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Blog Post #20

# Digital Balance: Aligning Freedom with Responsibility

## Digitalization as a New Living Space

Digitalization is no longer a distant future scenario to be debated; it is a reality that we breathe in and that shapes our every moment. It has permeated every aspect of our lives, from our professional work to banking transactions, from health monitoring to entertainment. However, this major transformation holds a distinct and profound meaning, especially for the youth. While adults generally view technology as a 'tool' to get things done, for young people, it has become an indispensable 'living and socialization space'.

Today, young people gather in online games and on social media platforms just as much as they meet in parks. The action we perceive from the outside as merely 'being glued to a screen' is, in fact, a living process where they build friendships and construct their identities. During this process, they also gain numerous secondary benefits that might not be immediately apparent to us, such as practicing foreign languages, strategic thinking, and teamwork. Consequently, viewing this realm solely as a threat may lead us to overlook the other side of the coin.

## To Worry or To Open Up Space?

At this precise point, as parents and educators, we find ourselves swinging on a large pendulum. On one end, there is the justifiable anxiety we feel about issues like technology addiction and inactivity. On the other end lies the option of completely letting go of the reins—reasoning that 'this is the necessity of the age'—and opening up an uncontrolled space. Yet, we know that unlimited freedom is a heavy burden for a developing mind to manage.

It is at this precise point that we, as Junior Achievement Türkiye, are striving intensely to strike this delicate balance. While developing the entrepreneurial competencies of youth, we prioritize ensuring they become individuals who not only consume technology but also produce and use it consciously. The successful individuals of the future business world will not be those who are mere consumers of technology, but those who can manage it effectively. Therefore, our aim is not to disconnect them from the digital world, but to guide them to remain resilient and productive within it.

The TechWell Project, of which we are a partner, is an international reflection of this vision. TechWell Project is funded by the European Union's Erasmus+ Programme, managed by the Turkish National Agency, led by Istanbul Technical University and collaboration with University Paris XII Val De Marne from France, University Degli Studi Di Padova from Italy, IASIS from Greece, and Istanbul Governorship, Junior Achievement Türkiye, Yeniden Association, and ACTKNOW from Türkiye. TechWell has an interdisciplinary research team comprised of technology experts, psychologists, educators, and economists from different regions of Europe. The solution lies not in prohibitions, but in teaching youth 'online and offline health behaviors.' Through pilot trainings to be implemented across diverse cultures such as Türkiye, France, Greece and Italy, the project aims to reach 1,080 students and raise awareness about smartphone addiction in 2 years. TechWell offers a flexible model that adapts globally designed approaches to local dynamics.

## Opening the Right Channels: Turning the Digital Flood into a Lifeline

### Building Bridges, Not Walls<sup>1</sup>

We cannot completely ban technology for children or remove it entirely from their lives. While we can set healthy boundaries, attempting a total ban might mean building a wall between us and the youth. Instead of isolating them, we must guide them on how to use technology as a tool for development.

We must strive to understand them and discuss how they can stay 'safe' in the digital world, rather than rejecting their presence there. Let us not forget: digitalization is like a flood. If you build a wall against it, it destroys everything in its path; but if you open the right channels, it irrigates the fields and gives life. We are here to open those right channels for our youth.



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