



## Transformation of Condolence in the Digital Age: A Case Study on Turkish Culture

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### Abstract

This article aims to demonstrate the practice of condolence for digital immigrants in Turkey. Although digital media technologies expand communication opportunities and networks, they also cause changes in social relations between people. Versatile communication has become possible thanks to digital media technologies as opposed to conventional media's non-interactive or unilateral communication. Nowadays, it is possible to send a message to dozens of people with just one click. As such, new attitudes and behaviors are observed in society along with the developing possibilities of digital media. The study hypothesizes that "digital immigrants that use social media platforms in Turkey have experienced a change in the practice of condolences." In this regard, the emphasis put on the changes in condolence practices across Turkey is discussed along with new Internet technologies. We interviewed 15 participants between the ages of 52 and 69 between April and June 2020. According to the findings, many participants adopt traditional condolence practices, but they do not devalue the condolence practices that occur on social media. We observed that digital condolence practices have started to coexist with traditional condolence practices. However, this change should not be perceived as the traditional one is beginning to be erased or disappeared.

**Keywords:** condolence, social media, digital immigrant, ritual, social change

## 1. Introduction

Although digital media technologies expand communication opportunities and networks, they also cause changes in social relations among people. Versatile communication has become possible thanks to digital media technologies as opposed to conventional media's non-interactive or unilateral communication. Nowadays, it is possible to send a message to dozens of people with just one click. As such, new attitudes and behaviors are observed in society along with the developing possibilities of digital media.

These effects of the rise in network societies today are reflected in traditions, cultures, and habits. From this perspective, defining the network community will provide essential data in making sense of the changes we experience. Van Dijk (2012) emphasizes that the reason why the concept of the network society is mentioned today is related to the density of networks, not the multiplicity of networks, by reducing the origin of the concept of the network society until the first-time humanity started to speak. Communication, today, is at a more advanced point in terms of volume and speed. People can transfer the information they want from one point to another globally and do not feel obligated to be in a field physically. This transfer can be done without time and restrictions. This situation causes radical changes in social relations.

At this stage, every event or thought, from celebrations to commemoration ceremonies, from feelings to thoughts, is shared and made visible through social media. This situation also causes significant changes in culture and traditions. Tyler (2002) states that with the development of digital technologies, social relations can be positively or negatively affected. It positively suggests that people can communicate with each other more quickly and support each other more strongly. The negative point is that people constantly communicate without preferring face-to-face communication and without leaving the house will lead to weaker social relationships (Tyler, 2002: 196). When this is the case, new discussions can be raised about the social reflection of celebrations, commemorations, condolences, and shared feelings, especially in the last ten years on social media. Sharing feelings on social media can negatively make people asocial, lonely and depressed (Kraut et al., 1998).

On the other hand, in another study (Tyler, 2022), researchers reached exciting results on the formation and execution of relationships over the internet. According to the results obtained, relationships shaped over the internet are strengthened with real-life relationships and turn into meaningful, longer-lasting relationships. According to McKenna et al. (1998), communicating and establishing relationships on the internet can provide essential opportunities for those anxious in social relations. At this point, the internet can provide an efficient communication area for those who hesitate to share feelings such as sadness and joy in face-to-face communication. Face-to-face communication established in the continuation of internet-based communication can lay the groundwork for more solid-based relationships (McKenna et al., 1988; Tyler, 2002). According to the studies presented above, in addition to being a subject that should be discussed with its negative and positive aspects in internet communication, it can also be evaluated with the complexity it brings to social relations.

Visiting the relatives of the deceased and conveying condolences is a tradition that has been going on for years in almost every society. This tradition is about sharing the pain and sorrow

of the deceased's relatives and ensuring social integration. However, it is striking that this tradition or culture has changed in recent years. Condolence practices, carried out effectively in traditional societies, began to lose their effectiveness and meaning as the traditional structure began to disappear and life flowed more rapidly in parallel (Abuzar, 2010: 260). The term "digital natives", used to describe people who have not seen the era without the Internet and who are born directly into the society where the Internet is used, was first used by Marc Prensky (2001) in McGraw Hill's *Digital Game-Based Learning*, then Prensky's *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants* (2001). According to Prensky (2001), the internet and all new connected technologies form the center of the lives of digital natives. However, online activities also have an important place in their daily lives. This situation not only changes the lives of digital natives compared to previous generations but also affects their learning characteristics. According to Bilgiç et al. (2011: 4), digital natives have some essential characteristics: These people want to access information quickly, prefer visuals instead of text, prefer to play games instead of following serious studies, they want to do many tasks at the same time and for them learning through exploration is more attractive. Since these people do not know an age without internet, their view and perception of life can be quite different compared to digital immigrants. Accordingly, digital natives tend to solve their problems, get information and establish most of their communications online.

For many people, imagining a life without internet is not easy. Therefore, it is a solid prediction that the number of digital natives will increase in the coming years. As a matter of fact, with the internet, digitalization takes up space in our lives more every day. Accordingly, social transformations are also possible. Many traditions maintained by societies will either radically change or survive by transforming. However, the subject of this study is not about the generation born to the internet (digital natives), but the change in the tradition of condolence experienced by digital immigrants who adapted to the internet later. The determinations to be made will cause discussions and evaluations on how societies and traditions have transformed.

According to Arabacı and Polat (2013: 12), the main reason for the formation of two different generations, digital natives and immigrants, is the rapid development in communication technologies. Digital immigrant is the term used for people born before the internet age and who met the internet after puberty. Digital immigrants are people experiencing learning difficulties while adapting to the internet and technology. Many opinion leaders today are digital immigrants. Prensky (2001) states that the technology literacy levels of digital immigrants are lower than digital natives. Digital immigrants can be classified as those who prefer printed text over visual and hypertext readings, have difficulty using technology products without looking at the user manual and prefer reading through books instead of web-based research (Arabacı and Polat, 2013: 15). With today's increasing digitalization and communication networks, digital immigrants are also adapting to the digital world and trying to find a place in the online world. At this point, the adaptation processes of all individuals are different. Due to this situation, Zur and Zur (2011) divide digital immigrants into three main groups: (i) The Avoidant group prefers a lifestyle with relatively little or minimal technology. They realize that technology is part of today's world, but they cannot fully adapt. This group is defined by its cautious and uncertain attitude toward digital technology. (ii) The enthusiastic group is digital immigrants who have the potential to keep up with the locals because of their interest

in using technology. (iii) The high-tech group sees the value of technology and does their best to use it. Some members of this group have a great mastery of these issues despite their digital immigrant status. Similarly, although digital natives and digital immigrants are separated by age limit, some studies suggest that being familiar with and using technology is not age-related. The results of these studies seem to support the research of Hosein, Ramana, and Jones (2010), as well as Jones and Shao (2011), who conclude that the web is interactive, technically oriented, and socially interactive. Those who spend their entire lives surrounded by technology and using technology may be more resourceful than digital natives (Niess, 2019: 8). Moreover, it is possible to find many digital immigrants today who teach new technological developments and software to digital natives.

## 2. Condolence as a Social Practice

Although Turkey has a very diverse condolence culture, this culture varies from one region to another. A change in the culture of condolence is inevitable, along with the phenomena such as urbanization, migration from the villages to the city and the expansion of communication opportunities.

After a death, it is an expected behavior in societies to convey condolences to the spouses, relatives, and friends of those who died (Bahar et al., 2012). Condolence means expressing condolence and consoling a deceased person's relatives (Albayrak and Arıcı, 2007). Its meaning is an encouragement for perseverance. Condolences provide essential information in understanding a society's view of death and life, its traditions, and culture. Death is not only a biological phenomenon but also a social phenomenon with its ceremonies and behaviors it draws on (Thomas, 2003).

Condolence practices contain many symbolic values, providing information about past societies and civilizations as well as clues about the daily lives of the society. According to Abuzar (2010), condolence is the cultural values brought by the customs and traditions that provide integration and solidarity in society and provide information about the building blocks of the society.

In Islamic traditions, some religious and traditional rituals are held after the deceased. The dead body is washed, put on a white shroud, brought to the funeral prayer, and then sent off with his relatives' participation on his last journey. It is accepted as the last duty of the relatives of the deceased (Hansu, 2007).

Ertan (2012) describes the tradition of condolence, which has a religious and customary basis, as the "Code of Social Behavior". In almost all traditions and beliefs, the dead is commemorated with good stories and features in commemoration ceremonies and condolences held after the dead. In addition, daily chores are done, and food is taken to the funeral house (Zafer, 2019). After the funerals, the preparations at the funeral house are largely handled by the neighbors. Similarly, those who come home are hosted with the help of neighbors and relatives (Bolçay, 2014). Similarly, Abuzar (2010) argues that the tradition of condolence has the quality of sharing and alleviating the pain of relatives after death, creating integration and solidarity in society.

Nas (2015: 30) states in his research on Yörük<sup>1</sup> culture that funeral ceremonies are as important as weddings. Meals are cooked in the funeral home and served to those who come to express condolences. The said cooking and hospitality are not done by the funeral owners but by friends and relatives. Everybody who comes for condolences supports the family who lost their relatives by bringing various meals to the funeral house for about a month. Relatives continue to visit home until forty days after the funeral. Keskin (2006) says that in the cemetery in **Şanlıurfa**, condolences are offered to the deceased. Afternoon condolences are offered for those who cannot attend the funeral prayer or the first condolence in the cemetery. On the day after the burial, the relatives of the deceased stop at the mosque door after the afternoon prayer in the mosque in the neighborhood where the deceased is located, and the congregation from the mosque passes in front of them and expresses their condolences, thus ending the condolence ceremony. The condolence period is increased to three days as the news of death is not heard by everyone because of the increase in the population due to urbanization (Keskin, 2006: 22).

Sağır (2013: 98) states that death has become a communication network with the emerging ritual, ceremonial, and condolence traditions, as well as evaluating death as a provider of social unification and coming together. According to Sağır, these networks shape social identities and leave individual identity in the background compared to social identity. While established communication networks are seen as stronger in traditional societies; on the other hand, perceptions and meanings have changed and transformed in modern societies (Sağır, 2013).

As mentioned above, the ritual of being together and conveying condolences, which is highly important, has gained a different channel with the increase of communication networks. Nowadays, the tradition of conveying condolences through social media has started to form after death. Therefore, the essential hypothesis in conducting this study is the change in the tradition of condolence with the widespread digitalization of communication opportunities. At this point, reconsidering the concept of condolence in today's digitalization of communication enables this change to be seen from a different dimension.

To reveal the research universe of digital condolence, the subject of this study, it is necessary to discuss the digital natives and digital immigrants and to reveal their borders. These concepts are of great importance in establishing whom the research covers. The digitalization of the media and its ability to go beyond time-space constraints has brought many societal changes. The media's ability to communicate between distant people is described as an opportunity to overcome spatial and temporal limitations (Thompson, 2019: 51). Cairncross (2001) conceptualizes this situation as "the death of distance". Castells (1996) emphasizes the concept of "timeless time" in connection with new communication technologies with a similar approach. The disappearance of spatial distances with the Internet causes changes in the condolence traditions mentioned above.

Physically reduced presence and greater visibility on the Internet can limit an individual's ability to conduct emotional and complex interactions. On the other hand, sending messag-

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<sup>1</sup> Yörük is the Turkish people who have preserved their nomadic lifestyle. It is also used for the Turkmen tribes (obas) who live a highland-winter life in Anatolia. They constitute the majority of the population of Anatolia, especially the Aegean. There is also a high number of Yörüks among the Turks in the Balkans.



es to many people simultaneously allows individuals to stay in contact with more than one social environment (Wellman and Boase, 2004: 2). Studies show that only a tiny minority of the Internet users meet new people online. These findings state that the Internet has the potential to improve neighborly relations. With this logic, the Internet contributes to society's communication volume and helps protect the relationships that have existed for decades (Wellman and Boase, 2004: 9).

A report on a user survey revealed that the Internet puts users in contact with their families and friends more frequently, and e-mail is an essential means of communication (Di Maggio et al., 2001). Similarly, it has been determined that Internet use increases interaction with family members and strengthens social support networks (Di Maggio et al., 2001).

Geertz (1973: 5) treats humans as animals that survive in the meaningful bonds that weave them. At this point, the possibilities provided by the technical media can strengthen, diversify, or fundamentally differentiate the meaningful bonds people have established. According to Thompson (2019: 28), communication tools serve as a wheel that maintains meaningful ties in the modern world. This approach is linked differently with McLuhan's statement that "the media is the message itself". According to McLuhan (1967), the media repeatedly changes social relations and shapes every aspect of it. He highlights all the thoughts and institutions we accept without question from the media should be reviewed. At this point, our ties with all institutions and individuals with whom we have relationships and communication, such as our family and neighbors, also change (McLuhan, 1967). According to Dijk (2016: 245), societies are beginning to be divided into social circles due to digital communication opportunities. Dijk underlines that social areas are less substantial than in the past. With increasing abstraction, important areas reserved for people's private use in cities and villages are increasing. This situation separates societies with a coexisting and homogeneous structure from each other with specific social networks. Basically, socialization tendencies have declined with modern society. With the increase of individualism, people started to look at life from the canon of the whole of networks that replace the patterns created by the towns, cities, or villages they live in and block physical communication and interaction (Dijk, 2016: 245-246).

For most people, the entrance to the social world is the home pages of Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. In this case, the traditions mentioned above also change significantly. Eventually, communities that started to use digital communication technologies reluctantly accepted being in a highly passive position against changing traditions with the ease of getting rid of temporal and spatial constraints. In other words, the users rebuild their traditions and customs with changing communication possibilities. According to Dyrud (2018: 185), cultures and societies have been reshaped by the digitalization of the media. Depending on this, the relationships and ties we establish are also changing. Oğuz (2007: 32) states that people leave the places where cultures are produced and maintained, and accordingly, they create new cultures by following modern life. From this point of view, the Internet and related social networks are among the new places produced.

Today people can communicate with the other people from far away over networks. Increased interaction and more frequent encounters between cultures have started to blur the

differences between cultures. In other words, the feeling that cultures seem foreign to us is decreasing. On the other hand, with the Internet and the disconnection of communication from time and space, doors have been opened for individuals who are disconnected from their original place to stay connected to their culture through the Internet and keep it alive. This situation causes the creation of new cultures in virtual environments and the transformation of old cultures (Bars, 2018: 171). Thompson (2008: 244) states that because of the increasing intertwining of traditions with the media, people continue their existence independently in a non-spatial manner. According to him, the more traditions become non-spatial, the more accessible people get. This means that they can be changed and transformed faster as well. This approach does not mean that traditions did not change before the media. According to Hobsbawm (1983), although traditions are claimed to date back centuries, he states that many of them took shape in the early 19th century. From Hobsbawm's approach, it is possible to deduce that traditions are constantly changing or invented. At this point, the tradition may change with digitalization. Thompson's (2019: 248) basic approach is about the vulnerability of traditions dependent on media.

Along with all the changing traditions and customs, essential changes have been observed in the condolence culture. In this sense, this study aims reveal how the tradition of condolence we have after death, has changed, and transformed with digitalization.

### 3. Method and Universe of the Study

This study emerged with the following hypothesis: "The Digital immigrants who use social media in Turkey have experienced a change in their condolence practices." In this regard, emphasis was placed on the condolence practices across Turkey. A discussion was formed on how these practices are shaped by tradition and how they are transformed with internet technology.

This study uses the in-depth interview technique to measure how digital immigrants use social media for condolences. In this sense, this study uses the Individual Interview type. Answers to research questions are based on interpretation and reflection, so qualitative observation is used. No prior information was given to participants, and care was taken not to affect their thoughts. In line with the aim of the study, the in-depth qualitative method is selected, and semi-structured interviews are undertaken with digital immigrants. In-depth interviews are useful when the researcher pursues detailed information on a person's thoughts and behaviors or explores new issues in depth. Interviews are often used to provide context to other data (such as outcome data), answering the question of why offering a complete picture of what happened in the program and the reason for that. (Boyce et al. 2006; Gürkan, 2019).

Within the scope of the study, carried out between April and June 2020, in-depth interviews were held with 15 participants who can be qualified as digital immigrants between the ages of 52 and 69. Along with the findings, the transformations and changes in the condolence practices of digital immigrants were tried to be determined. Within the scope of the study, the following questions were asked to 15 participants without any restrictions and guidelines, and they were asked to answer them comfortably and in their desired style:

**Q1:** How would you offer your condolences when someone you know dies?

**Q2:** What traditions have you known and followed about condolence since you were young?

**Q3:** Have you ever offered social media condolences? If you did, why did you choose it, and what did you feel?

The interviews planned to be made face to face with the participants; however, were conducted online due to the Pandemic conditions. During this time, voice recordings were taken, and then the recordings were deciphered. The participants who could not technically find the opportunity to interview online, submitted their answers in writing. Considering the physical limitation of the research being a scientific article, statements that were supposed to be irrelevant, repetitive, and not original were removed from the reception texts. In this way, the reception is kept within a specific page border. 15 people between the ages of 52 and 69 participated in the study. These people live in different cities and towns in Turkey. At the same time, the participants are familiar with the culture of condolence in Turkey in different places. All participants are actively using Facebook. Some also have Twitter and Instagram accounts. All participants own smartphones. Female participants were coded with K/n and male participants with E/n.

#### 4. Results

As a result of interviews with 15 participants between the ages of 52-69, all participants talk about the traditional condolence rituals of their regions. The first question asked to the participants was “How would you express your condolences when someone you know dies?” The answers that are tried to be obtained with this question are to reveal people’s views on their condolence practices. Most participants are aware of the change in the culture of condolence and are not against this. Only 1 participant finds it wrong to use social media directly for condolence practices and does not accept the change. One of the participants, **K4**, was the only person who stated that social media cannot replace reality and that she was against it.

**K4, 62 years old, Gümüşhane.**

*Can social media replace these? (Traditional condolence practices) it cannot. Only maybe if you're abroad.*

Apart from this, all participants have expressed their views on their condolences on social media and made statements that it may be reasonable depending on the location.

**K6, 66 years old, Aydın.**

*People like us try to continue these customs, but young people do not want to share their pain and find them unnecessary. I write to them from there if they share it on social media. So, they want to accept condolences from there. They feel better sharing it online. But the old traditions are more acceptable to me.*

**K8, 57 years old, Iskenderun.**

*Sometimes on Facebook, I write “May God have mercy, let his/her place be heaven.” to the relatives of the deceased. If I know them in real life, other than the page friendship, we also write things like; “I am very sorry, s/he was a very good person, s/he left us early.” Sometimes, to fully perform the traditional condolence*



*practices, we also say, “Rest his/her soul, let its place be heaven.” If s/he is a familiar and young person, I will be sorry, my heart will hurt. Thanks to social media, I pray, reach out to their relatives, and share their pain even if I do not know them.*

In the interviews with the participants, it was seen that the participants living in Istanbul made more references to the practices applied on social media rather than traditional condolence practices. At this point, as it will be emphasized in the following, the participants from Istanbul prioritize giving a condolence message rather than helping them in person, thus, conveying their condolence traditions in this manner. On the other hand, those living in smaller cities of Anatolia talked about their condolence practices belonging to their regions at length and highlighted the practices.

**E4, 68 years old, Istanbul.**

*It is also important to pray to them and ask God for their last place to be paradise. My condolences regarding the sharing of news of someone’s passing on social media helped people with whom we share common memories, our friends at the university, learn about the loss in a short time all over Turkey. If there were no social media, we might never have learned about it for the rest of our lives. When the news wants to be spread to layers of communities, such as friends from the neighborhood, military, and profession, it will be better to use social media.*

**E6, 57 years old, Istanbul.**

*Condolence practices with communication tools and social media is used primarily due to the climatic conditions in our country; summer and winter and transportation conditions may affect personnel being there to offer condolences. In addition, the possibility of offering one-on-one condolences is completely restricted due to the epidemic in our country and worldwide. In these extraordinary days, our society fulfilled all the requirements of condolence on social media. If this process takes longer, it is necessary to accept that there will be many changes in our country in condolence practices. The most preferred form of communication in social media is via the phone. Therefore, social media will be the most effective way of condolence in Turkish society.*

**E7, 52 years old, Istanbul.**

*If s/he is close, the relatives of the deceased will call and share their pain. People prefer social media if s/he is a distant relative of someone. Nowadays, most people need to write when they have a loss from social media, and on their page, they share messages like “we lost our dear mother”, “we lost our rock, our dear father today,” etc. As a result, every individual who sees the post conveys their condolences. Especially people who are far away were able to make this situation known to more people. Facebook makes such events even easier because one may not have the phone numbers of most of those on one’s friend list, making it easier to convey condolences on social media.*

**K5** was the only one among the participants from Istanbul who talked about traditional condolence practices and somehow the importance of their continuation. However, the partici-

pant mentioned, also gave her opinion on the importance of social media and expressed her opinion on the changing condolence practices.

**K5, 62 years old, Istanbul.**

*If s/he is very close, you go to the family because there are many coming for condolences, you bring pide<sup>2</sup>, chicken, or other ingredients are taken, and you stay overnight and help serve food and take care of the visitors. It is essential to attend the funeral of a close friend in the same city. You say, "May s/he rest in peace, and hope God will not show any other pain" His/her relatives are consoled, if the deceased is young, they go back from time to time, and not going empty-handed is the norm, and some food is prepared and taken to the funeral home. If one of the neighbors dies, if there is no one to take care of the burial, they will be cared for, helped, and taken away by the neighbors.*

Another question asked to the participants was "What are the traditions you have known and followed about condolence since you were young?. Most of the participants know about the condolence traditions of their region.

**K1 is 65 years old, Aydın.**

*When it is heard that someone has passed away in a small place, immediately food is prepared and taken to the funeral home, and condolences are expressed. His/her relatives help with the burial procedures, and then the relatives accept condolences, some people come to the funeral home, and that evening, the burial Mevlid is held, and helva<sup>3</sup> or pide is served. When someone dies in the Aegean region, their neighbors cook and take the food to the funeral home. If the deceased is a young man/woman, people go to the funeral house more, his/her relatives are comforted, if the relatives need help with the chores at home at the time of grief help is offered. If visiting the funeral home is not possible, it is customary that they are called, and condolences are expressed, saying things like "We heard the sad news; we are very sorry for your loss."*

**K2, 62 years old, Malatya.**

*After the funeral prayer, the deceased is passed in front of his/her house before going to the cemetery, like saying goodbye for the last time. They also put the shoes of the deceased in front of the house of the deceased, and the remaining clothes are given to those in need. That evening, burial Mevlid<sup>4</sup> is held. Mevlid is held for the following seven days, rice is cooked with chicken, and it is served to those who come on the fortieth day; relatives and neighbors gather, for another Mevlid, lokma, or chicken with rice is served. After that, on the 52nd day, a Mevlid is held again, and a meal is given again, some people keep holding Mevlids every year on the day of his/her passing, and some of them hold Mevlid in the mosque for more people to participate in, and serve helva, some of them hold it at home.*

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2 Pide is a flatbread common in Turkish and Middle Eastern cuisines and can also be seen in Balkan cuisines.

3 Helva is a kind of dessert.

4 Mevlid, "the place and time of her birth," is used in Islamic culture to express the birth of the Prophet, the ceremonies held on this occasion, and the works written.

**E1, 58 years old, Aydın.**

*Our condolence practices depend on the person who passed on and our closeness to them. If we are close relatives or friends, we will express our condolences face to face. If necessary, we will be there for them until the end of all condolence ceremonies. As for the traditions, it also varies according to the region. In our hometown, neighbors take people visiting for condolences out to dinner. Nevertheless, in many places, the funeral host offers food. We must either provide food to the guests from outside, provide accommodation to the guests, or help during the guests' catering.*

**K3, 60 years old, Aydın.**

*Everyone was sensitive when we heard about someone's death in our childhood. If you are very close, you hear it with screams from the funeral home and run away, if you are far away, you can go with the announcement after the call to prayer. Since we live in a small town, everybody knows each other, so they also know the deceased, the issue is to help the deceased's family. So, the first thing to do is to help the family residents if they are in shock and crying uncontrollably, if I am far away, I call. I'll go to their house if I'm in the same place.*

**K4, 62 years old, Gümüşhane.**

*During this time, the houses are always full, almost all the people of Kelkit<sup>5</sup> come to visit. Even in the future, everyone will ask each other to ask, "Did you see the ..., did they come?" so people come back to visit more than once to make sure the grieving family sees them and remember they attended the funeral ceremonies. No work is left to the owners of the condolence house, farm livestock etc. all taken care of by the neighbors. In this process, close friends, neighbors, or relatives help with the chores at home, serving the food brought, wash and return whatever pots and pans are sent to those who brought them. That night, the lights are never turned off, nobody sleeps until the morning, so that when the deceased comes to visit his/her house, it might be upsetting for him/her to see the lights are off. Can social media replace these acts of care? It can't.*

Another question asked to the participants is "Have you ever offered condolences on social media?". 14 participants express their condolences directly or indirectly from social media. Although some of the participants do not prefer to express their condolences on social media, they state that they sometimes use social media for this purpose.

**E1, 58 years old, Aydın.**

*Did we not express our condolences from social media? Yes, we did because unfortunately, social media is now the most preferred place for condolences. Everyone wants to share and read there. "My dear brother has passed on. May God have his mercy upon him. I hope that his final resting place is paradise. I wish patience from God. Thank you." We use expressions like these on social media.*

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5 It is a town in Gümüşhane provenance.

**K6, 66 years old, Aydın.**

*If they share it on social media, I write from there. This means they want to accept condolences from there. They feel better this way. But the old traditions are more acceptable to me.*

**K7, 56 years old, Balıkesir.**

*They immediately write on social media and put a contact number of a relative. We used to hear the news in my hometown, after a year of their passing, sometimes before social media, now we hear immediately. I feel very sorry for young people, I cannot call or write on social media immediately, I express my condolences after a few days, I say that I am very sorry, I am really sorry, most of the time I cry during condolences. So sometimes it can be good to say condolences on social media. I write with the same feelings, but I feel more comfortable.*

Basically, it is seen that 14 of the participants handled social media as integrated with the culture of condolence. Although almost half of the participants gave hesitant answers about the use of social media as a discourse, it is striking that social media is incorporated into the condolence culture as a practice of use. In addition, the tradition of condolence from the past has been preserved, especially in small cities. Accordingly, more information about the details of the past and continuing culture of condolence were found in the answers given. Participants from Istanbul are in a more middle line between social media platforms and tradition. In the conclusion and evaluation section of the article, we will return to the digital natives/immigrants discussions with the findings from the interviews.

## 5. Evaluation and Conclusion

Observing and measuring major changes in social behavior and lives requires a detailed study since change is a long process. At the same time, finding a research sample that can concretely examine change is challenging for such research. Working on the transformation of condolence practice is possible with the awareness that research has been done on attitude and behavior change over a long period.

The phenomenon of death, which is the basis of the condolence practice, is one of the phenomena that impacts social behaviors. Different places in different regions of the world and in Turkey, even though the basis of faith and feelings of condolence are the same, funeral rituals are practiced in many ways from each other. From the fact that the soul of the deceased finds peace and his relatives are not left alone and hopeless, many goals/inputs turn into many positive situations/outputs, from the reinforcement of the solidarity of those who remain after the deceased and the achievement of social harmony.

In addition to this unchanging emotion and purpose underlying condolence practices, the new communication possibilities offered by changing communication technologies change the way of expression and performance of these emotions. This study's main problem is analyzing how these changes affect deep-rooted habits. Digital natives can also be included

in the research in new studies to be carried out after this study, which can be considered as one of the first steps for the conceptualization and reflection of the subject. In addition, the sample of the study can be expanded more systematically, and even oral history studies can be an extension of the research.

This study, started with the hypothesis “digital immigrants who use social media in Turkey have experienced a change in their condolence practices” and it was determined that digital immigrants, who were subjected to criticism on many issues related to digital skills, adopted and applied current rules of conduct regarding digital condolence and were not weirded out by them. Condolence remains important for those participating in the research, and condolence should be offered online or in person, whether it is for a close or distant acquaintance. At this point, the digital adaptation capacity of condolence is striking.

Tyler (2002) states that digital technologies can have positive or negative effects on social relations. The negative aspect emphasized by the author is that people will prefer not to leave the house because of the increased use of social media. From the point of view of condolences, the participants' criteria in this regard is personal closeness. Participants acknowledge the superiority of face-to-face condolence in all circumstances but consider digital condolence sufficient if the bond with the deceased is not too strong. In this case, digital condolence is a criterion of sincerity rather than an element of negligence or passing. In addition, metropolitan conditions (business life, permit problems, traffic density and distances), which are defined as “big cities” by many of the participants, are also a valid excuse for them not to carry out condolences face-to-face.

None of the participants stated that the digital platform was preferred to overcome the timidity felt in face-to-face communication emphasized by McKenna et al. (1998) and Tyler (2002).

Although 14 out of 15 participants use social media by presenting a standard digital immigrant profile, the participants do not dismiss the use of platforms such as Facebook or Instagram when it comes to condolence. All participants are well versed in many details of condolence and can provide in-depth information about condolence by combining it with local cultural elements. However, they are aware that current conditions make many of these rituals difficult, and they do not feel uncomfortable about it. Digital platforms have become an adopted part of the condolence culture.

Participants do not find any of the face-to-face condolence rituals unnecessary, do not criticize them, or make negative comments about irrational beliefs, such as “whether the dead person should see the lights off when he comes home”. In addition, they seem to sincerely embrace expressing condolences by using emoji, pressing the like button, typing a private message, and sending comments to the public page of the relevant people.

As a result, even though social change includes the parts of a large system from personal characteristics to group characteristics, from cultural elements to the relations between the elements that make up the society, and that change requires a process, this also spreads over time. We can state that the digitalization of condolence practices is realized and adopt-



ed quickly by getting ahead of all myths, traditions, habits and beliefs. This, as an advanced research topic, points to studies aimed at detecting change patterns in social behavior.

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