappiness, anxiety, alienation, depression, and delinquency, and serious psychological problems are more common in those who live alone (Akgül, 2020; Islam et al., 2023; Li et al. 2021; Mozafar Saadati et al., 2021; Perese & Wolf, 2005). According to May (1997, p. 26), who said that loneliness and emptiness are always side by side, the individual cannot stand to feel meaningless, empty, and ordinary for a long time and tries to fill the void inside with virtual relations and games played in the virtual environment. Because when a person cannot realize the potential meaning and purpose of his life, he/she, as a responsible being, experiences existential emptiness, which manifests in the form of boredom (Frankl, 2009, p. 121). Many areas such as activities to relieve this boredom, daily life practices, education, and entertainment have shifted from normal to digital platforms with the developments in information and communication technologies. Games, which are extremely important for the biological, physical, and psychological health of children and which can be considered a leisure activity for adults, are one of the areas that have moved to digital platforms.

Computer games have become one of the most popular leisure activities for adolescents and young adults in recent years to strengthen memory, develop critical thinking, and provide active learning opportunities. Although games that can be played online/offline have some positive impacts such as creativity and problem solving, they also have negative effects and risks varying according to the purpose and frequency of use. The most important of these risks is digital game addiction, which is increasingly considered a public health problem on a global scale (Ministry of Health, 2018, p. 12). Unlike classical addiction types, digital game addiction, which does not contain any harmful substances that will harm physical health, can cause negative consequences such as deterioration in family and social relations, disorder in anger control, and inability to think independently (Mun & Lee, 2022; Zhang et al., 2022). The fact that games have become the most important addiction in an individual's life as an important activity taking over one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, being busy with games to a degree that disrupts daily life practices, and having difficulty in self-control are considered "addiction indicators." However, it must be "severe enough to result in a significant deterioration in family relations, social relations, education, occupational, or other activity areas persisting significantly for at least 12 months" (International Classification of Diseases 11, December, 2018).

The effort of perceiving the reason for existence of a person, guiding life throughout the developmental stages, and developing a consistent perspective on the entire life can be defined as the search for meaning (Yüksel, 2020, p. 378). The concepts of meaning and purpose are often used interchangeably in the existential questioning of human life, but there are differences between them. According to Göka (2013, p. 133), purpose is a desired result, and meaning is subject to experience and interpretation. However, as purposefulness determines the basic position of existence, it is very important in explaining human behavior and the search for meaning.

Being aware of the fact that human life is limited in the world and will end one day is accepted as the basic and motivating force in the search for attributing meaning to life (Frankl, 2009, p. 113). A person who cannot lead a meaningful life develops avoidance mechanisms to cope with the feeling of guilt and therefore alienates himself (Geçtan, 1994, p. 126). The "meaning of life," which must cover individuals and their social aspects, is almost the life guide of individuals (Yıldız & Emecen, 2019, p. 362). Absent meaning, life means to be deprived of purpose, quality, value, and self-awareness (Eagleton, 2007, p. 32, 56).

According to Frankl (2009), an individual can find the meaning of life in three different ways: either by creating a work and leaving a mark on the world, or by interacting with a person in love, or by honoring the sufferings faced. This honorable experience of suffering strengthens person by making him feel that he/she does not have to fear anything but God. According to Eagleton (2007), who defined the meaning of life as "happiness," happiness can only be achieved by human solidarity, sharing, and having strong social networks. In a longitudinal study that was conducted by Harvard University, it was reported that the only thing that makes people healthy and happy is quality and satisfying relationships (Grant & Glueck Study, 2014).

Previous studies also reported that digital game addiction is directly or indirectly related to internet addiction, which is directly or indirectly related to loneliness (Doğrusever, 2020; Nowland et al., 2017; Mozafar Saadati, 2021; Ümmet & Ekşi, 2016). The motive of this study was the realization that the meaning of loneliness and the reasons that push the individual to digital game addiction were not addressed in terms of existential concerns and the individual's search for meaning in the literature. In the present study, the mediating role of young adults' search for meaning between the level of digital game addiction and loneliness was investigated through a sampling consisting of university students in light of the discussions of leading theorists.

As the only being that is capable of questioning existence, the meaning and purpose attributed to life have an important place in the ability of humans to cope with the difficulties faced in life adventure and to develop coping strategies.

Loneliness and gaming addiction pose significant problems for young adults. There are studies in the literature explaining the relationship either between loneliness and gaming addiction (Li et al., 2021; Mun & Li, 2022; Mozafar Saadati et al., 2021) or with the search for meaning (Borawski et al., 2022; Trzebiński et al., 2020). Nevertheless, literature has a gap when it comes to gaming addiction's relationship with the search for meaning. Therefore,

this study is intended to fill this gap and be a pioneer for the upcoming studies in this field. Moreover, this study provides a useful set of data for policy developers and practitioners in this area, as this study takes a different perspective than known reasons of the fact that loneliness and gaming addiction exacerbate academic success/careers and the mental well-being of young adults.

Material and Methods

The study was designed as correlational survey and model testing (path analysis). Path analysis is a method to discern and assess the effects of a set of variables acting on a specified outcome via multiple causal pathways. By using this method, one can estimate both the magnitude and significance of causal connections between variables (Lleras, 2005). İn this study, path analysis was performed with AMOS 26 software and the fit of the model to the data was examined using the Bollen – Stine bootstrap procedure for normality (Bollen & Stine, 1992), chi-square, goodness-of-fit index (GFI), confirmatory fit index (CFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Good model fit is characterized by nonsignificant Bollen – Stine p-values, small and nonsignificant chi-square values, and RMSEA values. Indirect effects for multiple mediation were tested with bias-corrected bootstrap analysis (İlhan & Çetin, 2014).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to describe the relations between university students' attitudes towards attributing meaning to life and social – emotional loneliness and digital game addictions, and also to describe this relationship with the help of a model.

Study Question

What is the mediating role of young adults' search for meaning in the relationship between their perceptions of loneliness and game addiction?

Sampling

The sampling of this study consisted of a total of 1476 participants, 1152 (78%) of whom were female and 324 (22%) male, continuing their education in different departments of universities in Konya. The mean age of the participants was found to be 20.69 ± 2.27. A total of 737 (49.9%) participants continued their education in a department from different fields of social sciences, and 739 (50.1%) participants in a department from different fields of physical sciences.

Data Collection Tools

The Personal Information Form (7 questions), "Game Addiction Scale" (21 statements), "Meaning of Life Scale" (17 statements), and "Loneliness Scale" (11 statements) were used to collect the study data. The gender, age, monthly expenditure, field of study, educational status of parents, and place of residence before coming to university were questioned in the personal information form.

The meaning and purpose of life scale

The scale that was developed by Aydın et al. (2015) consists of a total of 17 Likert-type items including (11) positive and (6) negative statements. The scoring of the scale for positive statements is as follows. I strongly agree (5), I strongly disagree (1), and negative statements are evaluated with reverse scoring. The lowest score that can be obtained from the scale is 17, and the

highest score is 85. A high score shows a high level of meaning in the lives of individuals, and a low score indicates a low level of meaning.

Digital game addiction scale

The scale, which was adapted by Hazar and Hazar (2019) after a validity and reliability study, consists of 21 items in the Likert style in three subdimensions, which are named excessive focus/postponement, conflict/deprivation/seeking, and mood changes/inattentiveness. The evaluation of the statements in the scale is as follows; 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = I disagree, 3 = I am indecisive, 4 = I agree, 5 = I strongly agree. The lowest score that can be obtained from the scale is "21," and the highest score is "105." The scale is evaluated as "1 – 21: normal group, 22 – 42: low-risk group, 43 – 63: risky group, 64 – 84: addicted group, 85 – 105 highly addicted group."

De Jong Gierveld loneliness scale

The Turkish adaptation of the scale, which was originally developed by De Jong Gierveld, was conducted by Çavdar et al. (2015). Scoring of the scale is in the form of not at all appropriate (1), not appropriate (2), appropriate (3), and very appropriate (4). The scale, which has 11 items in total, consists of two subdimensions, "emotional loneliness," and "social loneliness." Six items (2, 3, 5, 6, 9, and 10) of the scale are negative items that measure emotional loneliness; and five items (1, 4, 7, 8, and 11) are positive items that measure social loneliness. To calculate the total loneliness, the results of emotional loneliness and social loneliness are added together, and the sum of the two dimensions makes up the overall loneliness score (De Jong Gierveld & Van Tilburg, 2010). A high score received on the scale indicates that the feeling of loneliness is also high (Çavdar et al., 2015).

Data Collection and Analysis

The data were collected online over Google forms between November 2020 and December 2020. The students in the sample were contacted through student societies, social media, and e-mail addresses, and the participation of those who volunteered was ensured after informed consent was obtained. The data of the study were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Statistics and AMOS programs. The univariate and multivariate normality was evaluated with skewness and kurtosis coefficients, and the reliability of the Meaning and Purpose of Life Digital Game Addiction and Loneliness Scale was examined with the Cronbach alpha coefficient (α). The Cronbach's alpha was 0.84 for meaning and purpose of life, 0.91 for game addiction, and 0.67 for loneliness in this study. The relations among the variables were investigated using the path analysis, which is one of the structural equation models. The findings were interpreted at a $p < .05$ significance level.

Ethical Dimension of the Study

The permission for the study was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Karatay University with the decision on September 14, 2020 and number 46409256-300. The consent form was sent to the study group, and their consent was obtained.

Results

The sampling of the study consisted of a total of 1476 participants, 1152 (78%) of whom were female and 324 (22%) male, who

Table 1.
The Descriptive Findings of the Mean and Total Scores of the Participants from the Scales

N = 1476	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
Digital gaming addiction mean score	1.00	4.86	1.4823	0.66510
Social and emotional loneliness	1.45	4.45	2.4523	0.72157
Meaning and purpose of life	1.00	4.76	3.7303	0.57950
Social loneliness	1.00	4.00	1.9846	0.83298
Emotional loneliness	2.00	5.00	3.0134	0.82264
Excessive focusing and postponement	1.00	5.00	1.5586	0.73159
Deprivation and search	1.00	5.00	1.2598	0.58303
Emotional change and inattentiveness	1.00	5.00	1.6060	0.84248
Total MPLS	17.00	76.00	58.7974	9.46918
Total SELS	16.00	49.00	26.9749	7.93730
Total DGAS	21.00	102.00	31.1280	13.96710

Note: DGAS = Digital Gaming Addiction Scale; M = Mean; MPLS = Meaning and Purpose of Life Scale; SD = Standard deviation; SELS = Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale.

continued their education in different departments of different universities. The mean age of the participants was found to be 20.69 ± 2.27. A total of 737 (49.9%) participants continued their education in a department from different fields of social sciences, and 739 (50.1%) participants in a department from different fields of physical sciences.

According to Table 1, the score the students received from the "Meaning and Purpose of Life Scale" was found to be 58.79 ± 9.46; the scores and standard deviations received in the "Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale" (SELS) was 26.97 ± 7.93, and the score in the "Digital Gaming Addiction Scale" (DGAS) was 31.12 ± 13.9. These results show that students attribute "moderate" meaning and purpose to life; they are not alone socially; however, they experience intense loneliness emotionally, and their game addiction levels can be defined as being in a "low-risk" group. The findings of the study are compatible with the literature data. In a study that was conducted in France, 89 percent of people said that they needed "something" to live for. In another study, when asked what was "very important" for them, 78 percent of university students said "finding a purpose and meaning in life" (Frankl, 2009, pp. 113 – 114).

When the scale scores of the independent variables are compared in Table 2, it is seen that there are significant differences between the gender variable and the attitudes toward the meaning and purpose of life ($t = 3.294$, $p < .005$). The mean score of female students was found to be 3.756 ± 0.552, 3.636 ± 0.659, which is higher than that of males. Statistically significant differences were detected in total and subdimensions of digital game addiction. The mean score of male students was found to be higher than that of female students. This finding is consistent with the literature data. Since digital games are mostly based on management, power relations, and competitiveness, they attract more attention from men.

In Table 3, before the basic analyses, the mean and standard deviation values of the variables that were used in the study and the correlations between the variables were examined. The results show that there were positive and moderately significant relations between the social and emotional loneliness subdimensions, and there were positive and highly significant relations between the subdimensions of digital game addiction. Also, it was seen that there were negative and significant relations between the meaning and purpose of life, social and emotional loneliness, and

Table 2.
The Comparison of the Scale Scores of the Participants According to the Variables of Gender

Gender		Meaning and Purpose of Life	Social and Emotional Loneliness Total Score	Social Loneliness	Emotional Loneliness	Digital Gaming Addiction	DGA-Excessive Focusing and Postponement	DGA-Deprivation and Search	DGA-Emotional Change and Inattentiveness
Female	Mean	3.756	2.440	1.977	2.998	1.368	1.435	1.184	1.458
	SD	0.552	0.819	0.828	0.810	0.551	0.613	0.483	0.711
Male	Mean	3.636	2.481	2.003	3.066	1.887	1.996	1.526	1.041
	SD	0.659	0.739	0.850	0.863	0.850	0.92424	0.792	1.041
	t	3.294	−1.046	−.602	−1.304	−13.126	−12.860	−9.593	−13.453
	p	.001*	.292	.201	.192	.000**	.000**	.000**	.000**

Note: DGA = Digital gaming addiction; SD = Standard deviation. *$p < .01$. **$p < .001$.

Table 3.
The Relationships Between Study Variables and Descriptive Findings Regarding Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	*M*	SD
1. Social loneliness	1						1.99	0.83
2. Emotional loneliness	.51***	1					3.01	0.82
3. Meaning and purpose of life	−.45***	−.40***	1				3.73	0.58
4. Excessive focus and postponement	.19***	.07**	−.27***	1			1.56	0.73
5. Deprivation and search	.19***	.08**	−.21***	.81***	1		1.26	0.58
6. Emotional change and inattentiveness	.17***	.07*	−.22***	.81***	.73***	1	1.60	0.84

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation.
*$p < .1$.
**$p < .01$.
***$p < .001$.

digital game addiction. Finally, it is interesting that there were positive and significant relations between social and emotional loneliness and digital game addiction.

Findings on the Structural Equation Modeling

The main purpose of this study was to examine the mediating role of the meaning and purpose of life in the relation between social and emotional loneliness and the subdimensions of digital game addiction. In line with the purpose of the study, a path analysis was made. As seen in Figure 1, social loneliness and emotional loneliness were the independent variables of the study. The purpose and meaning of life made up the instrument variable of the study. Excessive focus and postponement, deprivation and seeking, emotional change, and inattentiveness were the dependent variables of the study.

When the results obtained in the study were examined, it was seen that the data fit the model perfectly, $\chi^2(22) = 41.183$, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/sd = 1.77$, CFI = 0.99, GFI = 0.99, adjusted goodness-of-fit index = 0.96, incremental fit index = 0.99, Tucker – Lewis index = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.05. As seen in Figure 1, social loneliness and emotional loneliness predicted the meaning and purpose of life negatively and significantly ($\beta = −0.32$, $p < .001$, $\beta = −0.26$, $p <$

.001, respectively). These variables explain 25% of the variance in the meaning and purpose of life. Table 4 illustrates the perfect and acceptable fitness benchmarks regarding the enumerated fitness indexes and the results derived from our study.

Secondly, the meaning and purpose of life predicted excessive focus and postponement, deprivation and seeking, emotional change and inattentiveness negatively and significantly ($\beta = −0.31$, $p < .001$, $\beta = −0.23$, $p < .001$, $\beta = −0.25$, $p < .001$, respectively). The meaning and purpose of life explained 10% of the variance in excessive focus and postponement, 5% of the variance in deprivation and seeking, and 6% of the variance in emotion change and inattentiveness.

Discussion

As a result of the study, it was found that the attitude toward attributing meaning to the life of young adults was moderate, social and emotional loneliness levels were socially normal, but the emotional loneliness dimension was high, and digital game addiction levels were below the average value. In a study conducted on loneliness levels of university students (Kozaklı, 2006), 54% of the sampling had a loneliness score above the mean level,
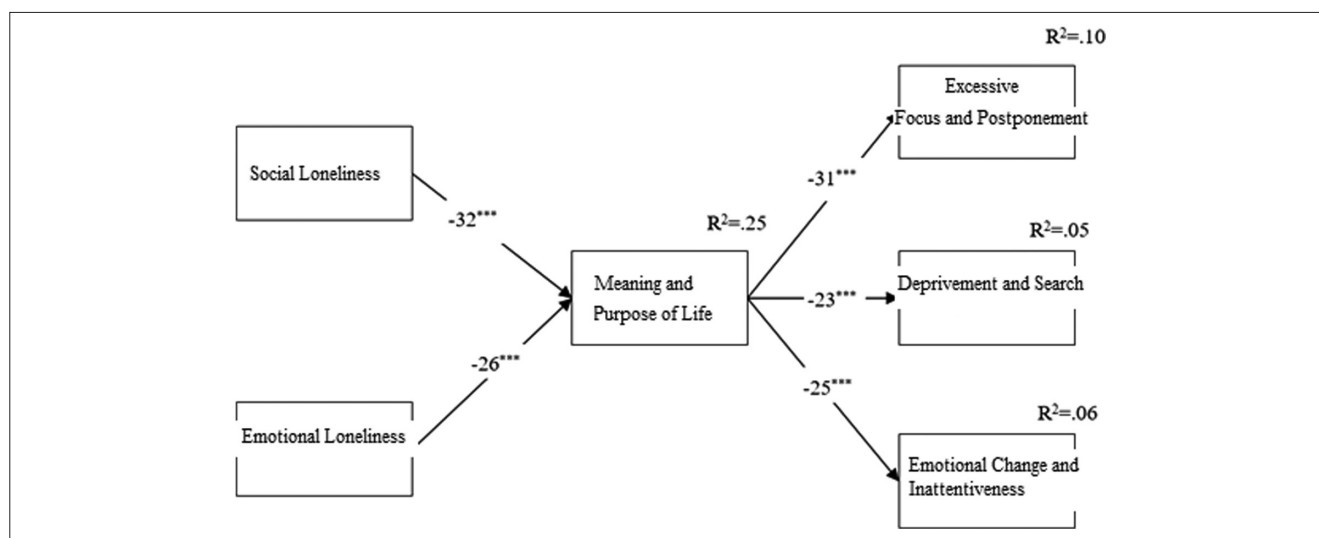

Figure 1. The Mediating Role of Meaning and Purpose of Life in the Relationship Between Social and Emotional Loneliness and Sub-Dimensions of Digital Game Addiction. ***p < .001.

Table 4.
Perfect and Acceptable Fit Values and Fit Values of this Study

Criteria	Perfect Fit Values	Acceptable Compliance Values	Compliance Values of This Study
χ^2/SD	≤ 2	≤ 5	1.77
RMSEA	$0.00 < RMSEA < 0.05$	$0.05 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.10$	0.05
RMR	$0.00 \leq RMR < 0.05$	$0.05 \leq RMR \leq 0.10$	0.02
GFI	$0.95 \leq GFI \leq 1.00$	$0.90 \leq GFI < 0.95$	0.99
AGFI	$0.90 \leq AGFI \leq 1.00$	$0.85 \leq AGFI < 0.90$	0.96
CFI	$0.97 \leq CFI \leq 1.00$	$0.95 \leq CFI < 0.97$	0.99
NFI	$0.95 \leq NFI \leq 1.00$	$0.90 \leq NFI < 0.95$	0.99
IFI	$0.90 \leq IFI \leq 1.00$	$0.85 \leq IFI \leq 0.90$	0.99
RFI	$0.90 \leq RFI \leq 1.00$	$0.85 \leq RFI \leq 0.90$	0.97

Note: AGFI = Adjusted goodness-of-fit index; CFI = Confirmatory fit index; GFI = Goodness-of-fit index; IFI = Incremental fit index; NFI = Normed fit index; RFI = Relative fit index; RMR = Root mean square residual; RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation.

and the loneliness levels differed depending on variables such as age, place of residence, educational levels of mothers, self-employment, or obtaining income from the family. In international studies, the game addiction rate varies between 0.6% and 15% (Festl et al., 2013; Lemmens et al., 2009; Poli & Agrimi 2012; Yalçın-Irmak & Erdoğan, 2016). Game addiction was reported to be a serious public health problem, and the necessity of taking precautions has been mentioned in countries such as China. Although no data are showing that there is a serious problem in Türkiye yet (Yalçın-Irmak & Erdoğan, 2016), in a study that was conducted by Aktaş and Bostancı (2021), it was reported that 6.3% of students are in the addicted group and 1.6% are in the highly addicted group. Although factors such as academic success, doing sports, and emotional balance levels are inversely proportional to addiction, psychosocial factors such as loneliness, alienation, and neurotic disorder are directly proportional (Hoeft et al., 2008; Şimşek & KarakuşYılmaz, 2020). Depression, anxiety, insomnia, fatigue, and stress are more prevalent among gaming addicts (Moge & Romano, 2020; Stanković & Nešić, 2022; Wittek et al. 2016). Within the context of digital gaming addiction, loneliness causes a vicious circle as the addiction itself feeds loneliness and vice versa.

In the present study, statistically significant relationships were detected between the total meaning and purpose of life scores and digital game addiction scores according to gender. Women had higher mean scores than men in attributing meaning to life. In the literature, different results are found in this respect. Although some studies show that the mean scores of women are significantly higher in line with the findings of this study (Aydın, 2017; Güven, 2015; Molasso, 2006), some other studies reported that the mean scores of men are higher or there are no significant differences between groups. It was concluded that it is not (Demir & Murat, 2017; Tanrıverdi &Ulu, 2018). In this study, even though statistics of loneliness are higher for women in the literature, gender provided a negligible difference in its relationship with loneliness within the context of this study (Diehl et al. 2022; Lepinteur et al., 2022).

Although men had higher average scores than women in the total score of digital game addiction, excessive focus and postponement, conflict deprivation, and seeking subdimensions, women had higher scores in the sub-dimensions of mood changes and

inattentiveness. Digital games attract more attention from men because they involve rival virtual characters competing for power, authority, and dominance (Delibaş, 2019; Hoeft, 2008; Moge & Romano, 2020). In terms of the educational field, no differences were detected among students on all scales. However, a statistically significant difference was detected in the total and excessive focus, postponement, emotional change, and inattentiveness subdimensions of the digital game addiction scale. It is considered that familial factors about education status, such as parents' oppressive/authoritarian/democratic attitudes or insufficient supervision, were effective in this outcome.

According to the path analysis made in line with the purpose of the study, social loneliness and emotional loneliness predicted the meaning and purpose of life negatively at a significant level. These variables explained 25% of the variance in the meaning and purpose of life. Previous studies have found a moderating effect of loneliness between the search for meaning and life satisfaction (To, 2016). It is concluded that the efforts given for enhancing the sense of meaning itself, as a result of loneliness experience, protect the person from the loss of meaning (Borawski et al., 2022).

Secondly, the meaning and purpose of life predicted excessive focus and postponement, deprivation and seeking, emotional change, and inattentiveness, which are subdimensions of digital game addiction, negatively and significantly. The meaning and purpose of life explained 10% of the variance in excessive focus and postponement, 5% of the variance in deprivation and seeking, and 6% of the variance in emotion change and inattentiveness. These results show that the data fits perfectly with the model. In digital game addiction, which is considered a leisure activity, the problem faced in the meaning of life pushes the individual toward social and emotional loneliness, and those who experience intense loneliness turn to digital games to eliminate this loneliness.

Göka (2013, pp. 166 – 168), who argued that the meaning of meaninglessness does not appear suddenly, shows a pre-symptom in the form of "boredom," and if a solution is not produced for boredom, anxiety and meaning crises emerge pointing out a "leisure" attitude, a value system, and social relations. Along with the modernization process, people in metropolitan cities are deprived of solidarity and social support networks but are "equipped with all kinds of

technological toys, and suffer from cosmic loneliness" (May, 1997, p. 7). In this respect, people also use communication technologies as a means of assurance that they are not alone (Geçtan, 2003, p. 28). To overcome the emotional state created by loneliness and meaninglessness, today's modern man tries to fill the void inside by turning to drugs, alcohol, virtual games, and virtual relations (May, 1997, pp. 7 – 8). In multiplayer digital games, thousands of players from different parts of the world come together with different characters, helping communities establish a virtual life for themselves. In this way, the digital world functions as a means of "clinging" to life for people who live in an existential void and drift toward alienation (Geçtan, 2003, p. 89). The life aim of young adults has focused on "success and money" with the influence of families in recent years. According to Geçtan (1994, p. 112), such a goal makes people believe that they can exist as long as they have these, which brings the result of perceiving other people as objects that will cover their needs. People who become increasingly lonely when there is no one left to have "relations for the sake of relations" with suffer from masked loneliness in crowds and turn to digital games to escape this loneliness.

The mediating role of the meaning and purpose of life in the relationship between game addiction and loneliness in young adults was uncovered in this study. According to Adler (2003, p. 12), life is working for society, and to be able to talk about meaning in life, meaning must be sought in the framework of relations and interactions with other people. The way to eliminate loneliness and meaninglessness is not to take shelter in digital platforms and games. It is possible to realize a fundamental change in the attitudes toward life by acting with a meaning of individual, social, and global responsibility.

Limitations and Directions/Suggestions for Future Research
The main limitation of the present study was that the sampling consisted of young adults who were university students. It can be suggested that new studies be conducted by expanding the sampling to include young adults who are out of formal education, working, unemployed, and who have special conditions. Qualitative studies should be conducted to focus on own subjective experiences of young people regarding existential concerns and search for meaning, along with other familial and environmental factors that drive them to digital gaming.

Another shortcoming of this study is its cross-sectional nature since the data were collected when the coronanavirus disease 2019 pandemic was still effective. It is possible that in this time span, the young adults had experienced existential concerns and self-questioning about the meaning of life more often than usual (Rasheed et al. 2022; Trzebiński et al., 2020). Moreover, the studies show that young people spared more time gaming in this period than they used to (Biswas et al., 2022; Li et al.,2021; Lin, 2020). Therefore, longitudinal research is needed.

A study examining the relationship between digital gaming addiction and the search for meaning could not be found in the literature. Then, this is an advantage for the novelty of this study, while the very same fact hinders its comparability. The upcoming researchers can study the effect of digital gaming addiction over the macrosystemic problems and multiple contexts effects of addicts rather than focusing on individual factors such as stress, anxiety, and loneliness.

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