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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Life Between Work and Travel: A Study on Turkish Digital Nomads

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ABSTRACT
As the boundaries between the physical and virtual worlds are blurring, the effects of digital transformation have become evident in all aspects of our lives. This transformation drastically alters the standard ways of working and lifestyles and paves the way for the emergence of new concepts and phenomena. In this context, digital nomads have become increasingly prominent as people who work and travel simultaneously with the motto "earn while travelling". The aim of this study is to examine the phenomenon of digital nomadism based on the example of Turkish Digital Nomads. By determining the lifestyles and working conditions of Turkish digital nomads, the changing expectations and emerging new dynamics in working life are discussed. For the study, a qualitative research method was used and data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 11 digital nomads between July and September 2024. The data obtained from the interviews were analysed by descriptive analysis method using the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA. According to the results obtained from the research, it was observed that digital nomadism was adopted as an important lifestyle among the participants in terms of both experiencing new cultures and redefining the work-life balance thanks to the freedom and flexibility it offers to individuals. As a result, standard forms of work are being questioned and issues such as work-life balance, job security and social rights need to be reconsidered.

Keywords: Digital Nomads, Digital Transformation, Flexibility, Digital Nomadism, Work-Life Balance

Introduction

Digital transformation, which refers to the integration of digital technologies into all aspects of life, is particularly transforming the concepts of work and the workplace. Digital transformation has led to significant changes in traditional face-to-face, physical workplace practices, removing the constraints of a physical office and enabling employees to perform their tasks from anywhere (Lee, Shin, & Kang, 2024, p. 324). In response to this transformation, new working styles have emerged in the professional landscape. Organisations and businesses are restructuring their existing business models to align with digitalisation and flexibility. The growing importance of knowledge-based work that is independent of time and space has led to an increase in the number of individuals adopting the digital nomad lifestyle in recent years (İli & Büyükbaykal, 2023, p. 72). Digital nomadism, which enables individuals to maintain a lifestyle independent of physical workplaces, is rapidly gaining prominence. This lifestyle challenges traditional work practices, creating a paradigm shift in professional life. Innovations in technology provide digital nomads with unparalleled flexibility by eliminating traditional office environments and geographical restrictions. The digital nomad lifestyle contributes to individuals gaining new experiences and prioritising personal satisfaction. Furthermore, the flexibility it offers allows individuals to optimise their work-life balance and engage in diverse cultural experiences (Bahri, 2024, p. 2).

The aim of this study is to examine the phenomenon of digital nomadism using the example of Turkish digital nomads. By identifying the lifestyles and working conditions of Turkish digital nomads, the changing expectations and emerging dynamics in professional life will be discussed. Accordingly, the research questions are as follows:

- How do digital nomads define digital nomadism?
- What are the motivations for becoming a digital nomad?
- What are the primary advantages of the digital nomad lifestyle?
- What are the most common challenges and disadvantages faced by digital nomads?
- What are the working conditions of digital nomads (e.g., working hours, productivity, motivation, income)?
- How does digital nomadism impact individuals' work-life balance?

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- What are the future concerns and plans of digital nomads?

In this study, qualitative research methods were utilised, with an interpretive phenomenology design being preferred. The research population consists of individuals who identify as digital nomads and maintain this lifestyle. The sample comprises individuals who identify themselves as digital nomads on social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. In this context, the research data were obtained from 11 individuals who live as Turkish digital nomads. These digital nomads were reached through social media platforms (Instagram, WhatsApp), Gmail, and interview requests. The interviews were conducted between July and September 2024 via Zoom (video conferencing), and audio recordings were taken with the participants' permission. The data collection process was concluded once the research reached a point of saturation.

A review of the national and international literature reveals an increase in studies on digital nomadism over the past decade. Most of these studies focus on topics such as the digital nomad lifestyle, business models, and social interactions in co-living and co-working spaces (Bednorz, 2024, pp. 1-2). However, it has been observed that studies focusing on the working conditions and work-life balance of digital nomads are limited. Particularly, the anticipation that the Y and Z Generations, which are highly adaptable to digitalisation and flexibility, will increasingly join the workforce highlights the growing significance of digital nomadism, which offers independence and flexibility. In this context, this study addresses the gaps identified in the literature regarding Turkish digital nomads and contribute uniquely to the field.

A New Lifestyle in a Digitalising World: The Concept of Digital Nomadism

In the process that started with globalisation and continues with innovations and developments in the domain of digital technologies, it is obvious that it is no longer possible to move forward with traditional practices and habits. Adapting to the changing and transforming digital world is becoming a necessity for individuals, institutions, systems, and societies. According to the "Digital 2024" report recently published by We Are Social, a social media agency, the number of unique mobile users in the world population of more than 8 billion has reached 5.61 billion. As a result, there are nearly 5 billion active social media users, corresponding to 62.3% of the total world population (We Are Social, 2024). With the increasing dependence on digital technologies across the globe and the catalysing effect of the COVID-19 pandemic that has simultaneously affected the whole world, there are obvious transformations in every aspect, especially in lifestyle, working styles and expectations. One of the most obvious examples of these transformations is the transformation of "traditional" and "standard" forms of work. These forms of work are rapidly being replaced by new forms of work based on precariousness, flexibility and transience. This structural transformation in working life renders employees' existing competencies obsolete, while labour markets demand new competencies in line with the digital world. This makes it a necessity to can do more than one job. The structural transformation in the labour market may bring up new topics of discussion and concepts such as "Coronatariat (Corona+Proletariat)" (Omay, 2020, pp. 132-133). Indeed, some other authors have pointed out that the combination of COVID-19 and digitalisation has accelerated the transformation of working life (Amankwah-Amoah, Khan, Wood, & Knight, 2021, p. 602).

Since the mid-2000s, concepts such as "Net" and "Digital" have been associated with certain generations (e.g. iGen), therefore, conceptualisations such as "digital native", "digital foreigner", "digital hybrid", "digital immigrant", and finally "digital nomad" are used to define the relationship between digitalisation and generations (Gür Omay, 2023, pp. 127-129). In particular, digitalisation has become an indispensable element of working life, which has increased the popularity and number of those called "digital nomads". Younger generations, such as the Y and Z Generations, known for their affinity for technology and expected to play an increasingly significant role in the workforce, have a distinct perspective on the concepts of work and workplace compared to previous generations. They prioritise flexibility and autonomy in both their professional and personal lives. Consequently, the digital nomad lifestyle can be regarded as a reflection of these evolving generational values, shaped by advancements in technology and the pursuit of a more dynamic work-life balance.

The transformation of the world into a "global village", where national borders are increasingly blurred through digital technologies, has created international mobility and contributed to the increasing importance of personal aspirations and desires in terms of personal development and freedom of choice. The incorporation of digital technologies into daily life, which make it possible to physically relocate without disconnection, is leading to an increase in the desire for more leisure time and new lifestyles around the world. In this context, various studies that address international mobility within the framework of different conceptualizations have increasingly focused their attention on the phenomenon of "digital nomadism" in recent years (Hannonen, 2020, p. 335).

The concept of the digital nomad was first defined in the book "*Digital Nomad*" written by Makimoto and Manners in 1997. The authors discussed it as a result of radical changes in people's lives by combining current and future technological possibilities with the desire of individuals to travel (Makimoto & Manners, 1997). Because of recent developments, this was confirmed.

The concept of a digital nomad combines the word "digital", associated with technology, and the term "nomad" which refers to a lifestyle of continuous travel rather than permanent settlement. Digital nomads are defined as "*Young professionals working solely in an online environment while leading a location independent and often travel reliant lifestyle where the boundaries between work, leisure and travel appear blurred*" (Reichenberger, 2018, p. 364). They are also described as individuals who "*Are redefining work life by pursuing employment that allows for global travel, flexibility in work hours, and a departure from the traditional office environment*" (Richter & Richter, 2020, p. 78). Another perspective highlights digital nomads as "*Individuals who, taking advantage of portable computing technologies and widespread Internet access, can work remotely from any location and use this freedom to explore the world*" (Mancinelli, 2020, p. 418). Furthermore, they are characterised as "*Independent digital workers with extreme forms of spatial mobility and non-existent or loose organisational affiliations*" (Nash, Jarrahi, & Sutherland, 2021, p. 273). Another definition highlights digital nomads as individuals who "*Use digital technologies to work remotely; they have the ability to work and travel simultaneously, have autonomy over frequency and choice of location, and visit at least three locations a year that are not their own or a friend's or family home*." (Cook, 2023, p. 257).

Within the framework of the definitions mentioned above, a holistic definition for digital nomads can be proposed as follows: Digital nomads are people who aim to customise their own work-life balance through the opportunities provided by technological developments by going beyond traditional working and living styles that are bound by time and space constraints.

According to Reichenberger, the digital nomad holism appears at the intersection of the three fundamental freedoms, as shown in Figure 1. These are: Professional freedom, spatial freedom and personal freedom. These refer to the three interconnected spheres of freedom of digital nomadism, which cannot exist without one or the other. The freedom in both areas between professional freedom (work) and personal freedom (leisure) can contribute to learning, upskilling or upgrading competences and personal development. While spatial freedom increases the leisure time (personal freedom) of digital nomads through travelling, it can have positive effects on working life by increasing the creative thinking capacity of the individual. In sum, when professional freedom, spatial freedom and personal freedom come together in the way that digital nomads look for, a holistic framework can emerge (Reichenberger, 2018, p. 373).

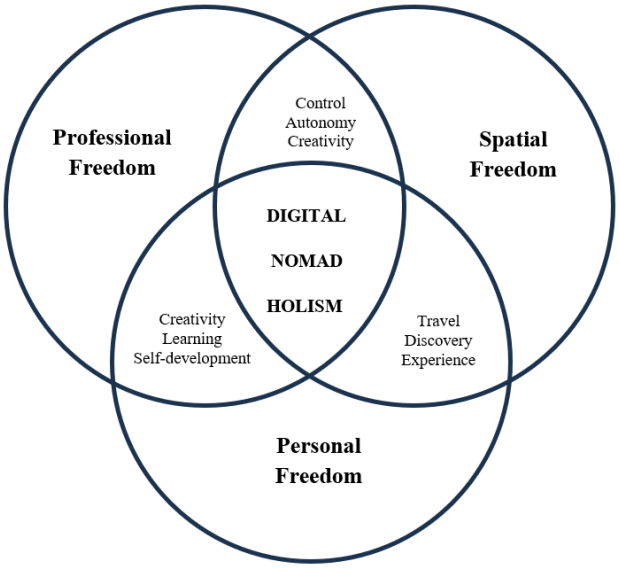


Figure 1. Digital Nomad Holism

Source: (Reichenberger, 2018, p.373).

Nomad List, which was launched in 2014 with the motto "Be nomadic and live everywhere", is one of the leading platforms that offers various services to digital nomads around the world and provides detailed information and content about them. According to Nomad List 2024 data, it is stated that digital nomads are mostly in the age range of 24-37 and that 90% of them are men and 10% are women. In addition, 54% of them have a bachelor's degree, 60% of them have a remote job, 34% of them have an annual income of 50.000-100.000 USD and 46% of them stay in a city for less than 7 days (Nomad List, 2024). Nomad List data may provide a framework for the demographic characteristics of digital nomads and their position in the labour market. Considering this information, examining the new role of digital nomads in working life and how they transform working dynamics can provide an important perspective on the changes brought about by the digital age.

The Impact of Digital Nomads on Working Life

Digitalisation is a process that spreads to all areas of life with the technological innovations it offers and makes its multifaceted effects fell. One of the driving forces of this process is digital transformation. Technological novelties are not limited to the internet. The impact of the latest digital technologies, which are the driving force of the digital transformation that has become a part of daily life, is not only limited to production and business practices, but also deeply affects the entire economic system (Chinoracky & Corejova, 2019, pp. 995-996). In the world of work, digital technologies have loosened the traditional structure of workplaces tied to specific physical boundaries, allowing employees to work from different locations and even combine work and vacation in an almost hybrid way (Lee, Shin, & Kang, 2024, p. 324).

However, with COVID-19 forcing the workforce to work remotely, the need for flexibility in working life has increased even more, both during and after the pandemic, leading to the adoption of new forms of working and making them permanent. Thanks to the proliferation of digital technologies and various developments in work-life balance, new forms of work such as remote work, hybrid work, gig economy and platform work are becoming increasingly prominent. As a result, expectations and values about work have been changing as individuals seek greater flexibility and freedom (Boccoli, Tims, Gastaldi, & Corso, 2024, p. 2). In particular, digital nomads stand out as the group that experiences the freedom of mobility provided by flexible working conditions most intensely.

By demonstrating that it is possible to work anywhere in the world without being bound by physical boundaries, digital nomads are making a new contribution to the spread and popularisation of remote working. Because all they should work is a smartphone or portable computer and a stable internet connection. Digital nomads who, are constantly travelling, work for a company that offers remote work or on their own account. They are also very flexible in terms of working hours. As they usually work freelance or part-time, they are active in more than one job at the same time (Hamurcu, 2022, p. 32-33).

Because of this lifestyle, digital nomads, who lead a constantly mobile lifestyle, face nomadic and precarious working conditions similar to seasonal agricultural workers. However, digital nomads, who are inherently different from seasonal agricultural workers, have higher levels of education and work in jobs based on digital platforms (Bozdoğan & Özuz Dağdelen, 2022, p. 272).

Digital nomads, who can work remotely from anywhere thanks to digital technological possibilities and internet access, use this flexibility and freedom to explore the world. One of the motivations for pursuing this lifestyle is related to the search for a satisfactory work-life balance (Mancinelli, 2020, p. 417). It has long been argued that work-life balance is becoming an increasingly important issue for employees and that ensuring it has become a necessity, especially in the digital age (Harris, Bennett, Davey, & Ross, 2010, p. 419). Digital nomads, who particularly value location independence, try to maintain a balance between work, travel and leisure. Through secure internet access connection tools, they can satisfy their wanderlust while working and have more time for their personal lives (Orel, 2023, p. 143). In this context, comprehensive research on the lifestyles and working conditions of digital nomads is a critical need to understand the transformations in working life. In the next section of the study, the findings obtained for the research are presented in detail.

Purpose and Importance of the Research

As mentioned in the previous sections, with the rapid development of digital technologies and changing paradigms in working life, different forms of work that allow working without being dependent on time and place have become widespread. With this transformation, a growing number of digital nomads are adopting a new lifestyle that combines work, travel, and leisure.

With the flexibility caused by digitalisation, digital nomads are moving beyond the traditional lifestyle tied to traditional working practices. This new lifestyle, where travel, work and leisure time are intertwined, has implications not only on an individual level but, also on economic, social and cultural dimensions. However, despite its growing popularity and importance, little is known about the reasons why digital nomads choose such a lifestyle. Although individuals may adopt this lifestyle voluntarily, it is obvious that there are forces driving them to do so (Tiberius, Chen, Bartels, & von der Oelsnitz, 2024, p. 1).

The aim of this study is to examine the phenomenon of digital nomadism based on the example of Turkish Digital Nomads. By determining the lifestyles and working conditions of Turkish digital nomads, the changing expectations and emerging new dynamics in working life will be discussed.

Research Methodology

The qualitative research method was preferred within the scope of the study. The data used in the research were collected through interviews. The semi-structured interview method was preferred in the interviews. Interviews, which are the main data collection tool that allows in-depth examination of phenomena and events in unique settings and conditions, were designed in a phenomenological design (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2016, p. 113). In this context, it is aimed to reveal the phenomenology of digital

nomadism from the perspective of Turkish digital nomads. For this reason, one of the qualitative research designs, the interpretation-based phenomenology design, was preferred. For the content validity of the interview form created by the researchers by reviewing the relevant literature, the opinions of the relevant field experts were consulted. For this study, an ethics committee decision dated 16.05.2024 and protocol number 2625496 was obtained from the Istanbul University Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee.

Data Collection Technique and Data Analysis

The number of participants between 10 and -15 is considered sufficient as participants in phenomenological studies that allow in-depth examination of a phenomenon (Kocabıyık, 2016, p. 56). In this context, the data of the research were obtained from 11 people who continue their lives as Turkish digital nomads. The data collection process was terminated when the answers of the participants started to be repeated.

Digital nomads were reached through social media platforms (Instagram, WhatsApp), Gmail, and interview requests were submitted. Interviews were conducted between July and September 2024. In the interviews conducted via Zoom (video conferencing), audio recordings were taken with the permission of the participants. The interviews with 11 participants lasted an average of 25 minutes. Interviews were conducted in Turkish and then translated into English for analysis.

In accordance with the research procedure, the audio recordings made to obtain qualitative data were transcribed and documented. Participants were coded as K1 and K2, and, the confidentiality of personal information was protected. The data obtained from the research were analysed with the descriptive analysis method using the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA (version 24.6).

There are some limitations within the scope of this research. The most important limitation of the research is that only Turkish digital nomads were interviewed. The interviewees were reached through Instagram and social networks. The participants were informed that the study was for academic purposes only. However, since they lead a constantly travelling life, many digital nomads did not positively respond to the interview request due to their busy schedules. In addition, during the interviews, the participants were asked to explain their answers in more detail; while some participants provided detailed information, others kept their answers short. This is another limitation of the study.

Demographic characteristics of the Participants

The demographic characteristics of the participants determined in line with the purpose of the research are as follows: gender, age, education level, graduated department, occupation, average monthly income, average monthly cost of living, duration of digital nomadism, destinations visited so far, and frequency of travelling.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Education Level	Graduated Department	Profession	Average Monthly Income	Average Monthly Cost	The Digital Nomadic Period	Destinations Settled to Date	Frequency of Travelling
K1	Man	30	Bachelor's Degree	Political Science and Public Administration	Blogger, Digital Content Creator and Career Coach	$ 1000 or above	$ 800-900	5 years	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Chile, Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, Mexico, and Azerbaijan	Change of city every 1-1,5 months, change of country every 3 months
K2	Woman	25	Bachelor's Degree	Food Engineering	Customer Success Representative	Not specified	Not specified	3 years	Mexico, Brazil, Japan, Indonesia, and USA	Every 3 months
K3	Woman	28	Bachelor's Degree	Computer Engineering	Computer Engineer	70.000 TL	40.000 TL	6 months	Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia	Every month
K4	Man	29	Bachelor's Degree	Computer Engineering	Computer Engineer	80.000 TL	30.000 TL	6 months	Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia	Every month
K5	Man	29	High School Graduate	-	Digital Content Producer	70.000 TL	50.000 TL	6 years	Visited 116 countries	Every month
K6	Woman	31	Master's Degree	Tourist Guidance	Tourist Guide, Digital Content Producer	60.000 TL	50.000 TL	2 years	Bulgaria, Germany, France, England, Croatia, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Georgia, Cyprus	Every 2-3 months
K7	Man	32	Bachelor's Degree	Mechanical Engineering	Digital Content Producer	$ 1500	$ 2500	7 years	Visited 65 countries	Continuos
K8	Woman	36	Associate Degree	Photography and Videography	Photographer	$ 1000	$ 2000	6 years	Greece, Italy, Bali, Thailand, Dubai, Austria, Montenegro, Australia, Denmark, Egypt	Every 2 months
K9	Man	32	Bachelor's Degree	Police Vocational School/Public Administration	Digital Content Producer	20.000 TL	$ 150-300	1 years	Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, India, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Iran, Colombia, Bolivia, Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil	Continuos
K10	Man	29	Bachelor's Degree	Civil Aviation Management	Digital Content Producer, Travel Organiser	100.000-150.000 TL	50.000-100.000 TL	7 years	Visited 30 countries	Continuos
K11	Man	31	Bachelor's Degree	Social Services	Digital Content Producer	50.000-60.000 TL	30.000-50.000 TL	4 years	Visited 38 countries	Continuos

As shown in Table 1, among the 11 digital nomads interviewed, 7 are men and 4 are women. The age of the participants varied between 25 and 36, with an average age of 30. In terms of the educational level of the participants, 1 participant had a high school degree, 1 participant had an associate's degree, 9 participants had a bachelor's degree and 1 participant had a master's degree. It is noteworthy that most of the participants, who graduated from different programs such as Political Science, Food Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Civil Aviation Management, make a living as digital content producers. Two participants work in the field of computer engineering, which is the program from which they graduated. Regarding the duration of the participants' being a digital nomad, it was observed that 2 people have been digital nomads for less than 1 year, while the remaining participants have adopted this lifestyle for 3 years or more. In terms of the frequency of travel, the majority of the participants travelled to different destinations at least once a month.

Research Findings

The data obtained through semi-structured interviews were analysed and the frequently emphasised issues were grouped under main themes and sub-themes and categorised in accordance with the purpose of the study. In addition, the codes related to the themes are shown in Table 2 .

Table 2. Themes, Sub-themes and Codes of the Study

Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Digital Nomadism as a Lifestyle	The Phenomenon of Digital Nomadism and Motivations for Becoming a Digital Nomad	Freedom, Flexibility, Desire for location independence, Passion for travel, Escape from traditional workplaces
Advantages and Disadvantages	Advantages and Disadvantages of Digital Nomadism	Independence, Opportunity to explore new cultures, Minimalist living, Mental fatigue, Internet access issues, Loneliness
Work Environment and Conditions	Working Conditions of Digital Nomads	Flexible working hours, Freelance work, Absence of a fixed working routine, Physical distance from traditional workplaces
Impact on Work Life	Evaluation of Digital Nomadism in terms of Work Motivation and Professional Development	Increased creativity, Skill enhancement, High efficiency and productivity
Work-Life Balance	The Effects of Digital Nomadism on Work-Life Balance	Work-life harmony, Constant travel and accommodation planning
Future Perspectives	Concerns and Future Plans of Digital Nomads	Financial stability, Long-term sustainability of the lifestyle, Absence of retirement planning

Source: Prepared by the authors

The Phenomenon of Digital Nomadism and Motivations for Being a Digital Nomad according to the Participants

Through the statements of the participants, it is analysed how digital nomadism, which offers more freedom and flexibility to individuals by eliminating the boundaries of time and space, is perceived and defined by the participants.

In this study, word cloud analysis was conducted on the perception and definition of digital nomadism because of semi-structured interviews. A word cloud is a tool that provides a visual representation of the frequency of repetition of each word in qualitative research data. For the concepts in Figure 2, their visibility is directly correlated with their frequency: More frequently used concepts are more visible, while less frequently used concepts are less visible. Table 3 shows the frequencies of the word cloud related to the concept of digital nomadism



Figure 2. Word Cloud for the Concept of Digital Nomadism

The findings from the semi-structured interviews suggest that the first two concepts that explain the concept of digital nomadism for Turkish Digital Nomads are “travel” and “freedom”. Again, according to the participants, digital nomadism is also expressed with concepts such as “flexibility, independence from time and space, escape from routine, freelancing, internet, social media”. Most of the participants also actively use social media platforms and earn a living through digital content production. Therefore, they use social media platforms such as “Instagram, Youtube” not only for personal purposes, but also as part of their jobs and professions. Moreover, the word cloud in Figure 2 shows that digital nomadism is related to many other concepts such as “new cultures”, “experience” and “work-life balance”.

Table 3. Frequencies Related to the Word Cloud

Words	Frequencies	Percentage
Travel	24	9,92
Freedom	17	7,02
Flexibility	16	6,61
Independence from time and place	12	4,96
Escape from routine	11	4,55
Freelance	11	4,55
Internet	10	4,13
Social media	9	3,72
Asia	9	3,72
World	7	2,89
New cultures	7	2,89
Language learning	6	2,48
Country	6	2,48
Youtube	6	2,48
Instagram	6	2,48
Content creation	5	2,07
Discovery	5	2,07
Traveler	4	1,65
Alone	4	1,65
Remote work	4	1,65
Self-confidence	4	1,65
Road	4	1,65
Earning money	3	1,24

Table 3. Continued

Experience	3	1,24
Accommodation	3	1,24
Minimalist	3	1,24
Work-life balance	3	1,24
Bali	3	1,24
Dream	3	1,24
Personal development	2	0,83
Electricity	2	0,83
Indonesia	2	0,83
Fatigue	2	0,83
Influencer	2	0,83
Digital slavery	2	0,83
AL	2	0,83
Time management	2	0,83
Computer	2	0,83
Different	2	0,83
Bravery	2	0,83
New people	1	0,41
Language	1	0,41
Different people	1	0,41
Youtuber	1	0,41
Different cultures	1	0,41
Vision	1	0,41
Hostel	1	0,41
City	1	0,41
English	1	0,41
Job flexibility	1	0,41
Global citizen	1	0,41
Self-improvement	1	0,41
Total	**242**	**100,00**

Factors such as the desire for work-life balance, flexibility, freedom, and independence of time and space are among the main factors and motivations that lead participants to become digital nomads.

"I've been backpacking for about eight years now. Ever since I was a kid, I had a dream to travel and see the world. While travelling the world, I also wanted to earn money. But I thought that doing something in the form of a youtube, I mean a content producer, is not very suitable for me. You know, people always have a mission in life. I will learn and share it with others. I need to learn the language to get to know that culture. My biggest motivation is to discover new cultures and bring this vision to the people of my country." (K1, Man, 30)

"I chose digital nomadism for the freedom it offers, the opportunity to experience different cultures, and the ability to work more efficiently. Because going to the office and working under that pressure under certain conditions does not make me jubilant. I feel happier this way."(K2, Woman, 25)

"It is about getting to know oneself, understanding life, knowing what one wants from life. I feel free while travelling. It is a lifestyle where I can use my time better. On the one hand, I still continue to work and earn money, and on the other hand, after my work is over, I travel around my location and see new cultures and places. These motivate me a lot." (K6, Woman, 31)

"I had been a police officer for ten years. I could not fulfil myself in my profession and I was searching for meaning. I loved travelling all the time, but it was difficult for me to do that. Therefore, I ignored all the environmental pressure and chose digital nomadism. Spiritual flavours make me jubilant on the road. I am at peace, I am free. These are my sources of motivation and reasons for continuing on the road." (K9, Man, 32)

"I started to cover the costs of my travels by volunteering or working for low wages in certain places. Then I determined that I could also make money by creating YouTube videos, and I started to do that and it became my job. First of all, I am fulfilling my dream. I continue to travel and see, I continue to learn, I continue to engage with new cultures." (K11, Man, 31)

The opportunity to work and travel whenever they want, the interest in experiencing different cultures and the desire to avoid standard working conditions stand out as prominent factors. Some participants not only feel liberated by this lifestyle but, also have a deeper motivation to realise themselves and share their experiences with others. This may suggest that digital nomadism is a holistic way of life that enables an individual's journey of self-awareness.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Digital Nomadism

Although the participants emphasised the advantages of digital nomadism as freedom, constantly discovering new places, experiencing different cultures and a virtual lifestyle, the most prominent disadvantages were physical and mental fatigue, internet access problems and isolation. Although this lifestyle offers individuals a sense of freedom and discovery, coping with the difficulties and uncertainties brought about by constant travelling is a significant challenge for digital nomads.

"Being free, experiencing different cultures and geographies, getting out of routine, forcing yourself to learn new things. Enriching your repertoire with new knowledge is the biggest advantage." (K2, Woman, 25)
"The advantages are to be more free, to be able to work independently of location. In other words, being able to be constantly mobile instead of staying in a certain environment. Digital nomadism actually teaches a minimal life. The mind and life become clearer as they become more minimal. What you take with you is limited as it is a living out of a suitcase and a bag" (K3, Woman, 28)
"The biggest advantage is that I can do my job anywhere, regardless of space, time or a certain physical environment, and at the same time I am travelling. I am not tied to any place. I am not affiliated to any organisation, I am independent and, free. I can move as I want, I can travel as I want, and I can work wherever I want. The freedom to do your job as you want has a positive effect on my life and makes me happy." (K10, Man, 29)
"I think the disadvantage is that after a while, travelling or producing content for social media starts to take control of you. There were really many times when I spent an hour eating, toilet breaks, seven hours of sleep and sixteen hours in front of the computer. Unfortunately, this will wear you out very quickly in the long run. What is the advantage? Of course, the place where I complain is sometimes Bali, sometimes Thailand, sometimes I complain that I work sixteen hours from a place where I look at the ocean in the Republic of South Africa." (K7, Man, 32)
"Places where the internet is weak and unstable are pushing me hard. It is essential for me to connect to the internet without problems." (K8, Woman, 36)
"Travelling is physically exhausting because you are constantly on the move. It is also mentally exhausting. Because you are constantly changing places. You are often exposed to different cultures and, different people. You are constantly opening a new page in your life. Every day is a new page and this is a bit mentally challenging. Even accessing the internet is sometimes a great luxury in some locations." (K11, Man, 31)

Despite the advantages of the digital nomad lifestyle, such as freedom, independence, exploration, and interaction with new cultures, its disadvantages, particularly physical and mental fatigue, internet access issues, and loneliness, stand out. This indicates that the flexibility and independence offered by digital nomadism cannot constitute a fully sustainable lifestyle without the development of strategies to address its inherent challenges. In this context, digital nomadism serves as a test of individuals' mental and physical resilience.

Working Conditions of the Digital Nomads

Digital nomads have flexible working conditions that are far from the standard working forms. Participants, who usually work in freelance or project-based jobs, can perform their work from different parts of the world without being tied to a specific office environment or fixed working hours. Some participants can set their own working hours, while others worked according to the time in Turkiye.

"I work freelance, so I don't have a specific working hour. The more I work, the better it is for me. That's why I try to follow my husband's working hours. We work according to the time in Turkiye. Here, we start at 14.00 noon and finish at 00.00 at night." (K3, Woman, 28)
"My working hours are fixed. I work 8 hours a day, between 10.00 a.m. and 19.00 p.m. Turkish time. "My working hours did not change when I came here and I continue in the same way." (K4, Man, 29)
"I don't have a certain working hour. For example, a product comes to me from Apple and they cooperate with me. They want me to produce social media content for any of their products. I produce content. Agencies are mostly relaxed about this. Because, for example, they expect them after 15 days. But sometimes they demand that we should enter the content for tomorrow. So I mean, I don't even have any working conditions." (K5, Man, 29)
"I work part-time. I only work on certain days and hours. For example, if I work all day on the weekend, I travel or do my editing the other 5 days. In fact, I am always working. But it is up to me to be at the computer whenever and wherever I want. I can do my work anywhere in the world, depending on the delivery and deal time. Besides photography, I also do social media management and travel consulting." (K8, Woman, 36)
"My working hours are very flexible. I work for a certain number of hours, focus on that hour and work efficiently, rather than working many hours and working inefficiently. I mean, today, for example, I allocated an hour of time for them, I try to allocate an average of one hour a day and it is enough for me. The rest of the time I invest in myself, I produce content for Youtube, for my Instagram and I work a little planned." (K9, Man, 32)

Digital nomads, who have flexible working conditions, stated that even though they have a working life within the framework of freedom and flexibility, this life also has some difficulties. It appears that the physical and mental fatigue of constant travel, the uncertainty of internet access and the complexity of accommodation have a negative impact on their working lives. The

reorganisation of basic needs in each new accommodation, the difficulties in moving technical equipment and the lack of a reliable internet connection were the factors that negatively affected the working practices of the participants. However, participants also emphasised the advantages of the lifestyle, such as the lack of a fixed routine, experiencing different cultures and enjoying personal freedom.

"You must constantly organise yourself while you are working, after all, a human being has basic expenses. Accommodation, internet, food, networking, all these basic expenses you have to build from scratch every time you move. So my moving costs are just mental, while most people think about the financial costs of moving, ours is a mental fatigue." (K1, Man, 30)
"It's a burden to carry the equipment we need to work while travelling. We also need a good internet connection at all times. Without this, we have a lot of difficulties. For example, the internet connection is poor in Indonesia at the moment, which creates stress for us. Because we need the internet all the time. Because we work online. Situations such as poor internet connection and lack of internet data packages cause a lot of problems in our working life." (K2, Woman, 25)
"The biggest disadvantage of working while travelling is the internet instability. One day you can work with the best internet I've ever seen in my life, and the next day, if I have an important meeting or a content I need to upload, you can come across an internet that can barely send a WhatsApp message. The most challenging thing for me in digital nomadism is the instability of the internet, the variability of internet quality. The biggest plus is that you don't have to stay in any condition you don't like." (K7, Man, 32)

In financial terms, some respondents reported earning more income from digital nomadism compared to being a resident, while others reported lower incomes but believed that their earnings could increase in the long term. In general, they stated that they prefer this lifestyle in terms of experience, flexibility and personal development rather than material gain.

"If I was working in a factory or a plaza in Turkiye, I would only be earning a quarter of what I am earning now, so being a digital nomad has had a positive impact on me financially." (K2, Woman, 25)
"I mean, I had a more predictable income because I used to work in the office with a fixed salary. Now I have an unpredictable, non-fixed income. But since I am new to what I am doing now, freelancing, maybe I can earn much better in another four years. This is due to the lifestyle and working style I prefer." (K3, Woman, 28)
"My income would definitely be less than it is now. Therefore, if I had done a job in accordance with the field from which I graduated, the money I would have earned would have been 50 thousand Lire. I sometimes buy a plane ticket for 50 thousand Lire. That'is why I always say that I am doing the best job in the world in terms of material gains. But of course, this is not constant and does not always happen so." (K5, Man, 29)
"Because the department I graduated from was mechanical engineering, I would have earned much more money for sure. But I couldn't be able to visit 67 countries in that case, so this is not something I would trade for money. You know, beyond money, I am very happy that I have bought many things with this time and the money you have spent so far." (K7, Man, 32)
"If I had a settled life, I would be barely making ends meet. I mean, I think I could barely pay my rent. Right now, as a digital nomad, I do not have perfect comfort with the money I earn from YouTube. However, since I am doing what makes me happy, I would still prefer this life compared to a settled life." (K11, Man, 31)

Evaluation of Digital Nomadism in terms of Work Motivation and Professional Development

When the participants were asked about the impact of digital nomadism on their work motivation and productivity, they basically stated that flexible working conditions and the positive effect of visiting new places increased their productivity compared to a fixed work order.

"Constantly seeing a different place, seeing a different geography makes incredible contributions to our minds in terms of motivation to work, vision, imagination and this makes us more creative. In normal, stable work organisations where the same things are done, your imagination, motivation and energy can often perish. In a job like this, you have the chance to stay active all the time. "Digital nomadism is a great experience for jobs suitable for this kind of mindset." (K1, Man, 30)
"I travel as I like. I answer no one. I have no superiors or subordinates. I am not in a hierarchy. "I am on my own, there is no such thing as waiting for days off. This has a positive effect on my work motivation." (K5, Man, 29)
"Since my time is valuable, I think I can use it with better quality. I feel better physically and mentally, which of course reflects positively on my work." (K6, Woman, 31)

Participants stated that digital nomadism is a lifestyle that fosters creative thinking, enables individuals to acquire new digital skills, and enhances work productivity. Furthermore, it can be suggested that this lifestyle encourages individuals to adopt more innovative and productive approaches.

"For example, I was normally just a blogger. In blogging, I learned how to set up a website, how to upgrade it, how to do SEO analyses, how to do effective marketing, how to monetise a social media account, how to collaborate, how to create content, and how to market something to people better. I learned how to set up a company abroad. I learned very well how to use artificial intelligence.. I learned many digital tools, Google's all the tools, in addition to this, I learned many programmes such as CANVA etc. There is a kind of digital hoarding." (K1, Man, 30)

"It especially gave me the opportunity to improve my language skills. It contributed to time management and planning." (K4, Man, 29)
"Editing and using premiere were things I never knew until 6 years ago. Now I can edit videos very early on my computer or phone." (K5, Man, 29)
"First of all, it contributes positively to you in terms of social relations. You look everywhere from the point of view of how I can get a job out of here, how I can produce content. I can say that your brain is constantly working actively. Since I am already a woman nomad on my own, you are constantly active in what is going on around you. It gives you the opportunity to acquire practical intelligence." (K8, Woman, 36)

The digital nomad lifestyle can be considered a source of motivation for digital nomads. Based on the participants' statements, it is observed that the absence of rigid hierarchies, the ability to manage their own time, and drawing inspiration from different geographies have positive effects on their work motivation. It is also inferred that digital nomadism fosters individuals' creativity and facilitates the acquisition of new skills. For instance, essential competencies of the digital age, such as effective use of digital tools, content creation, and marketing, are among the skills developed through the digital nomad lifestyle. Therefore, digital nomadism could be regarded as a potential alternative model to traditional work practices.

Effects of Digital Nomadism on Work-Life Balance

Participants generally stated that they achieved work-life balance due to the flexible working hours provided by digital nomadism. Some participants stated that they faced the problem of being perceived as unemployed by the others around them. At the same time, there are also participants who experience difficulties due to working in countries with different time zones.

"In the work-life balance, the fact that I can adjust my working hours myself provides an incredible comfort in the process that I determine my working hours myself in most, if not all, things. At that time, I do not hold back from doing the things I want to do." (K1, Man, 30)
"Digital nomadism has affected my work-life balance very positively. Before, there was no such thing as a private life in my life. I was usually always working overtime, coming home, eating and sleeping. I couldn't do much on weekdays. "Digital nomadism has opened up space for me to do things in my private life outside my working life." (K3, Woman, 28)
"As a result, since not everyone adopts this lifestyle, you experience disconnections with your circle of friends or family. Because I am a digital nomad, everyone thinks I am unemployed. They direct me to everything that needs to be done. After all, I have a job, but I manage this job myself." (K8, Woman, 36)
"For example, I am currently in Bali and there is a 5-h time difference between us and Turkiye. Naturally, for a job in Turkiye, it can be difficult for me because I am now 5-h ahead. Of course, the time difference affects both my work and private life. Nevertheless, I do not have a big problem in managing time, or rather, I do not have a big problem in allocating time for myself because I manage my work myself." (K10, Man, 29)

The digital nomad lifestyle can be said to have a significant impact on work-life balance. Digital nomads, who have the freedom to set their own working hours, can allocate more time to their personal lives. Although they may face challenges due to time zone differences stemming from being in different countries, their ability to manage their time effectively largely mitigates this disadvantage. It can be argued that their physical and mental well-being is positively influenced by the freedom to organise both their professional and personal lives autonomously.

Concerns and Future Plans of Digital Nomads

Although participants are concerned about future financial security, they prefer to focus on the short term. It has been observed that issues such as social security and retirement are considered as problems that will arise in the long term by the participants and therefore they try to postpone their concerns about the future as much as possible.

"Everything in life has an opportunity cost. After the age of 60, it does not make sense for me to give my most active years to ensure my financial security at work in the last 10 years of my life. I was going to have 20 days off a year. I refused the civil service. I qualified for the civil service, but I refused. I would have 20 days of leave a year. When I live for 40 years and there is no guarantee that I will take my medication, I think it is a very serious nonsense to devote a large part of my life to work for 5-10 years at that time." (K1, Man, 30)
"I am included in the private pension system. But social security etc., these are my worries 30 years. Of course, I am worried about the future. Because my money can be reset in an instant, its value can decrease. Therefore, I avoid thinking about the future." (K5, Man, 29)
"My biggest concern about the future is financial matters. Therefore, the biggest risk is that this work is inconsistent and irregular. So a job offer comes. For example, you make good money that month. You earn 3.000-4.000 dollars and there is no other job for the next 7 months, and the irregularity of income inevitably leads to the irregularity of dreams and plans." (K7, Man, 32)

It seems that the majority of the participants who stated that it is good for them to continue their lives by constantly discovering new places, experiencing new cultures and travelling at the same time want to continue this lifestyle.

"I think I am adding new things to myself, I am experiencing new cultures, I am enriching my repertoire and I am not in a certain routine and this makes me feel really happy and less stressed. I don't even want to consider waking up in every morning and going to a factory or a plaza." (K2, Woman, 25)
"Now, I want to turn it into a travel agency, maybe a little more, and I want to produce content and make my own trips again, but I want to make a little more tours and travel to the places I have discovered so far with new people." (K6, Woman, 31)
"I don't have a very long-term plan or programme, but I have some thoughts and goals for 2-3 years on average. I want to realise them and I think I will continue." (K10, Man, 29)
"I am satisfied, frankly, I am glad that I chose it. I even wish I had chosen it earlier."(K11, Man, 31)

It is safe to say that digital nomadism, which is different from traditional forms of employment, does not offer a solution for long-term financial security solutions such as social security. Digital nomads, who typically live in accordance with the motto "live in the moment" and are not included in social security systems, may be disadvantaged in terms of the risks they may face in the future. Moreover, the irregularity of their income may lead to uncertainties in their future planning.

Table 4. Advantages and Disadvantages of Digital Nomadism

Advantages	Disadvantages
Freedom of movement	The necessity to be constantly on the move
Independence from time and space	Internet access problems
Experience different cultures	Physical and mental fatigue
Motivation to visit new places	Non-fixed irregular income
Realising self and dreams	Job and employment insecurity
Opportunity for continuous development	Lack of a certain living arrangement
Flexible working conditions/hours	Irregular working conditions/hours
Using time efficiently	Obligation to carry working equipment at all times
Independence from hierarchy	Constant change in the working environment
Creative mindset	The process of producing content for social media
Minimalist lifestyle	Irregular workload

Source: Prepared by the authors

A general summary of the advantages and disadvantages of digital nomadism in the light of the data obtained as a result of semi-structured interviews conducted in line with the purpose of the research is given in Table 4. In addition to advantages such as flexible working conditions, independence from time and space, and freedom of movement, digital nomads also face various challenges such as job and income insecurity, irregular working hours, and the necessity to be constantly on the move.

Conclusion and Discussion

In today's world, where digitalisation is rapidly spreading, the global transformation has led individuals to question their lifestyles and working methods. This process is not limited to digital technological innovations but also possesses the power to deeply affect social, economic, and cultural dynamics. In particular, the impact of COVID-19 has initiated a fundamental change in existing systems and phenomena, causing new norms where digital interactions take precedence. One of these emerging phenomena is digital nomadism, characterised by individuals who embrace the motto "earn while travelling," simultaneously working and exploring.

This study, drawing on the example of Turkish digital nomads, explores their lifestyles and working conditions. It delves into the reasons for adopting the digital nomad lifestyle, the advantages and challenges they encounter, its effects on work-life balance, and their working environments in detail.

The findings reveal that digital nomadism for Turkish digital nomads is shaped around the axes of "travel" and "freedom." Digital nomads have adopted a lifestyle that allows them to work in enjoyable environments without being tied to a single location, departing from routine living. This lifestyle provides individuals with opportunities to explore new places, experience different cultures, and redefine their work-life balance. It was found that most participants generated income as digital content creators. The intensive use of social media platforms for both personal and professional purposes plays a significant role in their income generation and specialisation in their fields. In this context, digital nomadism emerges not only as a lifestyle but also as a business model that encourages individuals to enhance their digital competencies.

While the digital nomad lifestyle offers advantages such as flexible working conditions, freedom, and independence from time and place, it also has some drawbacks. Participants noted that constant travel leads to physical and mental fatigue, and uncertainties in internet access and accommodation arrangements negatively impact work processes. Moreover, independent and flexible working conditions combined with the need to adapt to different time zones can make maintaining work-life balance challenging. Therefore, for digital nomadism to be a sustainable lifestyle, individuals may need to develop strategies to cope with the challenges they face.

Digital nomads might appear to optimise their leisure time while minimising the time they dedicate to work. However, the findings indicate that this is not the primary reason for choosing this lifestyle. Digital nomads aim not to work less but to work differently and more independently. They can create a new dynamic in the working world. The desire to escape hierarchies, monotonous work content, and both temporal and spatial organisational constraints, along with the need for freedom and flexibility, may accelerate the rise of new work models. Digital nomadism, which transforms the traditional norms of working life, can be embraced not only as a lifestyle focused on short- and long-term material gains but also as a holistic way of living that allows individuals to embark on a journey of self-discovery. However, irregular income and lack of access to social security systems could pose long-term challenges for digital nomads. Therefore, financial tools that mitigate income fluctuations and flexible retirement programs could be developed to ensure the long-term sustainability of this new lifestyle and work model. The need for working conditions aligned with the realities of a globally mobile workforce is evident.

It can be argued that the digital nomad lifestyle serves both as a response to and a catalyst for changes in global work dynamics and lifestyle preferences. Accordingly, the number of studies on this topic is expected to increase. This study sheds light comprehensively on the emerging phenomenon of digital nomadism within the academic literature. However, there is a need for more extensive studies on the subject. Future research could contribute to a broader understanding of this lifestyle by examining the social and economic outcomes of digital nomadism in the long term and across different geographical contexts. Additionally, assessing the impact of digital nomads on local economies could provide significant insights for policymakers.

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