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Digital Social Work with Children and Youth : A New Challenge in Professional Practice

Brelyantika Indra Jesa
Author

Erasmus Mundus Master's Programme in Social Work with Children and Youth

Assoc. prof. dr. Justinas Sadauskas
Faculty of Human and Social Studies-Mykolas Romeris University
Supervisor

ISCTE- University Institute of Lisbon, May 2023

Funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

Abstract

Title: Digital Social Work with Children and Youth: A New Challenge in Professional Practice

Author : Brelyantika Indra Jesa

Key words: Digital Technology, Social Work, Children, Youth,

Digital Social Work is defined as an application of technology in social work practice. The deployment of technology becomes more crucial when working with children and youth because ICTs are an integral part of children and youth. This study explores how digital technology supplements in-person meetings in social work practice with children and youth. Qualitative research was chosen to understand the experience of social workers using technology. The study was conducted through purposive sampling with children and youth social workers in Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia. This research included 15 social workers in total. Data was gathered through online and in-person interviews, then evaluated using content analysis. Document analysis was also used to support this study by assessing each country's DESI (Digital Economy and Society Index) and Ethical Code. This study result showed that using digital technologies helps the work to be more effective and supports the intervention process despite the challenges and ethical aspects that must be considered. The intervention process that applies technology helps the client's engagement, encourages the client's change, extends assistance possibility, external support opportunities, and supportive Interdisciplinary Work. Social workers face challenges before applying digital technology and during implementation. They also need to consider some ethical aspects of professional boundaries that might be blurred because of social networks, confidentiality, and informed consent. By using digital technology, social workers not only emphasize its application but also comprehend what it can accomplish, keeping in mind that technology cannot be generalized in all cases and is determined by the client's condition, the available support, and the social worker's ability.

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Abbreviation

ICT- Information and Communication Technology

COVID-19- Corona Virus Disease-19

DESI- Digital Economy and Social Index

TAM- Technology Acceptance Model

UTAUT- Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

EU- European Union

Acknowledgment

Thank you for all your support and help in completing this thesis.

First of all, my gratitude to Allah SWT because it is by His blessings and mercy that I can complete this master's thesis successfully.

I am deeply thankful to the European Commission and ESWOCHY for allowing me to study at four excellent universities (MRU, RSU, Katholika University, and ISCTE). Learning in this program is a dream come true. Thanks to all the amazing professors for all their knowledge and experience.

Big thanks to my supervisor, Professor Justinas Sadauskas, for the guidance, help, support, and cooperation in completing this thesis. I am delighted to have you as my supervisor. The process of this research was smooth because of your support

My special thanks and appreciation go to Professor Raminta Bardauskiene for her support and kindness from the beginning of the scholarship process until the end of my study. And I would also like to acknowledge Professor Jorge Manuel Ferreira for his guidance and support throughout my research.

I also express my appreciation to all the informants who participated in this research and all the people who helped with this research, both in finding informants and liaising with other organizations. This research would not have been possible without your help.

I would like to appreciate my family deeply, especially my father, Sukaono, and my mother, Rohatin, for their unending love, prayers, support, and blessings. I dedicate this work to you, and I hope you will be proud of me. And my sister, Damai, thank you for your love and support.

Many thanks also to Hewad Alikhil, who has supported my journey from the beginning until now and always helped in every situation.

One last thing, thank you to all my ESWOCHY family. I am so grateful to meet and have you all in my life. Thank you so much for everything. For all my friends in Indonesia, thank you for the support, especially for Anin and Panti Carita’s team.

INTRODUCTION

Background. A human experience is mediated and facilitated by and through technology (Goldkind & Wolf, 2015). Technology is a social process and a fact of life (Warf, 2017). And nobody can steer clear of the implications of this technology (Golkind et al., 2019). Digital Technologies are changing society, the economy, and social inclusion, including Social Work Practice (López Peláez & Marcuello Servos,2018). Long before COVID-19, technology permeated social work practice (Mishna et al., 2020). The swift restriction imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic has demanded rapid digitalization (López Peláez et al., 2020). To connect with service consumers, social workers rely on video calling and other digital activities (Pink et al., 2021).

Digital technology has shifted, impacted, and intersected with the practice of social work (López Peláez et al., 2018) and became a significant component of professional activities (Pink et al., 2021). Technology provides support, a tool, and a resource for an effective social intervention that fulfills people's needs and social responses to reduce inequalities (Ferreira, 2023). Social workers cannot assess the needs of a group population or an individual without considering their online activity, interactions with other institutions, and digital skills (Castillo de Mesa et al., 2020).

Digital technology has 'permeated' social work practice (Pink et al., 2021), opening up new chances and confronting new obstacles (Reamer, 2013). It modifies professional practice and redefines social work knowledge and identities (Petružytė et al., 2022). Bringing technologies into social work practice involves examining the benefits and drawbacks, designing technology-based treatments that respect the relationships between social workers and clients, and generating ethical dilemmas (Reamer, 2015; Wodarski & Curtis, 2015). Clients and practitioners must be aware of the potential risks of using digital technology to provide distance services since improper or unethical use can lead to litigation and allegations of professional malpractice (Reamer, 2015a).

Digital social work is an emerging key specialization for 21st-century digital social service (López Peláez, 2023). Realizing how extensively the world relies on technology, the primary task of social work is to harness technological advances and employ digital innovations for the benefit of society (Cosner Berzin et al., 2015). According to Ceranoglu (2010), practitioners are hampered by the lack of empirical research on interventions based on technology. Digital technology research is particularly important today since rapid technological progress, societal change, and the expansion of computer technologies make technology an indispensable aspect of human existence, including social work practices (Price S. et al., 2013).

Problem Area. Social workers possess an essential role in working with and for kids and adolescents at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels, as well as with civil society on a global scale (Lyons et al., 2006). Technologies can be most effective in multiple systems, such as child welfare and juvenile justice (Cosner

Berzin et al., 2015). According to research, young people aged 15 to 24 are more fervent Internet users (71 percent) than the majority of the population (57 percent) in all sectors (International Telecommunication Union, 2022).

In Plowman, Lydia et al. (2010) research, children are growing up in a world where the internet, mobile phones, and different sorts of digital contact are ubiquitous. Children and youth, clients of social workers, are ardent consumers of digital technology. As stated by Masson et al. (2013), there is a risk to the profession when their clients (children and teenagers) use twenty-first-century communication while social workers remain stuck in the twentieth century (depending on phone numbers and postal addresses).

Cooner et al. (2020) explained how digital platforms might violate the human right to privacy and expose children to dangers. Otherwise, Breyette and Hill's (2015) research states that e-communication has several merits for their work with young people, including comfort, increased effectiveness and efficiency, reduced absence rates, better communication, more accessible documentation, less cumbersome timetabling, and better relationships between clients and social workers. This technology is a double-edged sword that always gives challenges and opportunities. This study will focus on "**How digital technology can complement face-to-face practice in social work practice with children and youth in 3 countries (Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia)**?"

Objectives of Study

General Objectives

Disclose how social workers use digital social work with children and youth to complement face-to-face practice.

Specific Objectives

- To analyze the concept and situation of social workers with children and youth using Digital Technology in practice to complement the face-to-face.
- To identify what kind of Digital Technology is used in the practice of children and youth, along with the challenge, ethical issues, and implications they faced
- To understand the experience of social work using Digital Technology in practice with children and youth and offering different result

Research Questions

- In Digital Social Work Practice with Children and Youth. What are the concepts social work used, and in which situation they used this technology?
- Does the Internet and Computer Technology promote some challenges, ethical issues, and implications in Social Work intervention with Children and Youth?
- How does social work practice change because of this digital technology and offering different results?

Significance of Study. The social work practice and education field have changed due to digital technology (Reamer, 2015). The social work practice with children and youth is very close to this technology because the client (children and youth) are native to this. The study in European countries (Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia) will show how each country applied digital technology in their practice with children and youth to complement offline activity. Technological advancements are being supported by the European Commission, such as The Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL), a new EU financial effort to bring digital technologies to businesses, individuals, and government agencies. Furthermore, the European Commission proposes a vision, objectives, and paths for Europe's effective digital transformation by 2030 (European Commission, 2021). Social workers need to take part in this program to develop this practice.

The research analysis also connects to the document analysis based on each country's Digital Economy and Social Index (DESI) from European Commission and Ethical Cod from the social work association. This study's findings contributed to filling in the gap in social work research with children and youth. It also significantly benefits social workers, children, youth, organizations, government, educational institutions, and social work associations.

Definition of Keywords

Digital Technology includes various tools, services, technologies, and applications that use different hardware and software (Rice, 2003). Examples are computers, phones, television, and robots (Rice, 2003; Vuorikari et al., 2016; Tulinayo et al., 2018).

Children are any person under 18 years of age. When a person's age cannot be ascertained with certainty, but there are grounds to assume they are a child, they are treated as such following this legislation until their age is established in accordance with the applicable law. (Law. No18/2017 On The Rights and Protection of Child)

Youth is defined as those aged 15 to 24, with an understanding that member states and other entities employ multiple definitions. (United Nations,2007)

Children, youth, and family social workers are providing services to children and youth under the age of 18 and to their families. An important function of social work is to improve social and psychological functioning, to provide support, and to understand the issues and concerns that affect them (NASW, 2020). (NASW, 2020)

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Understanding Digital Social Work

Social work as an academic and professional discipline demands changes due to digital transformation because social work is concerned with social problems and finding new possible solutions (Castilo De Mesa et al., 2019). Within social services and social work, digital or e-social work is also characterized by applying Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) (López Peláez et al., 2018).

Many academic authors are concerned about the use of technology in social work practice. Mishna (2012) finding about the impact of ICTs in social work; Castillo De Mesa (2017) discusses the problems of digital transformation; e-social work is examined by López Peláez and Marcuello-Sevos (2018). Reamer (2015) and Barksy (2017) discuss ethical issues in the digital age (Castilo De Mesa, 2023). Social workers must confront the difficulty of learning to cope with digital technology to improve their social workers' abilities and help service users find solutions because social workers aim to take advantage of the digital technology potential and complement face-to-face activities to optimize social work practice and research, not to replace it (Castilo De Mesa et al., 2021)

1.1.1. Concept of Digital Social Work

In 1967, Barran P invented the phrase "digital technology" in his book The Future Computer Utility, stating that *"these new developments in new computer technology are such as to affect the fundamentally the nature of economic and social life"* (Yates and Rice, 2020). In the social work practice, digital technology was nothing new and had been around for a long time. Individual activists promoted and pushed the use of technology in human services for the first time in the late 1970s. Professor of social work Gunther Geiss at Adelphi University surveyed in 1978 whether academics were using computers or creating new technology to improve their profession. A network of specialists with combined skills in technology and human services was established due to more than 80 positive answers. Then HUSITA (Human Service Information Technology Application), a virtual international organization advocating the ethical and efficient use of ICTs in human services, was founded in the 1980s and was carried on by Dick Schoeh's 1982 publication of Computer Use in Human Service: A Guide to Information Management, the first book that addressed the possible applications of technology in Social Work (Golkind et al., 2019). Social workers finishing their degrees in the 1960s could transmit facsimiles using the first commercially accessible facsimile machines, and in the 1970s, they examined study data entered into massive card-reading machines. By the 1980s, social work students could leave messages on answering machines (Reamer,2019).

The Digital Social Work paradigm was developed at digitalization and social work interface. Adopting technology to address social problems and barriers attempts to address concerns and define social workers' competence to evaluate, innovate, and produce solutions (Castillo De Mesa, 2021). Pink et al. (2021) propose that digital social work should be viewed and developed as a hybrid, anticipatory, and adaptable profession. Hybrid refers to social work services that simultaneously provide digital and physical services. Anticipatory refers to how social workers organize meetings using digital media and technologies but also plan in-person visits in the future. And flexible understood as social work might be ready for the future practice aspect aimed to handle rising uncertainties and navigate emerging opportunities.

The COVID-19 epidemic has hastened the digitization of social services and social work (López Peláez, 2023). During the COVID-19 outbreak, social workers avoid becoming infected by performing the tasks they would have done in person from their homes using digital communication technology (Pink et al.,2020). In addition to face-to-face practice, social workers are increasingly interacting with clients informally using ICT (Mishna et al. 2012, 2014, 2015, 2019). And they now rely on ICTs for every business and interaction with clients. (Mishna et al., 2020)

Digital technology has been used in social work practice since the 1960s and was not developed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Social media, online gaming, multimedia, and mobile phones are digital technology instruments and systems that produce or process data (Railean, 2020). However, the COVID-19 necessity to stay at home and prevent the spreading of the virus turned technology into the sole way to contact clients. Digital Social Work can be understood as using digital technologies to assist social work practice that does not aim to replace in-person support. These digital technologies influence social work practice in various ways, bringing positive and negative impacts.

1.1.2. Opportunity for Integrated Digital Technology in Social Service

Since 2014, the European Commission has monitored Member States' digital growth through the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) reports. Human capital, connectivity, digital technology integration, and digital public services are the four critical areas (European Commission,2022). This area of DESI is particularly relevant from a social services and social work perspective (López Peláez, 2023). All dimensions of DESI will help to understand the digitalization process of each country. European Commission, (2020) During the pandemic of COVID-19 member States have advanced in digitization efforts but are still struggling to close the gap in digital skills and digital transformation.

Figure 1: Digital Economy and Society Index 2022

The score of the EU is 52.3, with some countries above or below this score. This research was conducted in three countries (Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia). So it is crucial to look at the DESI rankings related to social work practice in these three countries.

Table 1: DESI Ranking of Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia

DESI 2022	Ranking	Score	EU
Lithuania	14	52.7	52.3
Latvia	17	49.7	
Slovakia	23	43.4	

Source: Author's compilation from DESI Country's Report

The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2022 comprises human capital, connectivity, technological integration, and digital public services. Lithuania is ranked 14th among the EU's 27 member states, Latvia is ranked 17th, and Slovakia is ranked 23rd. The DESI rankings indicate each country's general level of digitalization and related to social work services provided using digital technologies.

The first key component is human capital, which includes internet user abilities and advanced abilities and improvement. In this study, the indicators of digital skills include information and data literacy, communication and cooperation, digital content production, protection, and problem-solving (European Commission, 2022)

Table 2: Basic Digital Skills in Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia

Country	Basic Digital Skills	EU
Lithuania	49 %	54 %
Latvia	51 %	
Slovakia	55 %	

Source: Author's compilation from DESI Country's Report

Over half of the population in Lithuania has basic digital skills, but the EU average is slightly higher (49% versus 54%). Meanwhile, 51% of Latvians aged 16 to 74 have at least basic digital abilities compared to the EU average. Furthermore, 55% of individuals in Slovakia have basic digital skills, which is a bit higher than the EU average of 54%. Having digital abilities will assist social workers in efficiently implementing technology.

Social workers in the twenty-first century must establish physical and virtual groups to encourage community organizing and social work advocacy. There are two significant groups of digital technologies: (1) communication and message delivery tools, such as e-mail and social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and (2) data collection and visualization applications, such as GIS (Geographical Information System), donor management programs to manage donor relationships, including inviting donors to donate online, and automated subscription-based alert systems (Singer & Sage, 2015. Telephone counselling, digital counselling, online counselling, cybertherapy (avatar treatment), independent web-based therapies, electronic social networks, text messaging, and e-mail are all options for social workers today to provide services to the clients (Reamer, 2015).

Besides the service to the client, social workers also use ICTs in administrative activities. Social workers' role has expanded to include administrative tasks requiring us to use digital tools for calculating financial contributions for care services, entering data into databases, creating reports, and preparing presentations are among these tasks. The Internet and computerized information systems may be critical in enabling a brokerage function and allowing a social worker or other enablers to assist a service user in determining what is available and selecting the appropriate service from an increasing range of options (Watling and Rogers, 2012).

The European Union's DESI (Digital Economy and Society Index) may assess a country's digitization in terms of the use of digital technology, particularly in social work practice. In 2022, Latvia and Slovakia's DESI scores were lower than the EU average of 52.3, while Lithuania's score of 0.4 is better than the EU average of 52.3. Furthermore, the percentage of persons aged 16-24 with basic digital skills in Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia is lower than the EU average of 54%. DESI scores may impact the social services developed by social workers, primarily through digital technology support. In this era, social workers have many options for ICT. Social workers can select and use the most appropriate technology to support the purposes of the practices, such as for communication, data collection, client services, statistical analysis, and administrative tasks.

1.1.3. Digital Technology-Supported Intervention

Social work is in the process of transforming towards a digital environment (López Peláez,2023). Many technologies can be used to create intervention plans, collect data, and process information. A viewpoint that values technology as a determinant of social change also supports the role of technology as a hope for social transformation and a solution to many issues. ICT can potentially open new avenues of professional activity for social workers (Pereira-García, 2020). Similar to the previous statement, according to Barsky (2017), social workers employ technology in many facets of their practice, such as remote counseling (Hilty et al., 2013; Morgan & Polowy, 2012), maintaining records (National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2016; National Association of Social Workers & Association of Social Work Boards, 2005), learning (Judd & Johnston, 2012), supporting the development of community (Brady, McLeod, & Young, 2015), and campaigns (Belluomini, 2014).

Digital technology has created numerous possibilities for new interventions in the field of behavioral and mental health practice (Barak & Grohol, 2011; Chan & Holosko, 2015); gamification has been successful in the treatment of depressive disorders (Rao, 2013), addiction, and preventing violence (Schoech, Boyas, Black, & Elias-Lambert, 2013). It also allows social workers to decide whether to provide text-based therapy only or incorporate it with face-to-face interventions by messaging clients (Dubus, 2015).

The application and the types of ICTs adopted during the intervention are used to categorize technology-supported social work interventions. The first group contains technologically adapted interventions, designed with little or no technical component, conducted by human practitioners, and regularly altered to produce an online version. Online parenting classes, for example, are converted from an offline to an online format. The second type of intervention is technology-based, which entails incorporating technology into the original design in ways that would not be possible without it. Examples are photo creation, digital production, virtual reality, social media, and crowd-sourced sharing/gathering/matching platforms. The third category includes technology-driven treatments entirely executed by computer programs or artificial intelligence systems, with professional practitioners, only playing a limited role—for example, self-mobility and chat box counselling systems (Chan & Holosko, 2018).

Table 3: Classification of Technology Support Intervention

Classification of Interventions Supported by Technology	Classification Types	Research
Technology-adapted intervention (developed with little or without technology)	Online activities	Feil et al., 2008 examined online parenting training, and Hanley et al., 2017 reviewed online counselling practice.

Technology-based interventions (involve technology, may not be possible without it)	Photo production	DeCoster and Dickerson (2014) conducted the first systematic study of photography's therapeutic application in social work clinical settings.
	Digital Production	De Vecchi et al. (2016) give a scoping assessment of the draws of digital storytelling in mental health.
	Virtual Reality	Parrish et al. (2016) investigated the feasibility of virtual reality settings for treating teenage social anxiety disorder.
	Social Media	A. R. Lee and J. Suzanne Horsley (2017) investigated the influence of social media on healthy youth development.
	crowd-based sharing/sourcing/matching platforms	Chan and Holosko (2016) conducted a study on applying Mechanical Turk in behavioral sciences: The implications for social work.
Technology-driven interventions (entirely implemented computer or AI	Computer applications or Artificial Intelligent	L. M. East and C. B. Havard (2015) investigated Mental health mobile apps: From infusion to dissemination in the mental health network.

Source: Chan and Holosko. (2018). Technology for Social Work Intervention

Using Digital Technology to support in-person intervention will give better results. Three studies presented empirical evidence that technology use resulted in more effective interventions than those that did not. Sethi et al. (2010) found that integrating face-to-face and online Cognitive Behaviour treatment (CBT) in an online counselling platform called MoodGYM was more successful than separate online or face-to-face therapy in addressing symptoms of sadness and anxiety.

Another study by Peng and Schoech (2013) tested a web-phone intervention to modify smoking habits. Using their mobile phones, participants got messages from an automated web-phone system. According to the findings, the experimental group improved more than the comparison group regarding self-efficacy and stage of change toward quitting smoking.

Chi and Frydenberg (2009) carried out research to assess a coping skills program. Their findings demonstrated that the coping skill training focusing exclusively on Internet use (Cyber Savvy Teens Programme) improved participants' productive coping behaviour more than the overall coping skill program (Best of Coping Programme). These included, for example, focusing on the solution, focusing on the beneficial aspects, participating in enjoyable diversions, and investing in solid connections.

There are many purposes for using digital technology in social work practice. Utilizing ICTs for intervention is one of the options. During the intervention, digital technology might be helpful in mental health, reducing depression by gamification or giving new options to choose text-based and combining with face-to-face. Chan & Holosko (2018) classified technology that supports interventions (Technology-adapted, based, or driven intervention). Another study stated that combining interventions online and offline will give better results to the client.

1.1.4. Challenges of Using Digital Technology

Social workers are increasingly working with clients who utilize computers and information technology, demanding a greater understanding of the possible influence of these technologies (Wells et al. 2006). Sue Watling and Jim Rogers (2012). Describe potential issues that may arise when using these technologies, such as an absence of dedicated access to computers in a confidential environment, a lack of secure means of transferring information, time-consuming recording procedures, unreliable systems, computer-based documents, and systems that lack flexibility and are too rigid and prescriptive. Furthermore, documentation and systems prioritizing performance management over service user demands, the time required to enter data and comments into computer-based systems, and the lack of methods to incorporate user's voice are also factors.

While many social workers use technology with their service users, several limitations hinder the deliberate integration of technology into practice (Mishna et al., 2012). Firstly, a lack of expertise and training prevents many practitioners from properly utilizing technology (Mishna, Bogo, & Sawyer, 2015). Second, a lack of exposure to new technological applications led to misconceptions about using technology in therapeutic work (Freddolino & Blaschke, 2008; Langlois, 2011). Thirdly, The scarcity of evidence related to technology adoption has also prevented widespread adoption (Chan & Holosko, 2015). Fourth inadequate financial resources prevented the technology's field deployment and testing. Ferreira (2023) states that the present challenge is enhancing the collaborative model in social intervention by including user engagement, administration coordination, better resource management, anticipating and planning, and interaction among various virtual agents.

Many countries are expected to rely significantly on digital tools. But the availability of communication services may cause fluctuations in reality. People will be excluded in some countries where the Internet is unavailable or expensive (Aloui, 2023). Digital tools provide social inclusion, but an enormous percentage of the world's population is info-excluded (Ferreira,2023). Although the Internet is practically an everyday part of many people's lives in the EU, specific individuals are excluded to varied degrees, resulting in the digital divide. People living in rural regions may be excluded owing to a lack of infrastructure investment,

which creates access and performance issues while attempting to utilize the Internet, leading to socially undesirable outcomes (Eurostat,2022). Furthermore, social work must promote digital inclusion, described as "an activity that ensures that all individuals and communities, including the most vulnerable, benefit from access to and use of information and communication technologies" (National Digital Inclusion Alliance, 2017).

Another issue is the age of persons who use digital technologies. Prensky (2001) proposed that younger technology users were significantly distinct from older ones and used the metaphor of digital natives to think that they are skilled users of technology as opposed to digital immigrants (older people) as a tendency. While White and Le Cornu's (2011) findings show that people are digital residents or digital visitors, it is worth noting that people's level of comfort and knowledge with technology varies regardless of age, gender, social status, or education. A person's age does not reflect their digital literacy but how comfortable they are with technology, how familiar they are with different platforms and applications, and how they gain support in using technology. In contrast, digital visitors recognize the need to pass acquittances with various applications but are not particularly interested in them. They recognize the need to pass acquittances with various applications but do not seem interested in them. (Westwood, 2014)

To summarize, there are numerous difficulties in adopting technology into social work, and the constraints can be internal or external. Internally, age causes social workers to feel uncomfortable with technology; the older they are, the more challenges come. Lack of training and education also limits the effectiveness of social work. Externally, digital inclusion has not occurred in all parts of the world, and not all clients have access to computers and the Internet.

1.1.5. Ethical Aspects of Technology in Social Work Practice

a study by Reamer (2013), values and ethics have long been an element of social work. Technology delivers various benefits to clients in this digital age, including ease, accessibility, and efficiency. However, technology introduces new obstacles, and social workers must be conscious of safeguarding client privacy, confidentiality, and boundaries (ASWB, 2014). Some ethical problems of nineteenth and early twentieth-century social workers remain a source of anxiety for current practitioners, including challenges about clients' right to privacy, client self-determination, professional dominance, and the allocation of limited funds (Reamer, 2016).

Reamer (2013) examines the most relevant core ethical concepts that may be threatened, including (a) client commitment because social workers may not be able to fulfil their longstanding commitment to the most vulnerable clients, who live under economic due to their increasing use of technologies; (b) privacy and confidentiality, because confidentiality and privacy for clients have always been important in social work

practice; (c) self-determination, has always been crucial in social work d) informed consent; for example, social workers who provide online, phone, or video therapy must get consent from clients whom they might never see in person; e) professional boundaries and multiple relationships, employing large social networks might give clients the idea that their connection is flexible and not constrained by the standards that have traditionally characterized the professional-client relationship.

The availability of counselling services 24 hours a day, seven days a week allows individuals to "connect" with a worker anywhere in the globe practically quickly at any time of day or night, either online or through a smartphone, enhancing social workers' abilities to assist people in distress. Consequently, many experienced professional social workers discover these distance counselling choices disturbing, unsatisfactory, and illicit (Lamendola 2010; Mattison 2012; Santhiveeran 2009).

Many social workers were getting requests from past and current service users to be added to social networking sites as "friends" or connections. Communication with clients and previous clients via social networking sites may result in misunderstandings and jeopardize client privacy and confidentiality. Clients with access to a social worker's social networking accounts may learn a great deal about their social worker (such as information about the social worker's relationships and families, social life, and religion), which can introduce complicated problems of the transference and re-transference into the professional-client interactions (Reamer, 2014).

The development of technology encouraged The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Association of Social Work Boards (ASBW) to collaborate to create the 2005 Standards for Technology and Social Work Practices (NASW, 2005). The newly published Standards Technology in Social Work Practice (NASW et al., 2017) opened by acknowledging, "*Technology has transformed the nature of social work practice and greatly expanded social workers' ability to assist people in need."* The complex structure of standards handles the interface between actual conditions and ideal principles, between categorizing present realities and attempting to predict truths that do not yet exist. (Golkind and colleagues, 2019)

During November 2019 to January 2020, Pascoe (2023) examined the degree of advice and clarity offered by nine social work associations on Codes of Ethics, as shown below:

Table 4: Summary of Ethical Principles for Using Technology in Practice

Association	**Document consulted and date of publication**	**Explicit inclusion of ethical principles for the use of technology in practice**	**Approximate word count excluding title page, content page, etc**
Aotearoa New Zealand Association of	*Code of Ethics /Ko te Tauaki Tikanga* (2019)	Yes	2400

Social Workers (ANZASW)			
Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW)	*Code of Ethics* (2010)	Yes	11,600
British Association of Social Workers (BASW)	*Code of Ethics* (2014)	No	3600
Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW)	*Code of Ethics* (2005)	No	3500
Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW)	*Code of Ethics* (2007).	No	1100
International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)	*Global social work statement of ethical principles* (2018)	Yes	1400
National Association for Professional Social Workers of India (NAPSWI)	*Code of Ethics for professional social workers in India* (2015).	Yes	10,700
National Association of Social Workers (United States) (NASW)	*Code of Ethics* (2017).	Yes	9200
Singapore Association of Social Workers (SASW)	*Code of Professional Ethics (3rd Revision)* (2017).	Yes	3100

Sources: Pascoe (2023) Considerations for integrating technology into social work practice: A content analysis of nine professional social work associations' Codes of Ethics.

According to the table above, three of the nine social work association organizations (the British Association of Social Workers (BASW), the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW), and the Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW)) lack ethical principles for the use of technology in social work practice. These standards of ethics were last revised in 2005 and 2007, respectively, and do not integrate technology into ethical practice.

Reamer (2018) asserts that in the digital era, social workers must be acquainted with the standards that accompany licensing and regulatory laws and regulations, professional codes of ethics, and practice guidelines. Many social work professional groups have developed online ethical standards for social media use in social work practice today. In the United States, for example, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) established technology usage criteria many years ago (ASWB, 2005) (Boddy & Dominelli, 2017).

This study is conducted in three countries (Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia). Below is the summary of the ethical code from the three social work associations:

Table 5: Summary of Inclusion of Ethical Principles for use Digital Technology

Association	Document Consulted And Date of Publication	Explicit Inclusion Of Ethical Principles For use Digital Technology	Approximate Word Count
Lietuvos socialinių darbuotojų aso-ciacija (lsda.lt)	Lietuvos Socialinių Darbuotojų Etikos Kodeksas (2017)	No	890
Latvijas sociālo darbinieku biedrība (social work.lv)	Latvijas Sociālo Darbinieku Ētikas Kodekss (2022)	Yes	3476
Slovenská komora sociálnych pracovníkov a asistentov sociálnej práce (socialnapraca. SK)	Code Of Ethics Of Social Workers And Social Work Assistants Of The Slovak Republic (2015)	Yes	3608

Source: Author's completion of Each country's ethical code

In the Lietuvos Socialinių Darbuotojų Etikos Kodeksas/ Lithuanian Code of Ethics for Social Workers updated in 2017 and written in Lithuanian, divided into seven parts; 1) General Provisions, 2) Ethical Principles Of Social Work, 3) Ethical Responsibility Of The Social Worker Towards The Individual, 4) Ethical Relations Of The Social Worker With Co-Workers and Other Professionals, 5) The Relationship Between The Social Worker And Employer/Organisation, 6) Ethical Responsibility Of The Social Worker Towards Their Profession,7) The Social Worker's Competences And Professionalism Elgesy and Concluding Remarks in the part of ethical responsibility towards professionals written to improve professional competence continuously.

The Latvijas Sociālo Darbinieku Ētikas Kodekss/ Latvian Code of Ethics for Social Workers, updated recently in 2022, has five parts. In the part of General Standards of ethical behaviour in 5.6, the standards for the social worker's use of digital technologies and social media have four points.

5.6.1. Do not post information about the client on social networks and other online resources or any additional information that may cause any harm to the client.

5.6.2. not to post on social networks and other internet resources any personal information that could lead to a breach of professional boundaries, dual relationships, or harm clients.

5.6.3. should refrain from engaging in activities on social networks and other Internet resources that may impair a social worker's capacity to work successfully with certain clients, groups, or individuals.

5.6.4 Not to engage in non-professional contact on social networking sites with clients

The Code Of Ethics Of Social Workers And Social Work Assistants Of The Slovak Republic, updated in 2015 and written in English, has five parts. Preamble, 1) values of social work, 3) ethical responsibility (responsibility towards the client, himself, workplace, colleagues, and society), 4) Ethical Issues and Dilemmas, 5) The Code of Ethics binding power, as well as its conclusion. It is written as part of the obligation to clients that social work contributes to integrating users of social services into social media, supporting personal ties, and assisting the client in resolving issues in other areas of his life. Integrating users into a social network to keep personal interactions implies that social workers should employ technology.

Integrating digital technology into social work practice will always be followed by ethical dilemmas because technology may harm the relationships between clients and social workers. With the advancement of technology, the ethical implications of social work must be considered. Social workers must consider many ethical considerations, including professional boundaries that may be compromised due to utilizing social media, privacy, client confidentiality, and informed permission. Each country's association must update its ethical standards in social work practice and incorporate the ethical use of technology into the routine. Ethical standards are necessary for social workers to govern their professional practice.

1.2. Prerequisites of Digital Technology in Social Work with Children and Youth

Nowadays, kids are born digitally and socially fostered. Digital and social media technology have become vital to their lives and identities. Children and youth spend more time online than offline, and online interactions and activities typically significantly impact their growth and well-being than offline ones (Megele & Buzzi, 2020). The adoption and application of ICT in child welfare have been prompted by efforts to increase accountability and monitoring of practitioners and the children, youth, and families they serve. The integration of ICT with several guided practice systems has gained special attention, especially in case evaluation, planning, and monitoring (Parton, 2009).

1.2.1. Children and Youth Use of Digital Technology

The connection between social media activity and required developmental phases, such as the transition from youth to early adulthood, is becoming increasingly significant (Best & Taylor, 2014). Social media refers to a variety of interactive Internet-based programs that allow users to produce and share user-

generated content, like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, Wikipedia, and Blogger (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Prominent social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat provide an abundance of opportunities for young people to communicate with others, express their creativity, and develop their identity through photographs, text, voice, or video (Chou et al., 2009). Even though each platform's functionality and popularity varies, they are now well-established as pathways for young people's image and self-presentation (Herring, 2019), social capital development (Lee et al., 2016), and social activism participation (Maher & Earl, 2019).

Adolescents' daily lives are increasingly influenced by digital technology. Almost all teenagers (95%) own at least one mobile device, with 89% owning smartphones (Rideout & Robb, 2018). Young people now spend all their time at home due to COVID-19 and other limitations. Most online activities included chatting with friends, gathering information (Guessoum et al., 2020), enjoyment, and assessing school duties and courses (Fernandez, 2021). Youth participation in the digital world may have real-world advantages, such as improved communication, social connection, and technological aptitude (Ito et al., 2008).

General life satisfaction and self-esteem levels decrease during adolescence and are frequently at an all-time low. (Orthu & Shmitt, 2015; Simultaneously, media consumption rises and peaks in late adolescence (EUKidsOnline, 2014). The younger generation relies on social media: social networking sites like Instagram and TikTok and instant messaging applications like WhatsApp and Signal (Dielin & Niklas, 2022). Texting is the most popular means of communication among 12- to 17-year-olds (Joshi, 2006). Youth text more than they talk on their phones, converse in person, use instant messaging, send e-mail, or use social networking sites (Lenhart, 2015).

According to Westwood (2019), teenagers at this stage of development want social approval and the capacity to socialize with others, and social media gives them the space and possibilities to do so. Mobile technology advancements and increased availability have resulted in children and young people utilizing mobile devices while in care, which has been beneficial in keeping contact with birth families but also problematic in terms of parents using these to avoid established contact agreements. Social media affects children and young people in many ways, depending on their abilities and shortcomings, as well as cultural, historical, and socioeconomic variables, depending on cultural, historical, and social aspects (Beyens et al.,2020: Holis et al., 2020)

Eurostat statistics on the proportion of young people in European countries (EU) accessing the Internet every day in 2021 are provided below:

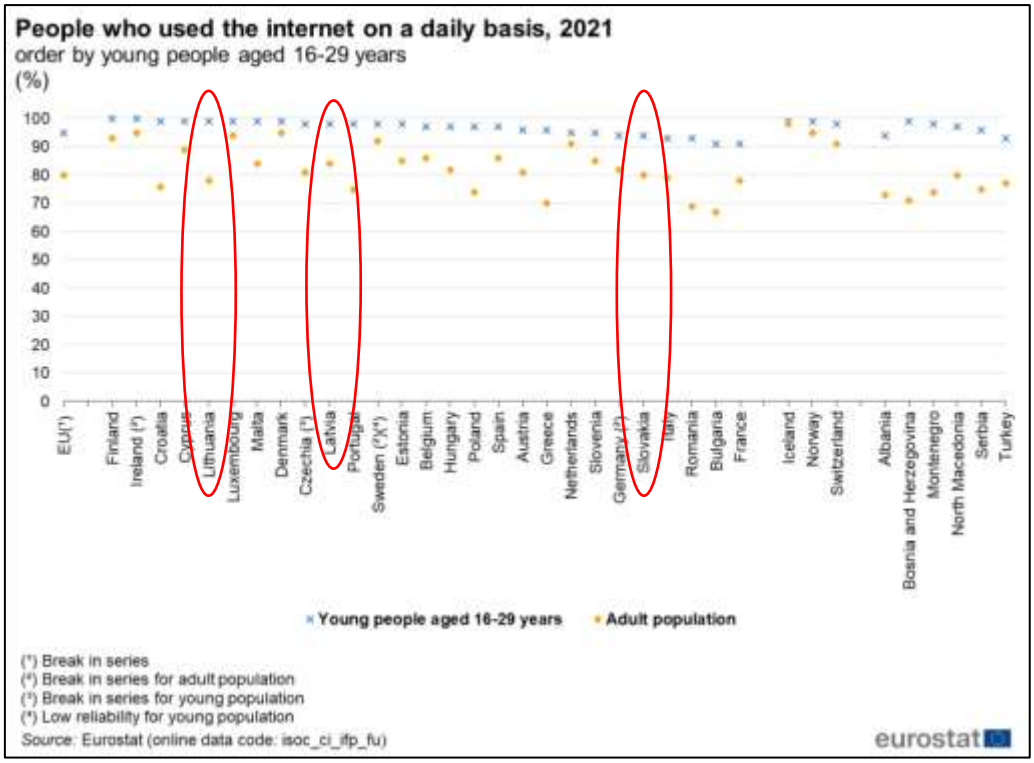

Figure 2: Young people used the Internet daily in 2021

In 2021, 95% of 16-29-year-olds (young people) in the EU reported using the Internet every day, compared to 80% of the whole adult population (Eurostat, 2022). In three countries where this study was conducted, Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia, it also showed that more than 90% of young people use the Internet daily. In Lithuania and Latvia, almost 100% of youth use the Internet daily. Young people generally possess a broader range of ICT skills than adults, and this trend continues (Eurostat, 2022).

The reality that digital technology is an integral part of children's and young people's lives is unavoidable. All the data shows the percentage of youth who use the Internet in all European countries is more than 95 %. They use it because they can maintain communication, find information, entertainment or establish young people's self-identity. ICTs impact young people differently depending on their abilities and shortage. Children and youth can have positive impacts or negatives. Social workers need to know how this technology affects clients and find the best way to use it when working with children and youth.

1.2.2. Digital Technology in the Area of Social Work with Children and Youth

Digital technologies and social media are central to the lives and identities of children and adolescents, and they play an increasingly pivotal role in their protection. Therefore, social workers must familiarise themselves with its significance, strengths, transformations, developmental consequences, and opportunities (Megele and Buzzi, 2020). Social media can increase awareness of these possibilities, enhance communication with young people, and ultimately assist in good youth development (Lee &

Horsley, 2017). As young people use the Internet more than any other age group, practitioners working with them are at the forefront of this digital challenge (PEW Research Centre, 2012).

In the area of children and youth practice, there are several approaches to embedding technology into practice. Coyle et al. (2009) state that gaming technologies are often developed and recently applied therapeutically. For example, games based on solution-focused treatment have been utilized with teenagers with behavioural issues. Service customers and employees engage with the game's *Principal Investigator*. This strategy has been demonstrated to help form therapeutic connections and service engagement.

Many organizations involving children and kids utilize popular and varied social media platforms to promote their services and build awareness of their help and guidance in child-friendly formats (Westwood, 2019). There are rising demands for youth services that need practitioners' use of ICT. Online Youth Outreach was created in the United Kingdom in 2010, and it provides solutions trough social media such as Facebook and training on Internet safety also advanced social media engagement training in Belgium and the United Kingdom (http://www.onlineyouthoutreach.co.uk/). In another country, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) of Hong Kong has assisted non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in developing online youth services for children vulnerable to social exclusion (SWD, 2011). And the number of peer-reviewed research publications on using Information and Communication Technology in various juvenile care sectors is growing (Szekely & Nagy, 2011; Waldman & Rafferty, 2006).

Every Child Matters (ECM), a government reform project that generated new legislation in the shape of The Children's Act 2004, is another example. Several significant advances in digital technology have occurred at the same time. As indicated by White et al. (2009) (Watling & Rogers, 2012), ECM has mainly relied on the e-government (the use of electronic technologies to record, publish, and disseminate information vital to the government) agenda to fulfill some of its ambitions. Furthermore, Australian practitioners advocated that social workers be better integrated with creating and using technology, with appropriate regular system education (Burton & Van Den Broek, 2009). As stated by (Munro, 2011), future ICT systems should completely utilize multimedia, children, and youth in their design, and objects such as images and digital stories might be employed more generally.

Social work with children and young people cannot be separated from using technology, as clients use technology more than any other group (older adults). Social workers must understand how to use these technologies to help their profession. For example, some countries have programs integrating digital technology to help clients, such as Online Youth Outreach from the UK and Every Children Matter. Before integrating technology into practice, social workers should know what clients need and involve them in designing the technology system.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Technology Acceptance Model

Acceptance and implementation of information technology may result in both short-term and long-term advantages to organizations and individuals, such as better performance, financial and time efficiency, and simplicity (Foley Curley, 1984; Sharda, Barr, & McDonnell, 1988; Marikyan, & Papagiannidis, 2023). Davis (1986) created one of the most commonly utilized models for estimating an individual's application and acceptance of information systems and technology, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The theories of social psychology and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) are based on this model. According to TAM, beliefs influence attitudes, which in turn influence intentions and behavior (Fishbein & Azjen, 1975).

In the original TAM, Davis (1986, 1989) included the following constructs: perceived utility Davis (1986, 1989) included the following dimensions in the original TAM: perceived utility (PU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), attitude, and behavioral intention to use. PU and PEOU, among the constructs, form how users think of technology and predict their attitude regarding it, which implies its adoption. Perceived utility (PU) is defined by Hewavitharana et al. (2021) as the degree to which a person feels a particular technology will increase their work performance. And Surendran (2012) describes perceived ease of use (PEOU) as the extent to which a person perceives that using a specific system would seem to be no effort (Khan,2021).

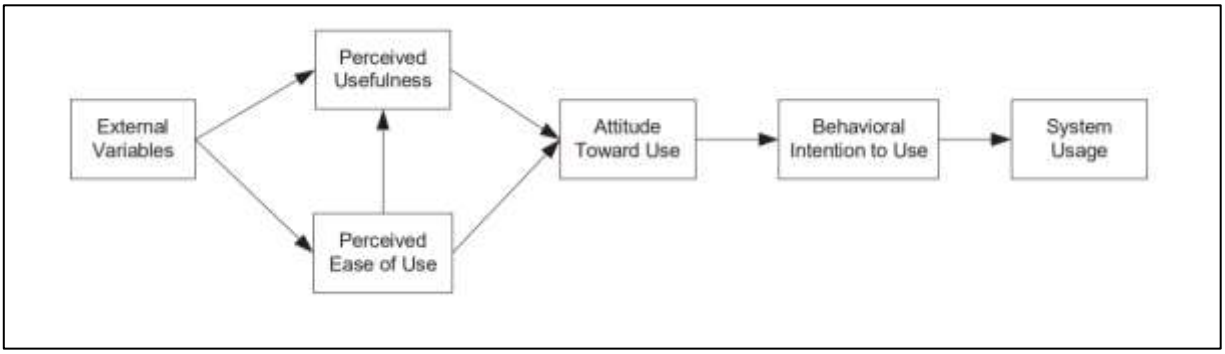

Figure 3: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

TAM explains technology acceptance as a procedure with three stages in which external variables (system design features) elicit cognitive reactions (perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness), which shape adequate responses (attitudes towards technology use/intentions) which impact how technology is used (Davis, 1989; Davis, 1993). TAM analyzes action due to perceived ease of use, usefulness, and behavioral intents. This theory will contribute to this study in understanding why social work incorporates digital technology in the practices of children and young people in terms of perceived ease of use and usefulness.

2.2. Social Cognitive Theory

Albert Bandura constructed Social Learning Theory (SLT) in the 1960s, which was extended into Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) in 1986 and proposed a deterministic, reciprocal relationship between individual, environment, and behavior; the three parts interact actively and inversely to produce the base of behavior, as well as possible interventions to modify behavior. (Bandura, 1977; Singhal et al., 2003). Social Cognitive Theory explains how personal factors and environmental conditions alter an individual's behavior. The three main components are interrelated (Schunk, 2012). Personal elements (expectations, views, perceptions of themselves, objectives, and intentions) form and guide actions when analyzing the interaction between individual characteristics and behavior. On the other hand, the interaction between the environment and personal elements demonstrates how social influences modify individual qualities such as (human demands, principles, and mental benefits). The social environment elicits human emotions such as (age, measurement, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and physical attractiveness) (Luszczynska, 2015).

According to social cognitive theory, a causal link exists between behavior and environment. In everyday interactions, conduct affects the environment, and the environment influences behavior. For example, an individual is unlikely to innovate if the external environment is built on a conventional approach with top management opposing technology (Bandura, 2002). As a result, the external work environment influences the individual's behavior.

The idea of self-efficacy, an individual's belief in their capacity to do an activity, is a fundamental component of social cognition theory (Bandura, 1977)—self-efficacy ideas influence human performance in four ways: cognitive, motivational, emotional, and decisional. Because effectiveness views affect human performance and their impact on other variables, self-perceived efficacy is important in the causal structure of social cognition theory (Bandura, 1997). High-confidence people perceive complex jobs as challenging to become proficient in rather than as a threat to be anticipated. In contrast, people with low self-efficacy will avoid complex tasks which they perceive as a personal threat (Bandura, 1994).

Self-efficacy beliefs could be established in four ways: (1) via mastery experiences, (2) by societal modeling, (3) through persuasive behavior, and (4) through the interpretation of physical and emotional situations. The most effective way to develop a strong sense of effectiveness is through experience of mastery. Successes help to maintain a high degree of efficacy. Failures reduce it, especially in the early phases of efficacy development. When people only experience little accomplishments, they get used to quick results and are easily disheartened by failure (Singhal et al., 2003).

Social Cognitive Theory will help to alter a individual’s behaviour by personal factors and the surrounding situation of the individual. In addition, the COVID-19 epidemic has transformed social work practice. The regulation prohibiting social workers from meeting clients in person encourages them to be resilient in

assisting their clients when meeting in person is not permitted. The study uses Social Cognitive Theory to understand better how social worker behaviour evolves and how to deal with the challenges of digital technology in their profession.

2.3. Diffusion of Innovation Theory

In 1957, Everett Rogers popularized the Diffusion of Innovations theory. This theory is widely recognized as a beneficial change model for guiding technological development, in which the invention itself is transformed and presented in ways that fit the demands of users at all levels. In addition, the theory highlights the important role of communication and peer networks in the adoption process. In a nutshell, innovation diffusion refers to the process through which individuals accept concepts, goods, practices, ideologies, and so on (Rogers,2003)

Embracing new ideas, behaviors, or things (i.e., "innovations") does not occur in social systems. Adoption is a process in which certain people are more inclined to accept innovations than others. Researchers discovered that persons who accept innovations early have distinct features than those who adopt innovations later (Kamisnki, 2011).

Rogers (2003) In adopting technical breakthroughs and their impact on the innovation and adoption process, five adopters may be characterized.

- The innovators population is 2.5 %. These individuals desire to be the first to experiment with ideas (to be change agents). They are daring and curious about new ideas. These individuals are not afraid to take chances.
- Early Adopters (respect) population is 13.5 %. In most systems, these are the persons who represent opinion leaders. Many other social system members look up to them as role models. They see the need for change and are open to new suggestions. And do not require information to persuade them to change.
- The early Majority (deliberate) population is 34 %. This population accepts new ideas before the average system member and rarely are leaders. They may occasionally ponder before implementing new ideas. They are not the first nor the last to try to discard the old.
- The late Majority (skeptical) is 34 %. People assimilate novel concepts shortly after the typical system member. Such individuals are cautious of change and will only accept an invention once the majority has tried it.
- Laggards (traditional) is 16 %. They are the last persons in the social structure to embrace change. These individuals are exceedingly conventional and conservative. They are cut off from the leader's perspective. They are nervous about creators and agents of change.

According to Rogers (2003), the Innovation-Decision Process is an information-seeking and information-processing activity in which a person is motivated to reduce ambiguity about the benefits and downsides of an innovation. The innovation-decision process consists of five steps: (1) knowledge, (2) persuasion, (3) choice, (4) execution, and (5) confirmation, and these stages often occur in a temporal sequence. The knowledge stage is when the decision-making process for innovation begins. At the knowledge stage, a person identifies and seeks information about the invention. In the knowledge phase, the question "What?" "how?" and "Why?" are crucial. In the knowledge phase, critical questions must be answered.

This theory is essential to understand how social workers with children and youth integrate technology into their practice and why it is necessary to use it. Everyone has different adopters levels during the innovation process, and we need to look it up. The steps of the innovation-decision process also help to analyze in which situation social workers use digital technologies.

2.4. Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) Model

Venkatesh et al. (2003) developed the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Usage of Technology, which addresses the TAM model's limitations while incorporating social aspects and human behavior. The theory also relates important factors in ICT acceptability with behavioral intentions to utilize the technology and actual use. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) investigates technology acceptance as a function of performance expectations, effort expectations, social influence, and enabling factors. The predictors' power is tempered by age, gender, experience, and voluntariness of usage.

The degree to which an individual believes that adopting the method would help them achieve their goals is referred to as performance expectation. The ease of utilizing the system is referred to as effort expectancy. Social influence is the extent to which a person believes that influential people feel that they should use the new system. Conditions that facilitate a person to think that the organization's technology environment is in place to promote the use of the plan (Venkatesh et al., 2003)

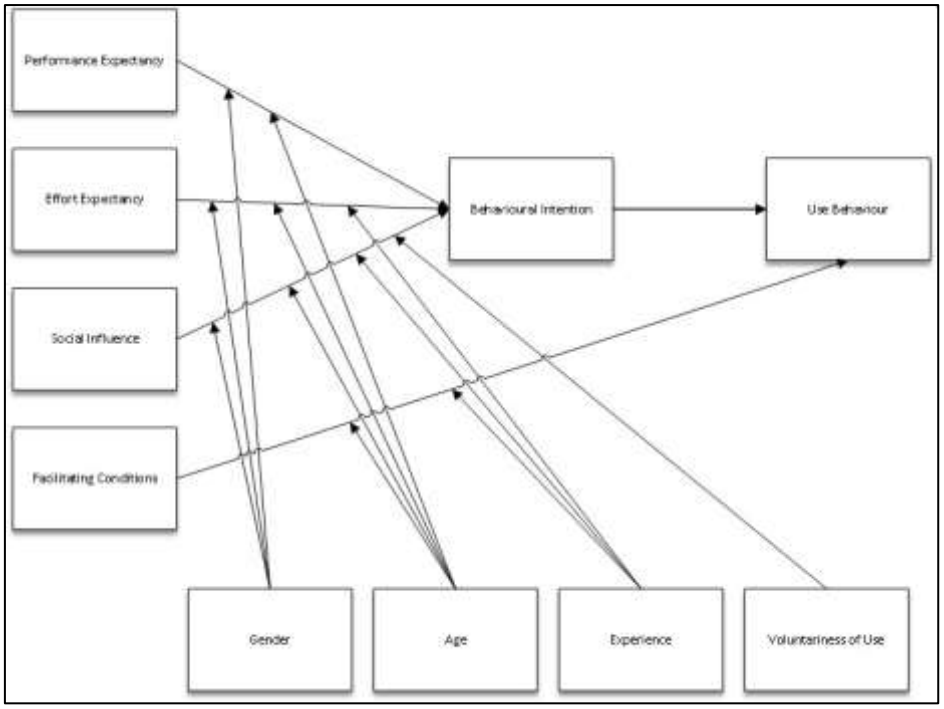

Figure 4: Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) Model

The moderating impacts of age, gender, level of experience, and usage voluntariness define the strength of predictors on intention. All four predictions are mitigated by age. Gender influences the connections between expectancy, performance expectancy, and social influence. Experience moderates the intensity of the relationships between expectation, social effect, and facilitating circumstances enabling components. Voluntary usage only mediates the connection between social influence and behavioral intention (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

The UTAUT model assists this study in understanding how children and youth social workers use technology to supplement their face-to-face interactions by taking into account performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions, as well as the moderation effect of gender, age, experience, and voluntariness to use. All of these elements are interconnected and influence social workers when using technology.

2.5. Theoretical Model as A Model of Analysis

The four theories mentioned above support the purpose of this study. The following image below explains how each idea in this study is related in simple terms:

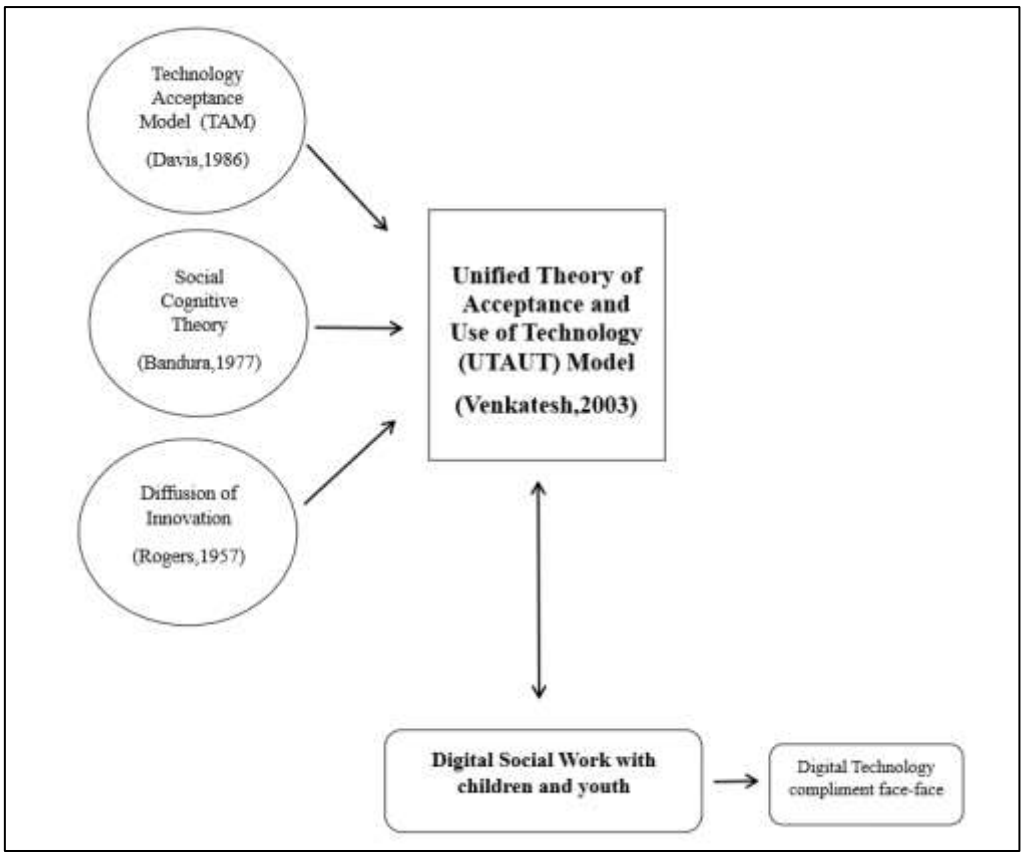

Figure 5: Model of Analysis

This study aims to understand how social workers with children and youth use digital technology to support face-to-face meetings: the TAM, Social Cognitive Theory, and Diffusion of Innovation are significant to explore this study. The purpose of using these three theories is to answer the research objectives, and each approach helps to reach them. Furthermore, the three theories before (TAM, Social Cognitive Theory, and Diffusion of Innovation) are covered by the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT). All of the theory is connected to help to understand the integrating process of using technology to take advantage of it.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Literature Search Technique

The literature review is frequently considered a discrete phase in the process of research, yet it is almost always a continuing study component (Bryman, 2012). Literature in research has several purposes, including providing a framework to determine the importance of research and a benchmark to evaluate the study results with other findings. (Creswell, 1994). In addition, literature searches generate evidence on topics as researchers gather information on the variables (dependent or independent) that they wish to examine (Leavy, 2014). The general question is how digital technologies in social work with children and youth can complement face-to-face practice. And followed by the challenges they face, the implication, what ethics they need to consider, and how this technology changes the result.

This process began with reading books from the library and also searching 11 electronic databases (Google Scholars, Scopus, SAGE, Springer Science, Taylor and Francis Online, Routledge, JSTOR, Epsco, ProQuest, PubMed, and Research Gate) using 19 keywords and the phrase "digital technologies, " "ICT," digital social work, "social work," "children," "adolescents," "challenges," "implications," "ethics," "internet," "social media," "COVID-19," "electronic," "online," "interventions," "digital skills," "integration," "organizations," and "social work associations. The researcher also reviewed statistical data from the Eurostat Digital Economy and Social Index (DESI) from the European Commission and Social Work Codes of Ethics from three countries (Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia) mentioned in the literature review. This document analysis will be linked to the interviews' results to support the study.

3.2. Research Method and Research Design

In-depth qualitative studies are frequently more appropriate for social work research since they try to understand better the processes, meanings, and definitions associated with actors in complex and open-ended domains (Shaw & Gould, 2002). According to Saldana (2011), the phrase qualitative research refers to various methods and strategies for studying natural social life. Furthermore, qualitative research is a method for investigating social reality (Bryman, 2012). The fact that digital technology is growing every day and impact all people without exception, including social work practice, make this qualitative approach appropriate to understand how this technology influences the social work area and how social work applies digital technology to supplement in-person meeting.

The conceptual framework for the study, also known as the research design, serves as the guide for gathering and analyzing data. According to Kothari and Garg (2014), a good design eliminates bias and increases the reliability of the data collected and analyzed. Creswell (2004) asserts that academics use

exploratory qualitative research to study a subject when the causes and theoretical underpinning are ambiguous. Creswell (2009) argues that qualitative researchers formulate at least one central question and several supporting questions, beginning their sentences with the words "how" or "what" and using exploratory verbs like "explore" or "describe." The questions are vast and comprehensive to allow participants to clarify their opinions. The exploratory technique of this study enabled it to investigate how digital technology integrates into social work with children to complement face-to-face and provide a fuller knowledge of the challenge, implications, ethics, and different results that social workers confront while employing digital technology.

3.3. Sampling and Participant Selection

The primary sampling technique in qualitative research is purposive sampling (Creswell, 2013). Purposive sampling aims to choose instances and participants pertinent to the research topics. To ensure that sample members differ in crucial features relevant to the study topic, researchers frequently choose to sample by providing the result sample has a lot of equitable variation (Bryman, 2012). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2015), purposive sampling selects the person or thing that will provide the most information on the subject under inquiry.

The researcher must be explicit about what criteria are essential to the inclusion or exclusion of the unit of analysis when using purposive sampling (Bryman, 2012). In this research on digital social work with children and young people, there are criteria for selecting participants such as:

- Qualified as a social worker;

- Work in an organization/institution that provides services for children and young people;

- Have at least one year of experience working with children and young people.

Purposive sampling frequently employs many approaches. Another type of purposeful sampling frequently precedes snowball sampling. Researchers who strive for purposefulness and representativeness in the strategy may use not only one sampling approach (Bryman, 2012). Because this study was done in three countries, snowball sampling was required. The researcher began by interviewing social workers from all three countries (Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia) and then requested their suggestions to do another interview with colleagues who fit the requirements.

3.4. Sample Size

A sampling includes not just persons but also a sample of various items. Purposive sampling may produce a representative sample of things like documents in the same way that probability sampling can be used to get a representative sample of other phenomena (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The sample size in qualitative

research should not be so small that it is difficult to achieve data saturation, theoretical saturation, or informational redundancy. At the same time, the sample size should be to big because it makes it more challenging for a deep-case-oriented analysis (Collins et al., 2007). This study began by contacting social workers who fulfilled the requirements, which was accomplished by sending around ten emails to all social workers or institutions in Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia. In all, 25 emails (9-7) were sent to each country's social workers within one month, although not all were suitable for interviews or did not answer the email. Seventeen interviews were held during the previous two months, with two being excluded because they weren't up to the standards of the working institution. Finally, 15 social workers (5 from each country) were chosen for this interview and data analysis.

3.5. Demographic Information

In this study, 15 social workers working in the area of children and youth participated. Below is the demographic information :

Table 6: Demographic Information of Social Workers

Informants	**Country**	**Age**	**Education**	**Work Experience**	**Work Institution**
SW 1 (F)	Lithuania	31	Bachelor in Social Work	Five years	Children Social Centre
SW 2 (M)		24	Bachelor in Social Work	One year	Children Care Home
SW3 (M)		44	Bachelor in Social Work	16 years	Youth Centre
SW 4 (F)		37	Bachelor in Social Work	15 years	Children Centre
SW5 (F)		34	Master in Social Work	15 years	Youth Space
SW 6 (F)	Latvia	34	Bachelor in Social Work	Three years	Municipality Social Service
SW7 (M)		42	Bachelor in Social Work	22 years	Foster Care
SW 8 (F)		29	Master in Social Work	Five years	Crisis Centre
SW9 (F)		40	Bachelor in Marketing and Communication	Ten years	Non-profit International Organization
SW 10 (M)		30	Bachelor in Social Work	Ten years	Resilience Centre
SW11 (M)	Slovakia	32	Bachelor in Economic and Management	Five years	Youth Centre

Informants	Country	Age	Education	Work Experience	Work Institution
SW 12 (F)		40	Master in Social Work	15 years	Centre for Children and Family
SW13 (M)		40	Master in Social Work	14 years	Youth Centre
SW14 (M)		48	Ph.D. in Social Work	25 years	Crisis Centre
SW 15 (F)		35	Master in Psychology	13 years	Foster Care

Based on the table above, 15 social workers participated in the interviews. The age range is 24- 48, which is very diverse to see how comfortable they use technology. The Education background, 12 informants have social work education, one in psychology, one in economic engagement, and one in marketing and communication. In the experiences of social workers, the shortest was one year, and the longest was 25 years old. The social worker institution also represented all working places related to children and youth. There are five social workers from Lithuania, three females and two males aged 24-44 years old, with experience in children's centres or youth centres for 1-16 years. In Latvia, the informants were three females and two males aged 29-42 and experienced from 3-22 years. The last in Slovakia was two females and three males from 32-48 years old. They have different years of experience of, 5-25 years old in the Children and Youth sector. The 15 informant is enough to support this study and achieve purposiveness and representativeness considering the sex differences, age, and work experiences.

3.6. Data Collection Method

In this study, semi-structured interviews and one-on-one interviews are employed. The researcher has a list of questions or topics to cover, referred to as an interview guide, but the interviewee has a lot of flexibility regarding how to respond (Bryman, 2012). Qualitative research questions are non-directional, open-ended, and dynamic. They restate the study's objective in more concrete words and often begin with a comment like what or how rather than why to investigate a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

This data collection started by searching for a social worker who meets the criteria by contacting the institution or association. In Latvia, I got the vice president of the social work association board member to recommend me for an interview. I started sending social workers information about this research and ask their participation in the interview through email; they usually reply in 1-5 days. After they agree to participate, I am sending the interview questions (*Appendix 1*), informed consent (*Appendix II*), and the ethical letter from the university (*Appendix III*) that allowed me to interview them. After they agree, we

schedule the meeting through the Zoom platform or meet in person. The interview was conducted in January-February.

Zoom Video Communication, Inc. (NASDAQ: ZM) is a communications platform that offers meetings via video, audio, webinars, and chat via desktops, smartphones, mobile devices, and conference room systems (Zoom, 2019). The researcher position was in Slovakia, and Zoom meetings were the only possibility to connect with social workers in Lithuania and Latvia. Of the 15 interviews, 11 are online, four are offline, and are in Slovakia. Each participant's interview duration differs from 50 minutes to 120 minutes. The online meeting was recorded and then transcribed.

English is the main language of communication between informants and researchers during the interview. The interview started by asking permission from the informant to record the session and reading the informed consent that had been sent. After the informant agreed, it began with asking demographic information and questions based on the interview guidelines. Most of the time, after social workers answered questions, the researcher asked following-up questions to get deeper and better information.

The interview that is conducted in person also has the same structure. The researcher was coming to where the social worker worked at the agreed time. The interview started with the researcher asking permission to record the discussion using the phone and asking if they had questions or doubts regarding informed consent. And as if they have any questions regarding the informed consent. Compared to online interviews, the disturbance was coming more from face-to-face sessions because of the noise from outside or other colleagues who suddenly just entered the room.

Data transcription began after one interview was completed. All the interview was done in English, and translation was unnecessary. The researcher used Trint (a cloud-based audio and video transcription tool that uses artificially intelligent (AI), machine learning (ML), and natural language processing (NLP) to automatically transcribe audio from a variety of file formats and generate a dynamic, searchable, able to be edited and shareable transcript). The accuracy of Trint was not 100%, and some errors need to be reviewed. The following process is to continue by listening to the recording and editing individually. During the editing process, including checking the typo and grammatical errors and erasing unnecessary words that might take 1-3 hours, depending on the long interview.

3.7. Data Analysis

A content analysis approach is used to assess the material gathered from interviews. Bryman (2012) defines qualitative content analysis as an approach to documents that points out the role of the researcher in building the meaning of and in texts. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2015), a content analysis approach is a

comprehensive and systematic investigation of a data's contents to find patterns, themes, or biases. Most kinds of qualitative data analysis begin with coding, while other authors prefer referring to the process as indexing rather than coding (Bryman, 2012). Three types of qualitative analysis strategies exist categorizing techniques (like coding and theme analysis), linking approaches (like narrative analysis and individual case studies), and memos and presentations. Coding is the primary classifying process in qualitative research (Maxwell, 2008).

The researcher employed MAXQDA in this study, a computer software application that assists the researcher in systematically evaluating and interpreting qualitative texts. It is also an effective technique for building theories and evaluating hypotheses (Cresswell, 2007). The process of analysis started by uploading all the documents into MAXQDA, making the coding manually and sub-coding, colouring it, seeing each frequency, and checking from which interview and line this code is coming. The researcher also used visual tools for word cloud and max map. The word cloud was used in the beginning to visualize the data of 15 interviews and get insight from the trends and patterns.

Figure 6: Words Cloud using MAXQDA

The picture of the word cloud above is the result after choosing the frequency for the words minimal seven times; in total, there are 50 words. The most mentioned word is technology, followed by the digital, client, think, and time—the content analysis generated eight themes, 21 sub-theme, and seven emerging themes.

Table 7: Categorization of Theme, Sub-theme, and Emerging Theme

Theme	Sub-Theme	Emerging Theme
Necessity of Digital Technology in Social	Integral Parts of Children and Youth's Life	Helping Tools to Reach Children and Youth

Theme	Sub-Theme	Emerging Theme
Work Practice with Children and Youth	Understanding Children and Youth's World	
Inspiration to Use Digital Technologies	COVID-19 Pandemic Restriction	Client Development Support
	New Channel of Communication	
	Easier Social Network Access	
Work Efficiency by Digital Technology	Ease of Communication	Time Availability of Colleagues
	Perform Administrative and Management Tasks	
Technical and Professional Intervention Support by Digital Technology	Effective Client Engagement	External Support Opportunity
	Encouragement for client's change	
	Extending Assistance Possibility	
	Supportive Interdisciplinary Work	
Learning Process to Use Digital Technology	Social Worker Individual Learning	Expert Support
	Colleagues Support	
Difficulties to Start Using Digital Technologies	The Age of Social Worker	Rapid Development of Technology
	Limited Access to Social Workers	
	Lack of Supporting Facilities for Client	
Obstacles to Implementing Digital Technology	Inconvenience of Client and Social Work	Tied to Technology
	Suitability of Technology	
Ethical Aspects Using Digital Technology	Professional Boundaries	
	Confidentiality	
	Informed Consent	

3.8. Ethical Consideration

The relevance of ethical issues is discussed by the majority of writers discussing qualitative research design (Locke et al., 1982; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Merriam, 1988; Spradley, 1980). Initial and foremost, researchers must respect the rights, needs, values, and preferences of informants. Bryman (2012) categorizes ethical issues into four categories: participant harm, lack of consent, breach of privacy, and deception. The examples are physical harm, responsibility for the participant's growth, decreased self-esteem, anxiety, and 'encouraging the subject to perform disgusting behaviours' (Diener and Crandall,1978). Harm to participants is addressed further in the code of ethics by advocating caution in maintaining record confidentiality. It is suggested that people's identities and descriptions should be kept confidential. This injunction also indicates that when findings are made public, every effort should be made to ensure that no individuals be identified or identifiable. Participants in the research should be provided with all the information they need to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate.

Concerning participant harm. This interview was done online and offline and in a secure location. The researcher also requested their free involvement to interview without compulsion. In the informed consent, the informant was told that this interview would keep anonymity and confidentiality and that they could drawback of this participation anytime. The relationship between researcher and informant developed based on respect and trust. The researcher initially requested permission to record to minimize misunderstanding and cross-checking of facts. All recorded interviews and transcripts were maintained in a safe and secure file on the researcher's computer and only utilized for the intended purpose of the research before being erased after the transcribing process was completed. During the online or offline interview, no other persons were in the room, only the informant and researcher.

3.9. Quality Assurance of Study

Guba and Lincoln (1994) state that defining concepts and methods for developing and measuring qualitative research quality is vital as an alternative to reliability and validity. They provide two primary evaluation criteria for qualitative studies: trustworthiness and authenticity. Some writers recommend a set of principles for measuring the quality of qualitative research, including credibility, transferability, dependability, reliability, and confirmability.

Establishing the credibility of results requires ensuring that research is conducted according to good practice standards and submitting research findings to community members being examined for validation that the investigator has accurately comprehended that social world. In terms of credibility, this research was done in accordance with ethical norms. While making interview questions, the supervisor guided which

appropriate questions to be asked. All informants received informed consent explaining the study's purpose and standards. During the interview, they are also free to answer the questions without any influence from the researcher.

In terms of transferability, qualitative findings are often directed toward the contextual distinctiveness and relevance of the social environment under study. In this study, there are three countries where this research was conducted (Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia) with different practice areas and consider the uniqueness during the analysis.

Regarding dependability, researchers ought to take an auditing approach, which entails keeping complete documentation of all stages of the research process—problem composition, research participant selection, fieldwork notes, interview transcripts, data analysis decisions, and so in an accessible manner. Before beginning the interview, the researcher conducted a literature analysis, decided on the most acceptable approach, and conducted interviews based on ethical issues. All research steps are carried out correctly.

About confirmability, the researcher may be proven to have behaved in good faith; that is, they have not explicitly allowed personal beliefs or theoretical leanings to affect the conduct of the study and the conclusions generated from it. In this study, the interviews were conducted in English, as English is not the researcher's mother tongue, and the informants, in some parts, presented challenges to understanding and took longer to think about what they meant. However, this could be overcome with the help of google translate. The language barrier is also not intended to cause misunderstandings between researchers and informants that could lead to different research objectives. In conclusion, this research fulfils the quality assurance of credibility, transferability, dependability, reliability, and confirmability.

3.10. Limitation of Study

This research has some limitations, although they were overcome during the process. The first limitation is the language barrier. It was difficult for the researcher to find informants fluent in English and ask for their willingness to participate in this study, limiting the number of participants. Social workers cannot express themselves freely in English compared to their native language. The translator was not used because of the different availability times between them and the social workers.

The second limitation is related to the analysis process. The data analysis conducted generally does not go deeper to analyze the specific pattern of the three countries (Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia) because it is challenging to conclude with the small number of social workers from each country (5 people) who has different background and place of work. The analysis only highlights the dominant aspects of each country.

4. FINDING AND ANALYSIS

4.1. General Analysis of Digital Social Work with Children and Youth

This study answers three objectives. What are the concept and situation, challenges, implications, and results of Digital Social Work with Children and Youth. As explained below:

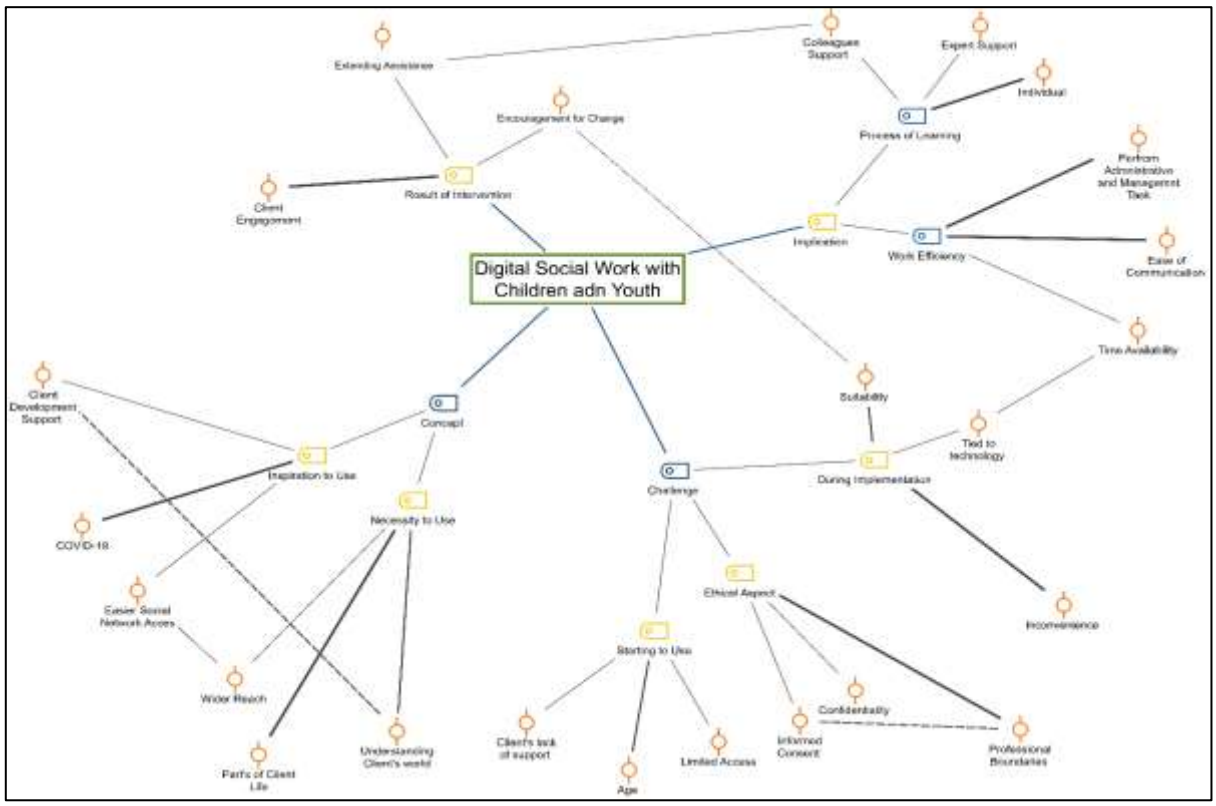

Figure 7: General Analysis of Digital Social Work with Children and Youth

Digital social work is understood as the technology used in social practice. The concept and situation social work uses technology because of user needs, and there are some inspirations behind that support social work to use it, such as COVID-19 pandemic restriction. The Innovation Decision Process analyzes how they accept this technology, and the Technology Acceptance Model help to understand why social workers apply digital technology in their practice. The implication of digital technology is explored in The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) on how this technology changes and helps social work practice. The challenges are related to Social Cognitive Theory on how social workers have self-efficacy to handle the problem and learn the skills. In General, there is some connection between each theme. As a result of the intervention, encouragement for clients might benefit them. Still, the challenge is that this technology is unsuitable for all clients and must be seen differently with the principle of individualization. Extending assistance as the result of intervention is also supported by colleagues because they share updated information and support each other.

4.2. Analysis of the Concept and Situation of Digital Technology in Social Work with Children and Youth

The digital technology concept and situation are divided into the Necessity and the Inspiration to Use it. The figure below explains it:

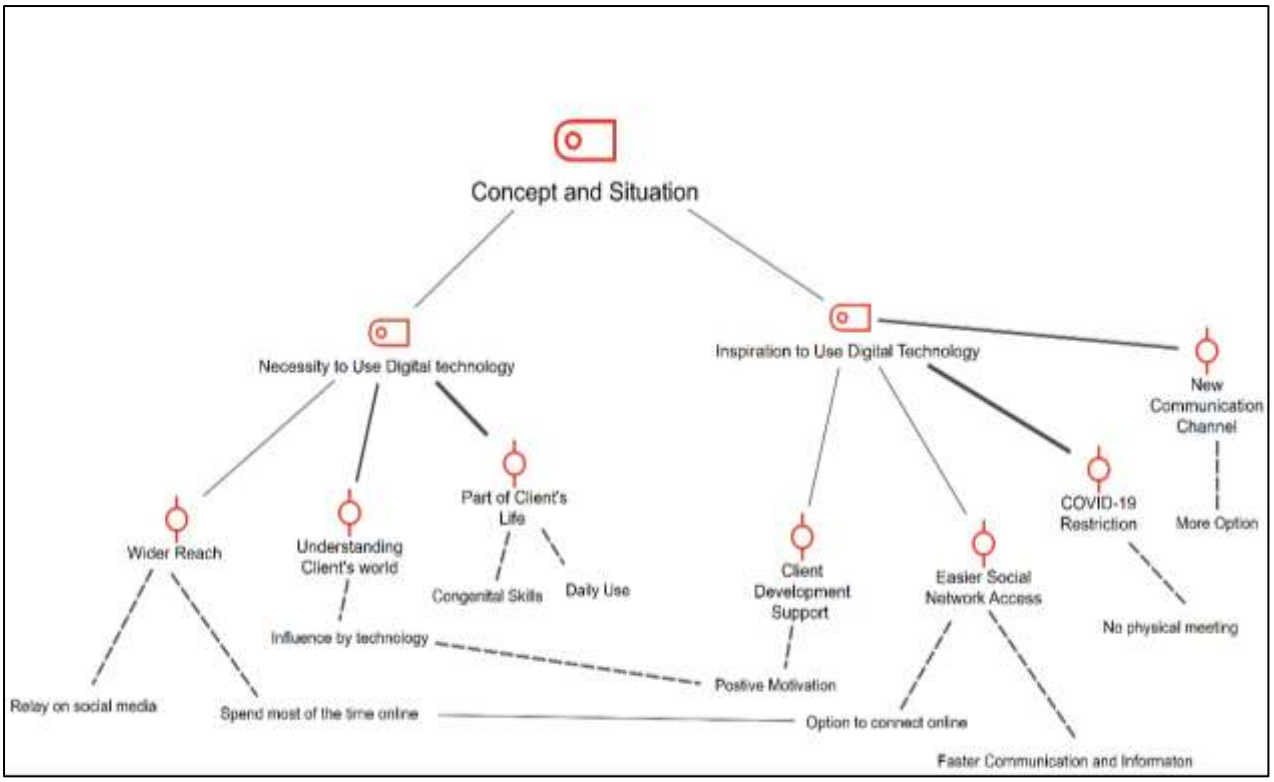

Figure 8: Concept and Situation of Using Digital Technology

The necessity to use technology is part of children's life. They are born with this technology, which is part of their life, and to help them better understand client life because they are influenced by technology and have a wider reach. Besides the necessity, the biggest inspiration for social work integrate technology into their practice was the COVID-19 restriction. The regulation not allowing meeting people forces social workers to change their approach online. Not only because of the laws, but this technology also benefits communication and makes it more meaningful between clients and social workers. Easier social network access indirectly help them to reach a wider group of clients (children and youth) and better client development support because social workers understand what is going on the internet, the newest update about any information related to young people

4.3. Necessity of Digital Technology in Social Work Practice with Children and Youth

This subject focuses on the importance of implementing digital technology with children and youth. The first stage of a person accepting an invention, according to Rogers' invention Decision Process, is knowledge. A person attempts to characterize the innovation and how and why it works (Rogers, 2003). In this study, social workers start questioning the need for digital technology and its benefit in their practice with children and youth. Using mobile phone technology while engaging with young people, according to Simpson (2017), may generate a "sense of presence."

Integral Parts of Children and Youth's Life. The reason social workers are using technology in children and youth practice is part of their client's life, and they cannot avoid using it when working with them. Social workers stated :

> *"When we work with those youth more, technology is a big part of their life. It's become a part of our everyday work with them. We don't stress, and we just we're using it. And young people feel comfortable with it. You don't have to use it with older people, but avoiding it with young people is difficult. Youth are very keen on technology. They understand it better. They know how to use it better than I do, and it's embarrassing to be through that. The younger the client, the better of them. They live in the digital age. It's not an option to rely on technology in times of crisis because it's everyday and natural for them. It comes with everyday life."*

Erickson Institute (2016) stated that children nowadays are raised in a society where technology has been integrated profoundly into everyday life. There is a term for younger people as digital natives who are competent technology users, unlike digital immigrants (older people). According to Prensky (2001), digital natives are constantly surrounded by digital communication technology. (Gallardo-Echenique, Marques-Molas, Bullen, & Strijbos, 2015). As digital natives, children and youth has these congenital skills. Zevenbergen and Logan (2008) noted that kids in preschool utilize this very early in their lives and quickly show confidence and skill in using technology before starting school—the same point made by social workers.

> *"You know, it's just they don't think even they don't even think about it anymore, you know, it's just something a part of their body, you know, it's like an arm. You cannot imagine yourself without an arm; it would be so much inconvenience without an arm. So it's something that. We have to accept" (SW 4)*

Social workers are aware of the need to use technology in their practice. However, it is important to understand that while young people are digital natives, this is not a sufficient condition. Being digitally competent is not just about using the latest smartphone or computer software; it is about using digital

technologies in critical, collaborative, and creative ways" (European Commission 2017). Social workers need to know how to utilize this to support their services.

> *"So youngsters are present on the internet. They have the skills, but they are mostly on the receiving side. They are watching, you know. It would be interesting for social workers to try out if someone wants to become an influencer or professional gamer. So this technology gives benefit for them" (SW 3)*

In Social Diagnosis (1917) and *What is social case work?* (1922), Mary E. Richmond claimed that a personalized and in-depth social casework method is preferable to a narrow, mass-oriented, and depersonalized approach. In this study, social workers with children and youth know why and how they use technology. Social workers are aware that technology is an integral part of children's and youth's life because they are born and live this technology. Social workers who are working with this group must follow and use what the client needs so they are not left behind and understand what the client needs.

Understanding Children and Youth's World. This technology is part of children's lives, and it's helping in practice. Social workers use this technology to help understand their clients (children and youth. Megele and Buzzi (2020) social work understand the significance of digital and social media technologies and their significant transformative and developmental effects and prospects. One of the statements of the social worker on how this technology helps to understand the client's world better

> *"In my case, for example, there is one boy now. He's 18. He's playing a very violent game. And he was, oh, I was playing this online game and said that the name of the game. And then I checked the game, and it's horrible. It's killing other people and using weapons. And I check the game is violent, and it's not unstable for that age because it can only play if you're 18. So then I start. I understand why he's so violent in school because of this game. Maybe other social workers. Okay. He's playing something. I don't know, or I don't care. What is it? They didn't want to check up or try to understand what he was working on. After that, I didn't say anything. First of all, I talked with the parents. I download this game, register for it, and on the consultation time, ask the parents to play it and ask them what they think. And they even didn't know what kind of game their son was playing. And after they went home, they started checking him up but didn't say anything. And only then, when he asks for permission to buy a license for this game, do they sit down as a family. And that was all my role. I even didn't speak with this guy. The family took all information by themselves". (SW 6)*

Technology helps to understand the client's not only during the program but also after the program's end.

> *"I said, we use this technology all the time. We use it to start to get to meet young people better. We use it to follow the kind of moves and what they do outside the group because, still, it's a rehabilitation program. So we must watch after them more often and use that all the time (SW 10)."*

The advancement of technology has had an impact on how individuals gain knowledge and learn (Szymkowiak et al.,2021). Children spend most of their time online; therefore, online activities usually have a more significant effect on their development and well-being than outside ones (Megele & Buzzi, 2020). In this case, social workers were playing online games, the same as the client, to understand what

happened. She found that this game influenced violent behavior and started planning the intervention. Violent video games and other media violence are significant risk factors for later aggressive and violent behavior (Anderson et al., 2006).

Hare (2004) social work has the person in an environment as a core concept. The person-in-environment approach views each component of the human and their varied environs functions as a dynamic, interacting system that concurrently influences and is impacted by the others. In this case, digital technology is a new environment that can control clients' actions. Social work is a profession that has the concept of Person in Environment (PIE) as a concept in its work. The environment is an important aspect that must be considered in helping others. Children and adolescents in this era have their digital environment and cannot be separated. It is essential to consider the development of technology and how it impacts and affects children's and adolescents' behavior.

Helping Tools to Reach Children and Youth. Today's children, as well as adults, rely on communication technology for entertainment, knowledge, social relationships, and more (Mishna et al., 2012). Social workers mentioned that digital technology could help them to reach clients to help them.

> *"Most youngsters are not motivated to come to our center and spend time with us. So if we can connect with it digitally, we will use it. Then we use it as much as possible if he is not showing up in our centers. So we will use it every way or after it. And after they are no longer clients in our centre, we still like to text them. We try to connect with them through messenger, chat, and say we're still here. You know if you ever need us, you can write to us and or phone us, and just we're not going anywhere" (SW 4)*

When working with young people, there are many ways to reach them: entirely online, combining online and offline, or only offline. One example of online help for kids is provided by Golkind et al. (2019). Children in foster care use Tumblr to seek and receive guidance and assistance as they prepare for life and college. An anonymous individual, for example, is seeking instrumental assistance in overcoming sexual trauma, and a foster care social worker is providing loving advice for her behavioral adjustment. Digital Technology also helps reach clients despite their distance and location.

> *"We can provide our services not only for the regular citizens but also from different states or countries. I mentioned that we had clients here and then living abroad from Spain, Greece, Germany, and England. So yeah, we can reach them" (SW 5)*

Another social worker added that this technology could help her reach clients during crises.

> *"I got information from the police, and they asked me to check up on the family, but I couldn't because it was COVID time, and we were not supposed to go to other homes then. And I just called through their video phone, like a video call. And I saw how bad the situation is at home, that everything is dirty, there are filthy surfaces and so on. And I sent them Child Protective Services, and they just took the kids away from that dirty place. And I know it sounds hard how it can be a good impact, but we helped small kids who cannot make any decisions themselves, so I think it's very useful. Use the*

technology not only by calling but this video call is great to understand what's going on in client as well" (SW 6)

Today's new media technologies, according to Kroski (2009), are compelling communication vehicles that enable organizations to connect and interact with a diverse variety of target demographics. According to Chan (2016), the Internet and computer technology have improved the efficiency of juvenile social work in several ways. In the outreach element, digital technology is like an extension of social work to help clients out of reach due to location, time, crisis, or low self-motivation.

4.4. Inspiration to Use Digital Technologies

This theme will discover why social workers with children and youth are starting to use digital technology. In the technology Acceptance Model (TAM), there are four aspects of why people accept a technology. The first is perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), attitude, and behavioral intention to use (Davis,1986). People accept technology as they perceive usefulness (PU), such as effectiveness, productivity, and increasing performance—they also perceive ease of use as easy to learn, flexible, and controllable.

COVID-19 Pandemic Restriction. Before COVID-19, digital technology had been used in social work practice for a long time. However, the pandemic caused an unparalleled global health catastrophe and altered people's lifestyles. The laws of lockdown, quarantine, and social distancing are being enforced by the government and health authorities (Balasa, 2020). This regulation has prompted social workers to adapt their practices to help their clients from a distance. Digital technology is one way to provide them with assistance. Social workers emphasized the main reason for using technology was COVID-19 pandemic regulations.

Social workers mention the use of technology in different ways. Such as for meeting by using social networks

"When a pandemic happens. So technology was our lifeline. What was ours like? We maintain some connection with youngsters during pandemics because of technology. And then information like when we organize our Facebook groups" (SW 3)

Or video conferencing

"But the pandemic helps us with that was the program teams when we wanted to connect from our homes because of the illness. So we all have started to use, well, teams. Microsoft teams or Zoom" (SW 12)

Social workers also use it to organize their work and share data with another social workers.

"Because of COVID, we started to become more modern, creating more digital pages and more we shared documents on the cloud, etc. So yeah, this is the positive impact, I would say, and also for

clients before there wasn't that possibility to do those online consultations. In the beginning, we weren't very happy to use it, and a few colleagues didn't want even to try." (SW 8)

Using digital technology in social work practice is one-way social workers can remain on the job and help their clients. According to Misha et al. (2020), there has been a paradigm change in how social workers utilize ICT due to the pandemic, with a varied spectrum of ICT platforms entering social work practice. Social workers were using social networks or video conferencing to counsel their clients, maintain connections through social networks, and help with data management.

New Channel of Communication. Social networks have transformed how individuals communicate, connect, share, and create knowledge with other parts of the world and are now a part of everyday life. (Gómez, Roses, & Farias, 2012). Social workers highlight technology as a new option to have a new channel of communication. It is not only about how to use the technology but what to do with the technology to help the contact more efficiently.

"For example, you suppose to learn a language. It doesn't matter whether you know or don't know the language. It's the possibility that it gives you to speak to other people. To know what you want to speak about. That's why you learn the language. With technology, it doesn't matter if you know how to use a word or messenger. It's important to make the clients feel better as technology supports them. It's just the tool, like to learn the language for him. You know, it's a tool for meeting up and talking. It's often thought that's the thing. It doesn't matter whether you understand how to use it, but what to do with it" (SW 15)

Social work assimilates technology as a language. Berger and Luckman (1966) introduce the idea of social constructivism. Language, cultural beliefs, and social interactions construct social constructionism. Language, as one of the aspects, is more than just a way of connecting people. People 'exist' in language. Same as technology is not only about how to communicate with technology but how technology can create impactful support for maintaining communication and connection between social workers and clients. Another social worker strengthens his statement.

"I have contact with children during the messenger. Many children are contacting me after the meeting in person. Maybe they are shy to talk in person and decide to text through messenger me there so they are more open with me" (SW 13)

The features of text messaging technology - immediacy, anonymity, continual interaction, and accessibility - are critical to the effectiveness of many interventions. When teenagers do not want to address a problem or sickness with an adult face to face, text messaging is a feasible tool for improving communication and disseminating crucial information (Porath, 2011). Digital Technology is more than just a way of communication. With this technology, social workers can create a new channel for better communication with their clients because children and youth have communication preferences. The social worker’s task is to understand how this technology can do many things to support the client.

Easier Social Network Access. Digital Technology has become the most crucial communication tool for organizations. The Internet has altered how organizations do public relations and advertising, including interactions with the media and stakeholders. Subramanian (2018). Social workers mentioned that technology helps them to have easier access to other partners.

"Facebook Messenger is very common in our region for different organizational tools in schools and other places, and WhatsApp We began to use in international work. So there are some Erasmus partners" (SW 3)

It is not only for communication with partners but also helps to have more social resources for their work.

"We have WhatsApp with all the social workers from the organization. People are calling and writing to us. We want to donate that, and that and that and some different kind of goods, and we are putting these things in the WhatsApp shop, and the other social worker who sees it, they see, Oh, I need this like for the clients. Now we had a donation of many carpets from that region at Norwegian Air" (SW 9)

In the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the perceived usefulness (PU) indicators are productivity and increasing performance. Social workers use this technology to connect with other organizations or social workers to support their work. The size of a social network is an essential attribute since it represents social resources. Social resources frequently improve people's well-being, health, and ability to complete life activities. Bastani (2007), Carstensen (1991), Granovetter (1973), Kahn & Antonucci (1980), & Pinquart & Sörensen (2000), Wrzus et al.,(2012). Through this technology, a social worker can access their social resource faster and easier, such as funding from the government, information about projects, and donations.

Client Development Support. One social worker mentioned his opinion of using social networks as a way to give motivation to the youngster. He believed that positive posts on social media could help clients in rehabilitation centres improve themselves.

> *"You can motivate the youngsters because if you are quite active on Instagram or in TikTok or these platforms, what they use, they check on you all the time. Their stories, and it's your stories, and your posts are positive. And with the in a kind of with a good vision forward and motivating, they're watching it and seeing it. Okay, mostly the kids follow, but I would say the youngsters follow some stupid things. So at least somewhere in the middle, they can see you with the positive things and everything you're doing. So they have this chance to see that there's a different way to live. And that is quite one of the meanings of the rehabilitation program to show the customer that there are many different ways to live because you can never change a person; you know, no one can do it. You can never change a person. We can show a different way how to live. We can show different ways how to think" (SW 10)*

> *"In this program, the youngsters who have finished their rehabilitation program. They're our ex-customers now are helpers to other people. With the help of one guy, they created websites to share their stories of when they had an addiction and how they survived, and many youngsters outside there have the same problem and can relate to the stories and ask for our help (SW 10)*

Social media is an innovative idea with enormous possibilities and room for development. With the advancement of social media, many organizations are improving their practice (Akram and Kumar, 2017).

Social media offers various benefits, such as leveraging web technologies to adapt and disseminate information on social platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and others, to educate and learn from others (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social workers are aware that social media always has positive and negative sides. Uploading and sharing positive content is one way to reduce the negative effect and to support client change. Social workers were trying to show a different way to live as he works in a rehabilitation center. The client can change, not the social worker who changes them.

4.5. Analysis of the Implication of Digital Technology in Social Work with Children and Youth

Implications of technology are divided into three parts; the influence of work efficiency, the result of the intervention, and the social worker's learning process.

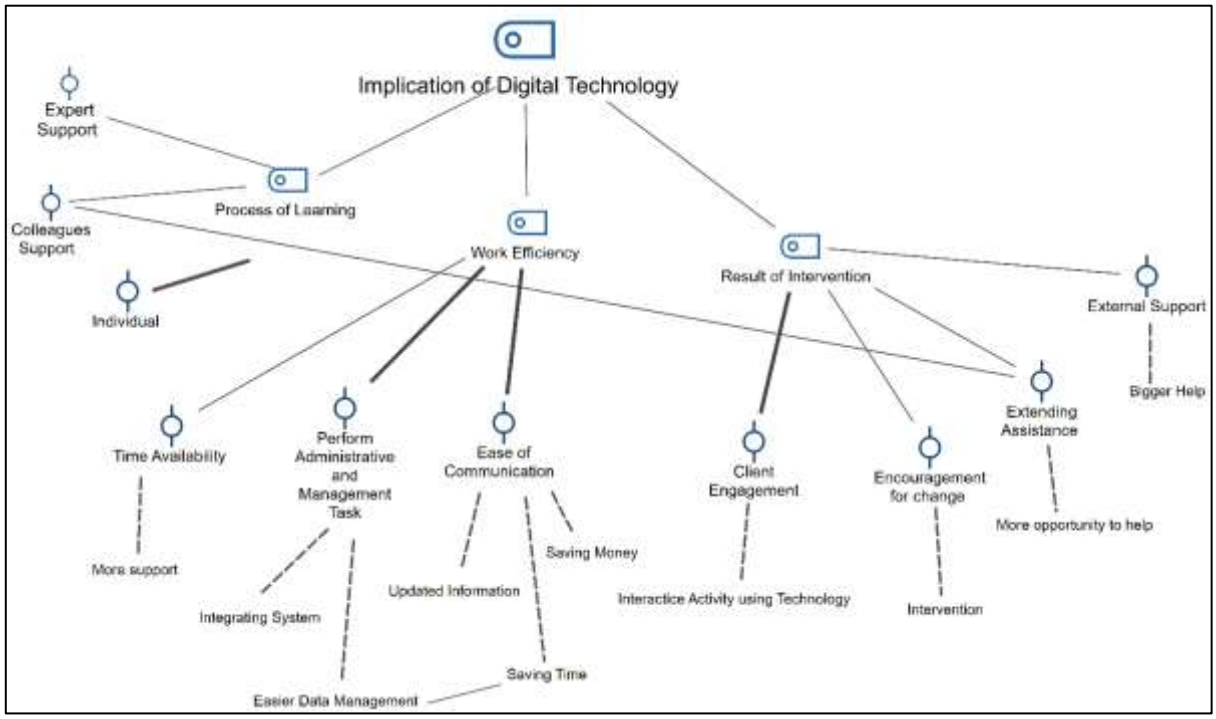

Figure 9: Implications of Digital Technology in Social Work with Children and Youth Practice

The most efficient for social workers is more accessible communication, saving time, and getting the newest information faster. This convenience of technology also supports administration and management tasks because they save time using computers instead of manually. In the intervention process, technology helps to engage better with a client by using many interactive activities (listening to music, watching movies, playing games, etc.) and extending assistance to help the client more. Colleagues also supported assisting because they shared and suggested tools or systems that could benefit their practice.

4.6. Work Efficiency with Digital Technology

Ease of Communication. Social workers explained how digital technology supports their practice in this part; maintaining communication is the most considerable help. Most social workers pointed out faster and more accessible communication was the big point of technology. They stated

> *"Digital work is designed to make work easier and faster. Using this technology, we do not need to travel to other cities out countries. We do not need to go by bus or on a long journey. Usually, the meeting takes 2 hours, and the journey takes 4 hours. We can easily connect via Zoom or Google Meetings. Saving not only time but also money. WhatsApp is used for quick communication with colleagues, while many social networks help children and young people with school and home-work."*

Easier and faster communication also increases the effectiveness of the work. Communication is one of the organizations' most critical managerial levers to form teams and do good work (Bucata and Rizescu, 2017).

> *"We make it faster to get to the information. For example, I want to ask something. Oh, my colleagues, all I want to know is how or What's new in the family of those kids. And my colleagues tell me that sometimes the family members come during the weekend to see the kids. For example, on Monday, Mr. X and Mr. X came here and were very polite. They were nice. They brought some sweets to the kids or some other situation the kids. So if something wrong happened and so, it's like a perfect way, I have to, you know, get all the information. So this is like my channel or my way how to be informed very quickly" (SW 12)*

> *"So it's nice. It saves money and makes communication a lot easier because, you know, with all having eight kids, you have a lot of things to do. So it will be impossible to make my job as good as I'm doing now without technology" (SW 2)*

Communication has changed over time and influenced social work practice. Communication in social work practice is between the client and social worker or the social worker with colleagues, stakeholders, and government. According to Simpson (2017), service users expect professional social workers to be skilled in using mobile communication devices. The skills in using technology make their work easier, such as saving time and energy to travel because they can meet their partners through online meetings and give good results.

Perform Administrative and Management Tasks. Peláez et colleagues (2017) data administration, storage, and distribution can be facilitated by digital technology, allowing social workers to work more quickly and efficiently. Middleman and Goldberg (1989) define social work as engaging with people who are not clients on their behalf through research, fundraising, grant writing, event organizing, or social administration. Below is one case example of a social worker:

> *"There was a situation when a municipality required us to provide some application, and the deadline was like to say this evening that today's the last day that you can do that. And you know, and it helped us really because, you know if it weren't for the management system. It would just be so much stress,*

just running, getting the signatures, trying to catch the director, and it just would be so I wouldn't see wouldn't be impossible, but it would be so hard and stressful. And, when I heard that, we had like, oh, okay, I think it's manageable, you know, And we did it. We, we did it in just a couple of hours. And in the way that also it's something that helps us not only connect with the youngsters or clients but also with our partners being able to react quickly and the fast because of digital opportunities" (SW 4)

"I keep all assignments, what people send me, all interview reports, and so on. I'm writing on our computer. Yes. I'm not doing that by hand. Not because my handwriting is awful, but because it's easier for me when I need it for a meeting. I'm just printing it out, and it's there. So I don't need to find somewhere else because I know one place in my computer" (SW 6)

Digital technology also helps to simplify the Data Management System.

"We have a lot of materials from notebook or internet. When we have children, we must write a report about children. And put it on the cloud. So from home or in other places, I can access it. It's like a hard disk. Yes, and we have support materials. We have statistics there. We have photographs in there. We can see all photography there, We have everything from there, and all of us can access it, and this is from the institution. It's for 15 social workers based on the material". (SW 14)

Social workers from Lithuania mentioned the same data management system that helps them in their practice, called Integra.

"We have Integra, which is like a system for documents that we have. We get like. Some reports about the documents sent to us and any documents mostly meant for the center itself. We have an administration, and we have a receptionist kind of, and she's taking care of that. So she's opening those systems. But I know we have this integra system, and it's yeah, we have this like important documents that we use". (SW 1)

"And then last year we bought some administrative documents management system. It's called Integra. So, we moved our documents there and still improving to have this system to help us to work with documents and not to take so much time" (SW 5)

Data Administration and Management are essential in social work practice to support evidence-based practice (EBP). A fundamental element of EBP, according to Persons (1999), is to rely on efficacy data when recommending, selecting, and implementing treatments. Social workers must manage their data and administration while serving children and young people. With the help of digital technology, it's easier for them to collect their data.

Time Availability of Colleagues. The convenience given by technology is easier and faster communication, saving people's time to travel to meet in person. One social worker mentioned that because many meetings are online, her boss has more time to help her in the institution.

"The biggest plus is what I am seeing is my boss is more available now because the meeting is online, and I need her. Previously, it was hard to reach her, or she was like. Or we couldn't talk by phone about something confidential because she was usually on public transport from one meeting to another. And I was like, okay, maybe this is not a good time. We can talk. But now, when all of these work groups and ministry meetings are mostly through Zoom, she's more available for us because she's doing a lot of those training for specialists nationwide. She doesn't have a driver's license, so

usually someone went together with her, you want to take her someplace, and then you lose two colleagues all day or maybe even more days" (SW 5)

The Meetings conducted online save social workers' time and give them more opportunities to do more as they do not have to travel much. Social workers mentioned having more time to consult and work with their bosses. Related to one of the factors for technology acceptance is perceived usefulness (PU), in this case, particularly in increasing productivity.

4.7. Technical and Professional Intervention Support by Digital Technology

In the context of technology for social work activities, "intervention" refers to any action designed to effect change. In contrast, "technology" is a dynamic word that primarily relates to information and communication technology (ICT) (Chan & Holosko, 2018). From the social development perspective, social development organizes human activity and energy to a higher level to achieve more remarkable results (Cox & Pawar, 2013). The interaction between social workers and users of services has evolved in three ways in the digital age: communication, the role of the social worker, and the way problems are defined, dealt with, and solved. In this theme, social workers discuss how Internet and Communication Technologies (ICTs) help the role of children and youth social workers to improve the changes in clients' lives.

Effective Client Engagement. There are many ways to engage with clients via digital technology, such as audio and visual technology, game console, or electronic media. Seven social workers mentioned using technology for client engagement with different purposes and tools. Four social workers said playing games together can build their connection better.

"So we have TVs, virtual reality games to play with the children. And as for entertainment and for like, you know, raising social skills, like communication between each other and teamwork. And we have these joystick, so we usually play PlayStation, Virtual Reality (VR), play online games, or dance together."

Two social workers mentioned that listening to music and watching movies also make them engage better with clients.

"We can have some loudspeakers, and they can connect their music and play, and then they can discuss what they like, what they don't like about music. About some arts maybe. Yeah, we play" (SW 3)

"Watching movies together is helping also build a connection and a relationship with the kids. So it's a perfect social tool because we don't just watch the movie and go right after that. We talk about the movie. We talk about the issues presented in the movie. We talk about the challenges which are characters face. We are putting the like; I'm helping children put them in that situation. It's just not that it's entertainment, but it's like a therapeutic entertainment for the kids" (SW 1)

Social workers must choose the best approach when working with children and youth. Person-to-person interactions are essential for building relationships with clients. Still, research suggests that the growth of

digital technology is unavoidable, and social workers should proactively use digital tools. Pink et al., 2021; Simpson, 2017). Using digital technology such as playing games, watching a movie, listening to music, or dancing together is an excellent way to engage with clients. During these activities, social workers get to know clients better, and clients trust social workers to be more open.

Encouragement for client's change. Social work's grand challenge in practice is harnessing technology use and leveraging digital advances for intervention (Berzin et al., 2015). Social workers were playing a game as a way to help clients change

> *"I am inviting them to play a game. Then we can play together, then he wins, or I win. And it's something also that changed their perspective towards me and opened up to them more. It's like, and it also becomes a future topic for me to talk with them. You know, it's like if they are feeling down, it's like, Oh. Do you remember when you won the game, and we played, and it's like I was so upset, and you did okay? You did so well. You know, any feeling, it makes them feel a little bit better" (SW 4)*

Games enable youngsters to be adaptable to change at any moment, to use several sources of information, and to explore and experiment to find better solutions to the same problem (Barr, 2017). Below is an example of digital technology as a disciplinary tool in response to a client's behavior

> *"So we have this motivation system, and you get pluses and minuses. And if they're getting a lot of minuses, they get digital technologies taken away from them for a moment. It is more like disciplinary action to give them some consequence for their action. We use these digital technologies as a disciplinary measure for children because nothing else works. They don't even care. We can take away their pocket money because they get it and don't care. It's tough for a social worker to make children interested in something so much that you would like. It would be a disciplinary measure. The only thing that works is that you cannot play computer games or do not use your phone for a day or a few hours. And it's like, Yes. Then they think that maybe I shouldn't do bad things because I'm going to stay without a computer for a day" (SW 1)*

Social work acknowledges that there are many ways to utilize technology. Technology can be used directly with the internet or online activities or indirectly. The example above uses the phone as a disciplinary method to change the client, and it works. The fact that children can't live without the phone makes it adequate to support the client's change with this method.

Extending Assistance Possibility. In this theme, expanding assistance possibilities can be understood as giving more immense opportunities for the social worker to help their clients. Social workers share their experiences on how this technology is being used. Two examples of their experiences below

> *"We have some kids whose parents are in jail, and we didn't use to take the kids to prison because of the environment. But I think the Online meetings with the parents and the kids online are good. That is helping the children that they can see their parents in helping to maintain contact. It's nice that the parent can see the kids here. And I think this is perfect" (SW 15)*

> *"There is one girl 12 years old, but she has many mental problems. Her age is 12, but usually, she behaves like five or six years old, Like she's very emotional, And she had the trauma of reading books. Like whenever you ask her, maybe you want to read the book. She just ran to her room and started to*

cry. But she likes playing on her tablet in all the kids' games. And we thought we could offer her reading to the tablet, which works. She likes to read from the tablets" (SW 2)

The Internet and computer systems may be critical in enabling the broker's role and enabling social workers or other enablers to assist service users in discovering what is available and choosing the best service from a range of options (Watling and Rogers, 2012). The two examples of social workers' experiences are possibilities that can happen as they explore what they can do with the technology and give benefit clients.

External Support Opportunity. Two social workers have experience receiving external support through social media. One of the success stories is

"There is a case he was a homeless and disabled young person who wanted to get a job, but no one wanted to take him. So I decided to take a picture of him and post it on social media. So that was the blue, all the social media that day. It was shown 60,000 times, with over 3000 reactions and hundreds of comments. After that, the journalist came to interview that guy and f me as your social worker. Later, we were invited to the Parliament to meet one member of the Parliament who was disabled and was moving similar law situation to integrate people with disabilities. The story concludes that that guy finally got a job. So yeah, so that was kind of a success story" (SW 5)

Not only increasing awareness of the public and changing regulations. Social media may also help the organization or clients. Social workers utilize social media to advertise their services or for public relations goals such as fundraising (Goldkind, 2015; Young, 2017).

"I will tell you, a family had two children and four cats. And, of course, they were poor. They didn't have home appliances like washing machines and so on. And the kids got bullied in school about smelling bad because of the cats. And the mother couldn't wash all those clothes. So we asked the social worker if there was a possibility in a family forum who could take the cats to the veterinarian. And we are being asked through Facebook for some washing machines, and then people give that so the family gets them and can wash them regularly. The kids didn't get the smell anymore and changed the school so that they began from a new beginning. And so. That was a positive case. How the technology together with social worker impacted the family" (SW 9)

Attention is a power used to promote a message and influence others. Through social media, people can get attention (Hermida, 2015). By using social media, clients get attention wider and faster from people outside, so people can do something, such as giving help, support, or donation

Supportive Interdisciplinary Work. Since the beginning of the profession, social workers have collaborated with other professionals (Bronstein, 2003). Social workers mentioned that interdisciplinary work has become better and easier with the help of technology

"When working with children and youth, we are not working alone. We work with Therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, teachers, police, and all other professionals. So you have to be in touch with them. Multidisciplinary meetings are more successful because of online meetings. It doesn't take so long because managing one is usually so hard. Everyone can come on the exact date and time, especially from a different municipality. This policeman example couldn't come because of the distance. With this online meeting, we created this link that is more accessible, and it takes less time so everyone could participate."

One social worker uses a digital tool in Latvia called e-klase. lv to support the work with the teacher:

"One of the best digital tools is e-klase. lv provides the opportunity to receive immediate and clear information about the child's progress and attendance at school, excluding any manipulation of the child in this area. E-class is a frequently used tool that also helps to monitor the child's homework performance and communication with subject teachers" (SW 7)

Social work uses an interdisciplinary approach to help clients. For social workers, interprofessional case conferences are essential when assessing clients' care needs and eligibility for various care services (Österholm et al., 2023). During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is impossible to meet in person. Furthermore, every profession also has a different schedule and time availability. It is very challenging to come up with one date and time to meet in person, so online meetings allow them to work efficiently with other professionals.

4.8. Learning Process to Use Digital Technology

Social workers should continuously learn about changes in the technology used to provide these services, including the type of technology and its use (NASW, 2017). There are many ways for social workers to learn how to use digital technologies, have competencies, and integrate into the practice with children and young people. Social workers have their way of learning digital skills and competencies.

Social Worker Individual Learning. Six social workers are learning how to use this technology independently. Watling and Rogers (2012) technology can support professional development with access to education and training materials, such as online documents and interactive learning materials. One social worker mentioned that he learned from Google, and another through YouTube.

"Just learn by myself how to use this technology. Usually I find the instruction in Google" (SW 2)
"I try to learn digital aids independently, using them at work and in my free time. Sometimes, to learn something that is not clear, I use YouTube" (SW 7)

In social work education and continuing education, ICT literacy and competency should be mandated learning outcomes (Peron et al., 2010). But not all social workers learn about digital technology at the university. ,

"There are so many things that I didn't learn in school, like in the university. But when you start to use different tools, the skills are coming. The competencies are coming. If you're if you can, you know, comprehend things and be conscious about things that you do. Because I think that for a social worker is the most important thing to be conscious in what you do, to realize, to understand your feelings, and then to show, to show how you do" (SW 4)

Learning by doing is one of the ways for social workers to have the skills and competencies to use digital technology. When using this technology, it is also important to have self-awareness.

"We try to understand that the internet is a tool and a place. And you have to learn how to be in that place. You have to learn how to use these tools there. When I am in the park, they have different rules

than bus stations. So, 's internet also is another place to go. It is important to have values or importance to present in every area. My values as yours work and what I what they want to achieve and what they want to do in that place" (SW 3)

The rapid development of technology also allows social workers to explore independent learning. Social workers need to know their goals and motivations for studying this technology. Even though the Internet offers excellent entertainment and knowledge opportunities, much information is incorrect and spreads fast (Dixon, 2022). Additionally, social workers must be self-aware of the internet world and use critical thinking before accepting new information from the internet.

Colleagues Support. Social work is based on helping people, establishing relationships, and working together to serve a common goal (Scholtz,2012). Besides learning themselves, working with colleagues is another way to learn how to use technology. Social workers mentioned

"We always share information, what is the new technology and suggest to each other. Sometimes I asked my colleagues when I had a problem using it, or they asked my help if I knew better than them. We are learning all the time together. And thinking how this technology can benefit us, our client, and support our work."

The eagerness to learn is coming from inside and outside. Sharing and collaborating with colleagues is one of the ways to develop it.

"For example, after training, my colleagues have new information about some tools then sharing with me, Oh there is this tools, I think it's good you can use it with your client" (SW 11)

Social workers are always in the learning process during their work with children and youth. To work effectively with clients, they need always improve their skills and competencies. Colleagues can be one of the support systems to use digital technology. The form of support is helping them when there is a technology-related problem, suggesting new tools to improve their work, and sharing the latest information about technology.

Expert Support. External support is received by social workers not only from colleagues but also from the expert. Help from the expert can be conducted in two ways. First, they have IT specialists working in institutions, or they invite IT experts to complete training on how to use some tools. Two social workers shared their experiences.

"So there's this IT expertise, or you call IT Specialist, and you can call or ask him how to do things. So it is easy because we have them" (SW 4)

"Yeah, we took our training. There was one lady actually from university, and she came to our organization, and she showed all the functions. How you can find something or what you can do. About this Client Relationship Management System" (SW 8)

The work in social work practice needs to be carried out by interdisciplinary teams to meet the challenges of technological innovation (López Peláez,2023). Indeed, taking part in training can lead to more beneficial

improvements in one's life overall (Hill & Lent 2006; Satterfield & Hughes 2007). The application of technology in social work practice will expand due to expert support since social workers have access to resources and possess the necessary knowledge and expertise to use technology.

4.9. Analysis of the Challenges of Digital Technology in Social Work with Children and Youth

The challenges of implementing digital technology begin when social workers start using it, during implementation, and finally relate to the ethical aspects of the social work profession.

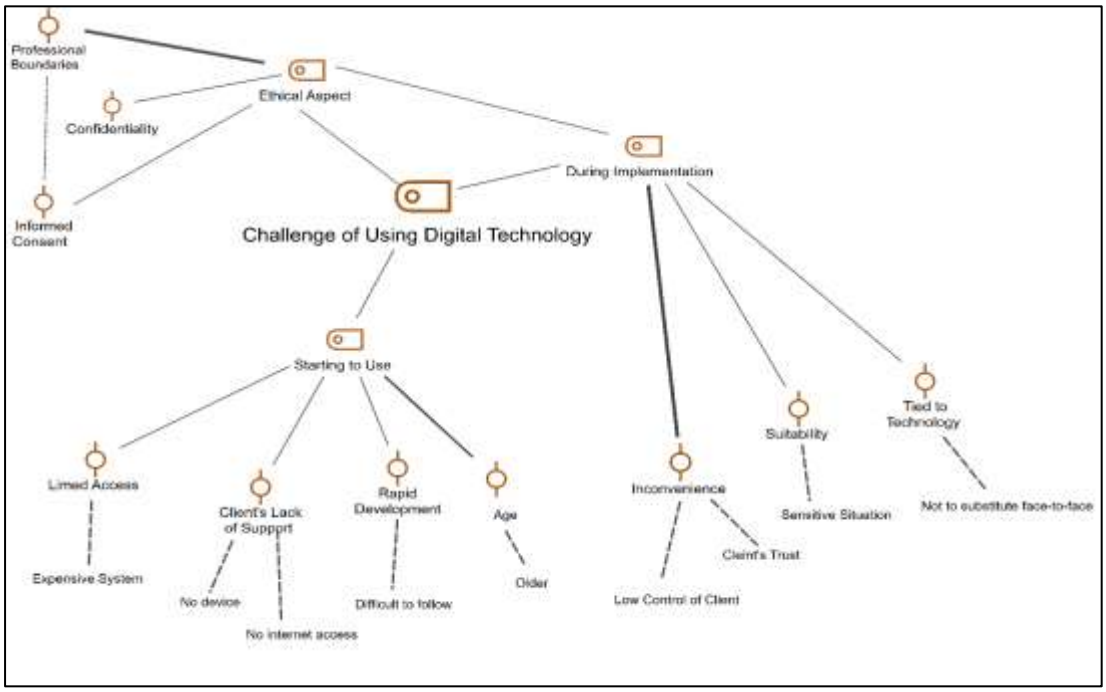

Figure 10: Challenges of Using Digital Technology in Social Work with Children and Youth

While social workers are required to utilize technology, the first challenge is age. Social workers feel harder when they are older and not good with this technology because, compared to children and youth, they use it less than them. Besides the age, limited support for the client, such as no internet or device to connect online, also preclude the use of technology. During implementation, the social worker and the client might feel uncomfortable connecting online. The relationship between them is different, especially when the case is the sensitive client will find it harder to open up online. Not only in practice, but this technology development also influences ethical aspects; professional boundaries become blurred because the client and social workers quickly have contact online in social media, which might affect the boundaries between client and social workers.

4.10. Difficulties to Start Using Digital Technologies

Every social worker faces different problems because they have other clients, experiences, areas of work, and demographic. Self-efficacy is defined in social cognitive theory as people's belief in their competence to accomplish an activity (Bandura, 1977). Social workers use technology despite the challenge and develop efficacy, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital technology was the only way for social workers to connect with clients. The three most significant issues they noted while employing digital technology are listed below.

The Age of Social Worker. Older people who try to learn to use the extensive range of digital devices and adapt to the new technological society find a significant problem (Bianchetti, 2008). Two social workers mentioned age is a big challenge to start using technology in their practices

> *"I have some connection with the youngsters through that platform, but maybe I'm too old to do that, or I don't want or have stopped already playing with them. I don't know what's wrong with me, but this, this kind of course, I know what they do. I try to understand how they work to bring to the practice" (SW 3)*

Not only experienced by social workers it's also by the colleagues

> *"All my colleagues are older than me, and we are not very comfortable using technology, the newest technology in computer" (SW 15)*

Older persons acquire new technology slower than younger adults (Czaja et al., 2006). Compare to younger people who can adjust to technology faster. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) explains that age is one predictor power that may influence the decision of a person to apply digital technology. Another study by Westwood (2014) said age is not a good indicator of digital literacy, but somewhat digital residents or young people are more comfortable and familiar with the technology. Compare this to children and youth born with technology. Older people were not used to it and needed to learn and adjust their practice. Older social workers may require more effort to understand and implement it.

Limited Access to Social Workers. Digital tools offer a form of social inclusion, but a significant proportion of the world's population is still excluded (Ferreira, 2023). Limited support and access are two social workers' difficulties when using digital technology. One social worker stated that some programs are costly and need funding to buy them.

> *"Some systems, it's very, very expensive. Yeah, because we are NGO, we write it down on a project to get the funding. We have a massive discount because of Microsoft so that we can use it" (SW 8)*

And another one mentioned that they do not know how to operate the system or tools.

> *"We don't know the tools. Some of the media. Even if we pay for the devices, convincing and using them is challenging because we have many applications. Lots of practical" (SW 11)*

Social workers in Slovakia mentioned that the limitation of using digital technology is the access of the social worker.

> *"During a pandemic when there was a crisis, or there was something for a discus. Um. We didn't have like those teams installed in all computers" (SW 12)*
>
> *"We only have two workers and volunteers, so it is hard for us to manage to post on our website or social media, and I know we need more propagation there" (SW 14)*
>
> *"We have a Facebook account that is the account of our boss. Maybe once twice a month he posts some photos of do events. Even as an organization. We need proper management team for that" (SW 15)*

According to the Oxford Dictionary, access is the opportunity or suitability to use or see somebody/something. Limited access faced by social workers can be divided into two. The first is access to economic resources, enough money to buy some program or software to support their work. And the second is a lack of skills and competencies can be related to limited information and education integrating technology into the practice. Taking into account that social workers face different challenges differently because they are in other locations and institutions related to support and access

Lack of Supporting Facilities for Client. Not everyone has the same ability and knowledge, and technology cannot be used equitably by all service users as society develops (Bryant et al., 2018; Garrett, 2005; Harris & Birnbaum, 2015). (Bryant et al., 2018; Garrett, 2005; Harris & Birnbaum, 2015). Not only skills and knowledge of clients are different, but also their resources to support using this digital technology. Two social workers mentioned the problem that the lack of internet access and mobile devices is the problem.

> *"Because at first the problem the biggest problem is for the guys that don't have any ways how to connect. They don't have phones, they don't have computers" (SW 10)*
>
> *"Sometimes it's people are saying they don't have an internet connection at home. That's why I am trying to ensure we can meet up with these clients who don't have Internet access. But I think it's more of a global problem because you can mostly catch Wi-Fi in the park, libraries, or somewhere else. That's the one minus is that people don't have money to buy Internet access" (SW 6)*

Two-thirds of the globe's school-age children, or 1.3 billion children aged 3 to 17, do not have access to the internet at home (UNICEF, 2020). Before starting to apply technology with clients, social workers need to know what kind of technology the clients can access, and social workers should not force clients to use technology that they do not have or help them to get that access

> *"Some of the clients do not have computers, so we decided to borrow them, and after some time, we asked them to give back. And do you know? It was funny, and one person said that he lost it. I mean, how can you lose a computer? And then we find out that they are selling it. It's not selling is pawning because they need money."*

Every client has different conditions and support before starting to utilize ICTs; social workers need to understand the client's situation and agree to use what kind of technology during the service. Social workers should know if the client can access the internet or computer. If not, social workers shall advocate for access to technology and resources for people who have difficulty accessing technology because they are vulnerable (NASW, 2017). Social workers can support by finding donors who can help clients or another resource for clients to use, such as borrowing them or did not use technology during the practices.

Rapid Development of Technology. One social worker mentioned their challenges are the rapid development and trend in digital technology that was changing so fast.

> *"It's hard to follow different trends online, which are changing fast. Not all the workers we have are young, so for an older generation, stuff is harder to keep up to date, and they don't know how to use those technologies" (SW 5)*

Digital technology is growing fast and bringing something new daily, especially when working with children and youth. The social media landscape is constantly changing, especially among teenagers, who are often at the leading edge of this sphere (Pew Research, 2020). Moreover, the fact that young people are particularly vulnerable to new trends in internet use (Wojdan et al., 2020) makes the job of social workers to understand their world better more difficult.

4.11. Obstacles to Implementing Digital Technology

Accessing, adapting, and creating new information and social intervention approaches utilizing ICTs is an urgent challenge for the social work profession (López Peláez & Marcuello-Servós, 2018). The challenges of using digital technology come initially and during working with clients. Below are the obstacles mentioned by social workers when applying digital technology to children and youth

Inconvenience of Client and Social Work. Digital technology is helping to maintain the connection between social workers and clients. Otherwise, there are negatives to using this technology that come from the client or social work side. One social worker mentioned the shortage of online meetings comes from clients.

> *"Client doesn't trust me. It's a big problem. He may think that someone is here listening to us, and I can record, so it is not very good for them to open up. Maybe they will listen and not be honest. Everybody here does not trust us, particularly those sent by the judge. So sometimes when they're stuck out in the world, they are not feeling very comfortable that" (SW 15)*

Another negative side of online meetings is that they also impact social work.

> *"We have online classes for parents, and then they came back when we started to do it again in real life, then we saw so many risks. We reported for one mum because, through Zoom, she said she understood everything and had no questions. But she finally came here with the kid. She didn't know*

anything that to do with the cases, And yeah, it was in pretty much, and that kid was pretty much in danger too" (SW 8)

"It is difficult to keep it interesting for me and a customer. To keep it fun, to keep it not getting boring. Because when you are afraid in your face to face, it's a different kind of thought. They are tired of sitting in front of a computer for 2 hours and want to sleep then turn off the camera or end then call (SW 7)."

This unpleasantness comes from using technology that does not happen in face-to-face meetings. Social workers understand that not all clients voluntarily come. Involuntary clients" are people forced by (the law, system, etc.) to be involved with social work. And reaching a client's goal may be more difficult when working with an involuntary client (Trotter, Roney & Roney, 2020). Involuntary clients might find it more difficult to engage when using online platforms because they are ordered to meet social workers, and there is no trust in them. And social workers need more effort to get engage with them, and the approach to using digital technology is not very suitable for involuntary clients before there is trust.

Another challenge is coming from the social worker's side. This technology makes it more difficult to control the client and keep the session interesting. For example, people can pretend they understand everything using a video conferencing platform because they want to end the meeting faster, but in reality, nothing. And might bring danger to them and the children and make the service support ineffective.

Suitability of Technology. Social workers frequently view technology as complicated systems that negatively impact client and professional interaction (Reardon, 2010). In some cases, technology use was unsuitable because social worker and client interaction might differ. Social workers highlight that not in all instances technology is applicable to use.

"It's suitable for a specific case or particular situation. I decide to use the technology when the problem is not very sensitive. If sensitive, maybe it's good to wait for the client and the kid in person. I think my colleagues have the same opinion about that. When is very sensitive, they do not trust everybody. And also, when it's very sensitive, we need to discuss maybe harmful and not very good things. So it's better to contact each other directly" (SW 12)

In the online meeting, when there is a sensitive situation, social workers cannot have the physical touch to support clients if they are crying or observe non-verbal communication better. The therapy also might give different results when using online meetings.

"For example, when I make music therapy lessons with kids. I cannot imagine how to provide music therapy with Teams programs because the sounds are absolutely different. Yes, yes. And those musical instruments, it's they have their typical sounds, which is like the streets and is helpful" (SW 12)

In the principle of individualization, clients need to be recognized and treated as human beings, not a case (Uchida, 1988). When applying this digital technology, social workers need to understand that the client’s

condition is that not all clients are the same, even if they have the same cases. Digital technology might be suitable in one case but not in another case.

Tied to Technology. Digital technology represents a widespread social phenomenon. On the one hand, it makes lives more manageable. On the other, it comes with the risk of addiction. (Emmerova et al, 2018). Social workers used more digital technology during the COVID-19 pandemic and have kept using it until now. Two social workers mentioned that technology should not substitute face-to-face meetings.

> *"It was crucial for me to see the kid. So nonverbal communication, I needed to see them. Physically. So sometimes the smile is important, but then we put the masks off because it is also very important to see the face of the kids. So for me, in therapy, and social work, sometimes, when we want to help the other person, the personal way is significant. But maybe it must be somewhere like we need to decide when it's suitable. That's all, I think. But it must be a good helper for sure" (SW 12)*

After COVID-19 and there is no restriction for meeting the client, social workers can conduct all the meetings with clients online. However, social workers must keep in mind that digital technology is not intended to replace the position of a professional Peláez et al., (2017). Even though using digital technology, the job is easier and faster

4.12. Ethical Aspects Using Digital Technology

Professional ethics are fundamental to social work (NASW, 2021). Yet digital technology and social media can threaten the application of many ethical standards. (IFSW, 2018). Social workers should be aware of several challenges, such as maintaining privacy, confidentiality, and relationship boundaries between the client and the social worker (ASWB, 2015).

Professional Boundaries. The client can perceive communication via email, social media, and text messages as informational and personal rather than professional, blurring practice boundaries and impacting dual relationships (Boddy and Dominelli, 2017; Mattison, 2012; Reamer, 2017). Social workers experienced professional boundaries

> *"The youngster is using technology a lot, and they don't understand our border. Every month I always receive an invitation to request to be my friend. Sometimes also, the parents add me to their Facebook friends. Or sometimes, they are like trying to like my photos or download them and talk about them later. Oh, I saw you were in Paris, and it was like very special and personal things that I didn't want to show them and talk about with them. I want to be private in my own life and be open in the workplace, but only about work. So I think that's quite challenging for me to settle boundaries."*

Giving clients a social worker's mobile phone number can limit a social worker's ability to maintain client-appropriate boundaries and compromise client confidentiality (NASW, 2017). Social workers need to set clear boundaries between themselves and their clients.

Confidentiality. Social workers use video conferencing for online meetings, social media to communicate, or data management to save client files that can bring risks to the client. One social worker mentioned data protection that might threaten the client's confidentiality.

> *"Data protection is an action here, especially personal data. We use the cloud, and all the graphics and pictures are there, not for publication. Sometimes we worry if the data is being hacked or another person can access it. So we have the password, and only we can access it. Or we put the client's information on a USB stick, and we lose it, so we have to be careful" (SW 14)*

When communicating with clients online, social workers cannot guarantee confidentiality. Software and Internet site encryption, password-protected machines and accounts, and firewall software installation are all approaches to increase cyber security (Harris and Birnbaum, 2015; Mattison, 2012; Reamer, 2013, 2017; Rummell and Joyce, 2010). Social workers need to make sure that they try to keep client's files and only authorized persons can access it

Informed Consent. Three social workers mentioned that many clients are trying to contact them outside working hours because they have the social worker's number or social media account. It is related to the boundaries that are blurred between them. The client understands that social workers are friends and they can contact anytime.

> *"They started to write some emails after where they ask questions and yet sometimes even if there was, and thought we are available 24 seven and it's our job to answer and (SW 8)*

> *"There are non-existing barriers or sometimes issues like they are trying to communicate and they are waiting for answers outside the working time" (SW 9)*

> *"Sometimes they want the attention when the person is not working" (SW 5)*

Managing limits and boundaries should be considered during the informed consent process. Social workers must also clearly explain the use of technology during the practice to clients. Below is the statement of social work related to informed consent

> *"It is important to discuss how we will work together with the client. And we prepared informed consent, and they must sign it before we start the session. So we understand our relationship."*

Discussing the benefits and limitations of online or technology-mediated services, confidentiality parameters, potential technology issues, what to do in an emergency, expected response times, and what is appropriate to discuss outside of scheduled appointments via email and text should all be included in informed consent. (Mishna et al., 2012; Reamer, 2013, 2017; Rummell and Joyce, 2010). Having informed consent explain how they work together is vital to set to avoid ethical dilemmas when using technology

Social workers must know the ethics and standard of using digital technologies in the workplace. Some ethical dilemmas might appear, such as professional boundaries, confidentiality, etc., and it is essential to have informed consent so that clients and social workers understand the matters and obligations clearly.

Ethical Code of Social Work in Lithuania. *Lietuvos socialiniu darbuotoju asociacij* (Lithuanian Association of Social Workers) in *Lietuvos Socialinių Darbuotojų Etikos Kodeksas* (Lithuanian Code of Ethics) in 2017 did not mention technology's use in social work practice. The part of the Ethical Principles of Social Work states that Social Work must "*continuously seeks to develop their professional competencies; share good practice."*

The message of developing professional competencies can be related to applying digital technologies. In this era, the social worker can increase their professional competence by integrating digital technologies into the workplace.

Ethical Code of Social Work in Latvia. *Latvijas Sociālo darbinieku biedrība* (Latvian Association of Social Workers) published *Latvijas sociālo darbinieku ētikas kodekss* (Latvian Code of Ethics for Social Workers) that updated in 2022 written in Standards number 6 for social workers' use of digital technologies and social media such as "*Not to engage in non-professional contact on social networking sites with clients."*

The standard in Latvia mentioned clearly to social workers related to the use of digital technologies, what social workers can and should not do, and the need to be aware of it. The example of Latvia's code of social work is related to professional boundaries that social ork should not have non-professional relations with the client.

Ethical Code of Social Work in Slovakia. The Slovak Chamber of social workers and social work assistants published the Code of Ethics of Social Workers and Social Work Assistants of the Slovak Republic in 2015. Mentioned in the part of Ethical Responsibility; 2.1. Responsibility towards the client *"contributes to integrating the users of social services into a social network of supportive personal relationships, help the client to resolve his problems regarding other aspects of his life."* The Code of Ethics highlights that social workers can integrate social networks into the practice if that can support the work especially beneficial for the client. There is no further explanation on what social workers should do and not do. Integrating social networks with clients, if only supporting the work, is a way to keep professionals' boundaries. Social workers should not contact clients in social networks if there is no need for professional employment.

4.13. Recommendations in Digital Social Work with Children and Youth

The recommendations are fundamental to holistically understanding how digital social work with children and young people applies technology in practice, what challenges they face, and how to overcome these challenges in order to utilize technology. Social workers have different recommendations that can be divided into two categories. For social work professionals and educational institutions

> *"I think more mostly workplaces should provide some interesting seminars because what they all can use on any basis is some small, simple steps that even can learn like a person with sixty age plus. Yeah. So some small training or explain what that is, why it's so important working with the kids and young children. Why are they so like this? All kind of technologies and try to encourage them to use as well or buying some system that can help the work" (SW 6)*

> *"Now we're trying to understand how to attract more youngsters to our center. And for example, I'm thinking about, you know, buying some games or a TV set that would help to attract them. I understand that they are because of the game, but I can work with them to help them open up during the game. So I think that to be flexible in this is the best recommendation" (SW 4)*

The collaboration between social workers and the institution where they work is essential to support technology integration. Social workers need to be always open to all opportunities. And institutions need to provide support by giving training, electronic tools, or buying systems that can improve social work services. The standard of practice in using this technology and ethics are also essential to improve.

> *"Most of the time, I just learned myself and did not check the ethics because when you are in practice is just going on. So is good if we could have more information about the standard and ethics so that we are more guided. (SW 13)"*

Educational Institutions also need to support and teach students how to face this technology development in practice, especially when the student will work with children and young people—social work is required to have a good understanding of the use of technology.

> *"Teach social workers' students about the technologies and social media outlets children use, especially for work with the kids. Because sometimes. People come to work with children and have no idea what they are doing online or what they're doing. What they're interested in, or what kind of technology would interest and interest the kids? And I think there should be something about what children are interested in now, which they are using. So the social worker has to help this kind of even at least the general understanding of what the client is into right now, what's happening in their personal space because different generations and there are different understandings. And since you're a social worker supposed to help the client, you have to know what's going on. Then the person's like what's he's surrounded with. So that would be very helpful. And there would be a course for the social workers on using what we haven't right now, but we have this creativity tool, right? How to use creativity as a tool to progress in social work. Mm-hmm. But there could be, of course, digital tools we can use to work with social. We, of course, have this digital tool, like making the family tree or the genograms" (SW 1)*

University can help the student by providing a course, seminar, or training on how technology influences the practice of children and youth social work. Students need to know how they use technology for good and support their practice—sharing experiences with social workers who are already in practice will benefit the student by giving them a real experience and overview before starting in practice.

CONCLUSION

(1) This qualitative study aimed to analyze how digital technology can complement face-to-face social work practice with children and youth in three countries (Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia). This research questions study investigating the concept of digital social work related to the necessity to use and the reason why using it, the implications of using technology related to work efficiency and how social workers learn to have the skills, challenges when using technology what did the obstacles to starting, while using and ethical aspect to consider, and what is the difference result after implementing technology during the intervention with children and youth practice. This study focuses on social work with children and youth, highlighting the broad and diverse experiences of each social worker from different countries.

(2) This first objective is to understand the concept and situation of digital social work. The study results show that social workers utilize digital technology as an integral part of children and youth, and using it when working with them is crucial. The social worker knows to accept technology; this is related to the innovation-decision process. The first stage for an individual to accept an innovation/technology is knowledge. Using digital technologies can help social workers better understand their clients and have more significant access to them. Outside the need to work with children and youth, the COVID-19 Pandemic and the restriction on meeting people and keeping social distancing push social workers to use ICTs more in practice. All social workers in Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia experienced this restriction in meeting the client, and the only option is connecting them online. Even though COVID-19 forced social workers to use technology, they perceived usefulness and ease of use, such as opening new communication channels, easier social network access, and supporting client development.

(3) Related to the implication of applying digital technology in the practice of children and young people are supporting the job of social work in general and specifically during the intervention. Social networks significantly improve work efficiency because of simple and faster communication between clients, colleagues, and other stakeholders. This faster communication also influenced the time availability of the social worker to help and support the colleagues. Furthermore, improvement in administration and management; as a profession based on Evidence-Based Practice, social workers must manage clients' documentation and file responsibly. With the development of technology, many systems helped social workers to do this efficiently. Informants in Lithuania used Integra as the data management system.

(4) Another implication found in this study is that Digital technology also influences the result of the intervention process. Most results showed that digital technology is beneficial and helps the intervention process if social workers use it properly. The first is effective client engagement; technology is helping social workers to engage better with clients by playing games together (PlayStation, Virtual Reality, or

Online Games). During playing the game, the social worker becomes close to the client, and the client is more open up with the social worker because they feel more comfortable. Even after playing the game social worker can still discuss it with the client and motivate them to change. Not only directly using technology to play games or do entertainment, the disciplinary method of giving or taking a phone related to the client's behavior also succeeds. Secondly, social work extends assistance to clients; because of this technology, social workers have more tools and options to use with their clients, making the opportunity for helping bigger. Support of clients also becomes widespread when employing social networks (Facebook, Instagram, etc.). Furthermore, digital technology makes the collaboration of social workers with other professionals more effective in assisting clients quickly and accurately.

(5) Besides the implication of technology, challenges are always part of it. As a profession based on relationships with people, social workers must meet clients in person and have a good connection with them. The use of technology supports their work, not changing. The first challenge comes in the beginning when starting to use technology. The Age of the social worker is the first concern because older people do not feel comfortable, although it is not the only aspect that influences digital competencies and skills. The rapid development of technology that quickly changes also makes it more challenging. Hereinafter, access to implementing a system that is too expensive and lack of training on how to use some tools inhibit the practice. Not only access from the social worker's side but also clients do not have access to devices or the internet. The role of social workers as advocators to promote an inclusive environment begins by helping clients access digital technology.

(6) Social work is a profession based on ethics—some aspects to consider while using the Internet and Computer Technology (ICT). Professional boundaries are the first ethical aspect that most social workers face. Communication through social media impacts the relationship between the client and the social worker indirectly. Client start adding social workers to their private social media or contacting others outside of working hours and making the relationship blurred. Providing informed consent to clients is very crucial to understand the role of each other, maintaining boundaries, and respecting each other rights and responsibilities. Confidentiality also arises in the ethical aspects of using digital technology because the client's data might be threatened, and data security needs to be improved.

(7) The document analysis using Ehical Code from Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia Social work association showed that only in Latvia the code wrote specifically about ethics when using digital technology and social media. Social workers need to be aware of professional relationships, the privacy of clients, and social work and use technology for good. The code of Ethics in Lithuania and Slovakia do not explicitly mention the code of ethics toward digital technology.

(8) DESI (Digital Economy and Social Index) can be one parameter of how technology can integrate into social service. The three countries' DESI results showed that Lithuania's percentage of DESI is more

than the EU average compared to Latvia and Slovakia, which is below the EU Average. Regardless of the DESI result, in social work practice, all three countries already integrate technology to complement physical meetings. Yet with different approaches and purposes because they have various clients, different support, and access, also a distinct need. A social worker in a crisis center has different approach to a social worker in the youth center.

(9) In conclusion, the utilization of digital technology to complement face-to-face meetings must be understood holistically. It is important to have skills in how to use the technology. However, that alone is not enough. The 5 W 1 H method needs to be applied. Social workers need to understand what is the skills to apply digital technology, what are the ethical aspects to consider, why it is good to use, when and where it is appropriate, which clients are suitable for using it, and how it can help support digital social work with children and young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Social Work Practice

Training to increase the digital skills of social workers is needed because most social workers learn it themselves. Digital skills are not just about knowing how to use technology but also how social workers can use it optimally with the knowledge, information, and ability they have.

Policy Development

This study shows that social work has different approaches to digital technology because it depends on location, client, and facilities. Ethical aspects are essential to provide clear guidance for social workers. So, the Social worker association in each country must provide social workers with the ethical standard for using digital technologies. The ethical standard will provide a clear vision for social workers when working with their clients.

Educational Institutions

As a place where future social workers are prepared, universities need to provide courses or training to students on digital technology, how to integrate it into practice, and the benefits to them. A "*learning with practitioners*" program by inviting social workers who work directly with children and young people will help students to have a clear picture of how digital technology is used in practice. Students can also go on field trips to gain real experience in the practice.

Further Research

This study showed that technology helps social workers in Interdisciplinary approaches will be interesting to continue. Research involving and collaborating with other professionals will provide comprehensive results by elaborating on different theories, models, and approaches. Understanding all the professions that social workers used to work together, such as psychologists, teachers, and IT experts, will help understand how this technology can benefit the practice and reduce the challenges.

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Appendix 1 – Interview Question

Digital Social Work with Children and Youth: A New Challenge in Professional Practice

Name :	**Sex :**
Age :	**Country :**
Education :	**Work Experience :**

Concept and Form of Digital Technology

- Based on your experience, explain what digital social work is. What does it look like in your working practice? Tell us more about the digital social work methods/ technologies you used in Your practice or organization. In which step of practice did you use it?
- Social workers can use a wide range of digital and electronic options. Can you share with us what type of digital technology you used? When was your first time, and what is your reason for using it?
- What does digital social work with children and youth mean to you as a social worker, your organization, and your clients?

Challenges and Implications for applying digital social work

- Talking about digitalization is like two sides of a coin with positive and negative impacts. Based on your experiences, tell us about the challenges you face as a children and youth social worker when using digital technologies in practice?
- Do you face any ethical issues when using digital technologies in your work? Tell me how digital technologies affect your relationship with service users (establishing and maintaining the relationship).
- Based on your experience in social work with children and young people, please share an example of a case where using digital tools shut down you or your service users.
- Tell me about the opportunities/implications you faced as a children and youth social worker using digital technologies in practice. Based on your experience in social work with children and youth, please share an example of a case where the use of digital tools helped to achieve the objectives of the work.

- Can you share your experience during your practice? How are the client's acceptance and satisfaction with this kind of technology to help them?
- How you describe digital technology can contribute to increasing the quality of your work as children and youth social workers.
- When using digital technology, we cannot separate it from the skill and competencies to use it properly. Can you explain your learning process to get this skill and competencies?
- Tell me about the support you received to apply digital technology in your work. What kind of support is it, and how has this helped your career.

Recommendations for the future development of digital social work with children and youth

- Can you suggest how this digital technology should be developed to support the practice of children and youth social workers?
- What could you recommend to educational institutions or training social workers seeking to develop digital social work?

Appendix II- Informed Consent

Dear Sir/ Madam,

You are invited to participate in a Master's Thesis Research entitled **Digital Social Work with Children and Youth: New Challenges in Professional Practice**. You will be asked several questions related to your experiences with Digital Technologies used in your practice as Social Work with Children and Youth. The following information will give you a basic overview of this research project and your rights and responsibilities as a participant. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask if you have any questions about this research project.

Research Goals : The findings from this study are expected to contribute to increasing information about the use of digital technology and its challenges in social work practice with children and youth. In particular for national, international publications and conferences as well as other useful opportunities available.

Research Objectives : There are three objectives in this research which are about the concepts and forms of digital social work with children and young people, the challenges and implications of digital social work with children and young people and disclosing social workers' experiences of using digital technology in professional practice with children and young people.

Research Procedure : Once you agree to be part of the research, you will be expected to participate in semi-structured interview and will be conducted online trough zoom meeting. In addition, the interviews will be recorded to helps in the continuation of the research project work. In the analysis, some data may be changed so that none of the interviewees will be recognized. After the project is completed, the data will be destroyed. The data I collected will only be used in this research project.

Risks and Benefit to Participation: There is no identified risk to participate in this study but, if you do feel uncomfortable with any question you have rights to refuse answer of that question or withdraw your participation.

Confidentiality: In this research the identity of participants will be kept confidential, the interview transcripts will not include your name, place of work or city where you work. At all stages of the research, data will be treated with confidentiality. Electronic recordings and information will be kept in a secure place, no one will listen to your responses unless you authorize it.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: Your participation is voluntary, which means you have the right to refuse to answer any questions or stop the interview without giving an explanation as well as withdraw from the study if you desire.

Further contact and Questions :

You are welcome to contact me or my supervisor in case you have any questions regarding this research project. My name is Brelyantika Indra Jesa, email brjesa@stud.mruni.eu. And the name of my supervisor in this research is Justinas Sadauskas email justas_sad@mruni.eu.

Statement of Consent:

I have read carefully the contents of this consent form and I understand about the study. I give my consent to participate in the study.

Interviewee's Name _____

Signature_____

Date_____.

Researcher's name_____

Signature_____

Date_____.

Appendix III- Ethical Letter 1

MYKOLAS ROMERIS UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL STUDIES
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES AND SOCIAL WORK

4th of January 2023
Vilnius

To Whom It Might Concern,

By this I certify that **BRELYANTIKA INDRA JESA**, is the 2nd-year full-time student in Erasmus Mundus European Joint Master Social Work with Children and Youth (ESWOCHY) program and is carrying out her research for her Master thesis on the topic "Digital Social Work with Children and Youth: A New Challenge in Professional Practice". Aim of the research: to gather data by conducting interviews with social workers who have experience using digital technology in their practice with children and youth.

I hereby confirm that she is acknowledged about the research ethics in social science and social work ethics in her research activities.

ESWOCHY is implemented by the universities of the Consortium that is Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania), Riga Stradins University (Latvia), The Catholic University in Ruzomberok (Slovakia) and ISCTE University Institute of Lisbon (Portugal).

ESWOCHY Consortium Coordinator
Faculty of Human and Social Sciences
Mykolas Romeris University
raminta@mruni.eu
+370 5 2714533

Dr. Raminta Bardauskienė

Appendix IV- Ethical Letter 2

RIGA STRADINS UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFAFRE Welfare and social work department

To Whom It Might Concern,

By this I certify that **Brelyantika Indra Jesa**, is the 2nd -year full-time student in Erasmus Mundus European Joint Master Social Work with Children and Youth (ESWOCHY) program and is carrying out her research for her Master thesis on the topic “Digital Social Work with Children and Youth: A New Challenge in Professional Practice". Aim of the research: to gather data by conducting interviews with social workers who have experience using digital technology in their practice with children and youth.

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ESWOCHY program director Anna Broka

Riga Stradins University

Welfare and Social Work department

+371 67061541, +371 27222201

E-mail: anna.broka@rsu.lv

Appendix VI- Ethical Letter 3

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY IN RUŽOMBEROK
Shaping minds and hearts
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Hrabovská cesta 1, 034 01 Ružomberok
www.ku.sk , phone contact 1: +421 44 432 68 42, phone contact 2: +421 918 722 111, e-mail: dekan.pf@ku.sk

To Whom It Might Concern,

By this I certify that Brelyantika Indra Jesa, is the 2nd -year full-time student in Erasmus Mundus European Joint Master Social Work with Children and Youth (ESWOCHY) program and is carrying out her research for her Master thesis on the topic "Digital Social Work with Children and Youth: A New Challenge in Professional Practice".

The aim of her research is to gather data by conducting interviews with social workers who have experience using digital technology in their practice with children and youth.

I hereby confirm that she is acknowledged about the research ethics in social science and social work ethics in her research activities.

ESWOCHY is implemented by the universities of the Consortium that is Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania), Riga Stradins University (Latvia), The Catholic University in Ružomberok (Slovakia) and ISCTE University Institute of Lisbon (Portugal).

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Mgr. Daniel Markovič, PhD.
ESWOCHY program coordinator
Catholic University in Ružomberok
Department of Social Work
E-mail: daniel.markovic@ku.sk

Appendix VII-Documentation