YOUNG ADULTS' MOTIVATIONS FOR DIGITAL DATING VIOLENCE BEHAVIORS

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ABSTRACT
This study investigates the prevalence and motivations behind digital dating violence among young adults. Through a qualitative phenomenological approach, 193 university students were interviewed. Findings indicate that a significant proportion (78.23%) of participants have engaged in digital dating violence, with women demonstrating higher rates than men. Common motivations include anger, excessive love, fear of loss, attention seeking, jealousy, revenge, sadness, insecurity, and joking. Understanding these diverse motivations is essential for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies to address this prevalent issue.

Key words: digital dating violence, causes, phenomenological research, university students.

INTRODUCTION
Lewis and Fremouw (1) define dating violence as any intentional behavior including sexual harassment, rape, physical force, threats, and psychological maltreatment, aimed at causing harm to a partner in a dating relationship. The advent and widespread use of digital communication and internet technologies have expanded the scope of dating violence to include digital channels (2), giving rise to the phenomenon of digital dating violence. These harmful actions can be perpetrated through various digital platforms such as mobile phones, social media, and email.

Digital dating violence can manifest in numerous ways, including:

- Writing things to provoke anger the partner
- Bringing up past transgressions to cause emotional distress
- Threatening to end the relationship
- Insulting the partner with derogatory language
- Writing things to induce jealousy
- Publicly ridiculing or shaming the partner (3)

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Understanding the underlying motivations behind digital dating violence is crucial for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies. Fidan and Yeşil (4) identified several factors contributing to dating violence, such as anger, the dissolution of love, perceived over-affection, excessive disagreement, and cultural differences. However, these are the causes of dating violence. Research on the specific causes of digital dating violence remains limited. Additionally, determining which gender commits digital dating violence more is essential for identifying high-risk groups.

Based on this background, the present study aims to examine young adults' motivations for digital dating violence. The research questions are as follows:

1. What is the prevalence of digital dating violence among participants?
2. What are the rates of digital dating violence among women and men participants?
3. What are the underlying motivations behind digital dating violence?

METHOD
Research Design
This study, a qualitative research component of a mixed-methods investigation, employed a phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of university students involved in dating relationships.

Participants
Participants are university students in dating relationships. The study group was created using the purposive sampling method. Purposeful sampling methods are mostly used in qualitative studies. Qualitative data were collected from 193 university students who agreed to participate in the study, while quantitative data were gathered from a larger sample of 422 students.

Table 1. Demographic data of the participant

Variables	*f*	%
Gender		
Woman	132	68.4
Man	61	31.6
Age		
18	18	9.3
19	31	16.1
20	40	20.7
21-25	104	53.9
Number of dates so far		
1	16	8.3
2	20	10.4
3	22	11.4
4	17	8.8
5	9	4.7
6 and more	72	37.3
I can't remember	37	19.2
Average daily messaging frequency with current/former partner (via social media)		
None	24	12.4
Several times a day	110	57
Often	25	13.0
Continually	34	17.6

As shown in **Table 1**, over half of the participants were female, and the majority were aged 21-25. Participants had, on average, six or more dating experiences and reported messaging their partners several times a day.

Data Collection Tools
Demographic Information Form and Qualitative Research Questions Form were used as data collection tools.
Demographic Information Form: The demographic information form is a survey form created by researchers that asks for demographic information of participants (gender, age, dating experience, and messaging frequency).

Qualitative Research Questions Form: The research team developed the qualitative research questions. Qualitative research questions were designed to explore participants' experiences with digital dating violence and their motivations for engaging in such behaviors.

Procedure
After receiving ethical committee approval from the university where the researchers worked, the data collection process began. Data were collected online via Google Forms. Participants first answered the Cyber Dating Violence Inventory, developed by Morelli et al. (3) and adapted into Turkish by Erdem et al. (5). Then, participants who answered this survey were asked the following question: "Can you share what were the feelings and thoughts that motivated you to do this or these to him/her?" The answers of the volunteer participants who answered this question constituted the data of this study. Participants were informed about the study at the beginning and approved the informed consent form.

Trustworthiness
To ensure the reliability of the research, the participants' shares were evaluated independently by both researchers, first coding was done and then themes were created. For transferability, the purposive sampling method was used and the data obtained from the

participants were presented with direct quotations (6).

Data Analysis

Within the scope of the research, frequency analysis and categorical analysis techniques from the content analysis techniques were used. Frequency analysis is the first method used in content analysis and reveals the frequency of occurrence of units or elements in numerical, percentage, and proportional terms. Categorical analysis is another techniques used. Categorical analysis is the division of a certain message into

units (coding) and the separation of these units into categories within the framework of certain criteria (7). Maxqda 20 was used in data analysis.

FINDINGS

Prevalence of Digital Dating Violence among Participants

To investigate the prevalence of digital dating violence among participants, a frequency analysis was conducted. The findings are shown in **Figure 1.**
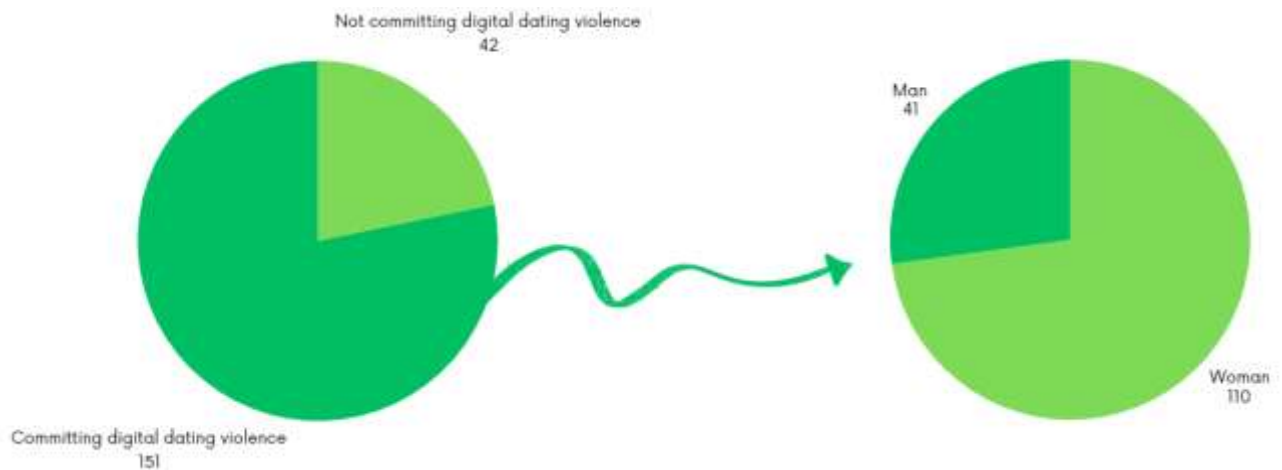

Figure 1. Prevalence of Digital Dating Violence among Participants

As illustrated in **Figure 1**, 193 participants were surveyed, of which 42 reported no engagement in digital dating violence, while 151 (78.23%) indicated involvement for various reasons. This suggests a substantial proportion of participants have been perpetrators of digital dating violence. A gender-based analysis revealed that 110 out of 132 female participants (83.33%) and 41 out of 61 male participants (67.21%) admitted to perpetrating digital dating violence. These findings indicate a significantly higher prevalence of digital dating violence among

female participants compared to male participants.

Participants' Motivation for Digital Dating Violence

Participants' motivations for engaging in digital dating violence were diverse, with each individual citing one or more reasons for their behavior. **Table 2** presents the most frequently mentioned motivations, along with their corresponding frequencies.

Table 2. Participants' motivations for digital dating violence

Motivations	f
Anger	48
Excessive love and fear of loss	26
Attention seeking	21
Jealousy	20
Revenge	15
Sadness	12
Insecurity	12
Joke	9

Anger emerged as the most common motivation while joking was the least frequent. In the following paragraphs, each motivation is explained and presented with direct quotations.

1. Anger: The emotion most frequently cited as the cause of digital dating violence is anger. P184 (man); "I underestimated my partner on social media because I was angry." P68 (man); "I

mentioned something bad she did in the past, once or twice, via WhatsApp. I did it because I was angry at what she did in the past." These statements indicate that digital dating violence behavior is a reflection of anger.

2. Excessive Love and Fear of Loss: Some of the participants reported that the reason for their digital dating violence was that they loved their partner too much. However, the underlying reason was the fear of loss. They often described these actions as driven by love and a desire to maintain the relationship. P148 (man): "I did it because of love and the value I gave her. I didn't want to lose her". P5 (woman): "I did it because of the respect I had for our relationship and the love I couldn't end. My last resort was to threaten him."

3. Attention Seeking: Participants stated, sometimes clearly and sometimes indirectly, that their motivation for committing digital dating violence was attention-seeking. They often employed digital dating violence as a means of gaining their partner's attention or provoking a reaction. P145 (man) stated that he committed digital dating violence for attention seeking: "I tried to get her attention by sharing insinuating tweets." P107 (woman) did not directly state the aim of attracting attention, but the implicit aim was attention seeking: "I tried to make him angry with my messages, that is, by conflicting with him, to make the problem between us to be solved. Otherwise, we would not talk."

4. Jealousy: Some of the participants reported that the reason for their digital dating violence was jealousy. Jealousy was often expressed together with anger and fear of loss. Participants described feelings of insecurity and possessiveness that led them to engage in harmful behaviors.

5. Revenge: A smaller group of participants reported seeking revenge as a motivation for their actions. They often described instances where their partners had engaged in similar behaviors, leading them to retaliate. P22 (woman) said, "He treated me the same way, so I did it." P91 (woman): I was angry and took revenge because he was misusing social media".

6. Sadness: A smaller proportion of participants attributed digital dating violence to their sadness and heartbreak.

7. Insecurity: Some also said that they committed digital dating violence because of insecurity. P163 (man) was one of them: "I did it because I was not sure enough about my girlfriend's love. To see if the value I gave her was reciprocated. I wanted to find out whether I could trust her or not and not waste my time."

8. Joke: Finally, some participants said that they committed digital dating violence as a joke. For example, P10 (man): "I like to annoy my girlfriend. So sometimes I do things to make her angry." P4 (woman): "It was something I did as a joke, to annoy him."

A smaller portion of participants also cited long-distance relationships, being cheated, not accepting that it's over, lack of self-confidence, and lack of respect as reasons for committing digital dating violence, in addition to these important themes.

Digital Dating Violence Motivations Word Cloud
The themes obtained from the analysis of qualitative interviews regarding young adults' motivation for digital dating violence were turned into a word cloud to visualize the data. The word cloud is seen in **Figure 2.**

Figure 2. Participants' Motivation for Digital Dating Violence

As seen in **Figure 2,** the most frequently repeated motivations by the participants are anger and excessive love and fear of loss, while the least frequently repeated motivations are not accepting that it's over, lack of self-confidence, and lack of respect.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
In this study, 151 out of 193 participants (78.23%) were found to have committed/perpetrated digital dating violence. The present study revealed that a significant proportion of young adults engage in digital dating violence, as perpetrators. This finding is consistent with the findings of Marganski and Malender (8) and Borrajo et al. (9) in their studies with young adults, where more than 70% of the participants were victims of digital dating violence. This findings suggest that both perpetration and exposure to digital dating violence are common among young adults.

Of the 132 women participants, 110 (83.33%) and of the 61 men participants, 41 (67.21%) reported that they had committed digital dating violence. While both genders exhibited high rates of digital dating violence perpetration, women reported higher rates than men. This result is consistent with studies suggesting that women tend to engage in more online controlling and monitoring behaviors (10, 11). Men are often found to be more likely to use physical and verbal violence, in other words, to use reactive violence more (12).

The study further explored the underlying motivations for digital dating violence among participants. Anger emerged as the most common factor, but other emotions and experiences, such as excessive love, fear of loss, and the attention seeking, also played significant roles. Understanding these diverse motivations is crucial for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies.

The participants' motivations for digital dating violence in the present study were largely consistent with those identified by Fidan and Yeşil (4), including anger, relationship termination, excessive love, frequent disagreements, and cultural differences. However, cultural differences were not explicitly addressed in the current research. While such factors may influence face-to-face dating violence, their impact on digital dating violence may be less pronounced.
In conclusion, this study underscores the prevalence and complexity of digital dating

violence among young adults. By identifying the primary motivations for such behavior, future research can focus on developing targeted interventions to prevent and address this pressing issue.

RECOMMENDATIONS
To address the prevalence of digital dating violence among young adults, several recommendations can be put forth:
Education and Awareness: Young adults should be comprehensively informed about the nature, consequences, and prevention strategies of digital dating violence. Educational programs and seminars can be organized to raise awareness of this issue and promote healthy communication styles within dating relationships.

Targeted Interventions for Women: Given the higher risk of digital dating violence perpetration among young women, tailored interventions are essential. In this context, it is important to prepare psycho-educational programs for women to express their feelings and thoughts in relationships without resorting to digital dating violence. These programs should emphasize healthy conflict resolution strategies and the importance of seeking support when needed.

Addressing Subtle Forms of Violence: It is crucial to recognize that digital dating violence can encompass subtle behaviors, such as the use of jokes or sarcasm to demean or control a partner. Young adults should be made aware of these more nuanced forms of violence and encouraged to identify and address them in their relationships.

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