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THE RISE OF DIGITAL MINIMALISM: WHY SOME PEOPLE ARE DITCHING TECH?

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Abstract
This paper explores the rise of digital minimalism, examining its impact on mental well-being, productivity, and social behavior. It highlights the psychological effects of excessive tech use, focusing on cognitive overload and stress, while discussing the benefits of reducing digital consumption for improved focus and health.
Keywords: digital minimalism, stress, focus, mental health, anxiety, social media, digital interactions.

Анотація
Ця робота досліджує зростання цифрового мінімалізму, аналізуючи його вплив на психічне здоров'я, продуктивність та соціальну поведінку. У роботі розглядаються психологічні ефекти надмірного використання технологій, зокрема когнітивне навантаження та стрес, а також обговорюються переваги зменшення цифрового споживання для покращення уваги та здоров'я.
Ключові слова: цифровий мінімалізм, стрес, увага, психічне здоров'я, тривожність, соціальні мережі, цифрові взаємодії.

In an era where technology is deeply embedded in daily life, a growing number of individuals are deliberately stepping back from excessive digital consumption. This movement, known as digital minimalism, advocates for a more intentional use of technology, where individuals prioritize meaningful interactions over endless scrolling and digital distractions. While technology has brought immense benefits, many people are now recognizing its negative impact on mental health, productivity, and real-world relationships. The rise of digital minimalism is not merely a personal lifestyle choice but a response to the increasing concerns over the psychological and societal effects of constant digital engagement.

One of the main drivers behind digital minimalism is the overwhelming nature of modern digital tools. Social media platforms, messaging apps, and news feeds are designed to capture and retain attention for as long as possible. This is largely due to the business models of tech companies, which rely on engagement-based advertising revenue. According to Cal Newport, the author of Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World (2019), these platforms use behavioral psychology principles—such as intermittent rewards and social validation—to keep users hooked. Over time, this excessive digital consumption can lead to stress, anxiety, and decreased satisfaction with real-life experiences. Newport explains that people's need for constant stimulation and affirmation can make technology use feel unavoidable, even when it negatively impacts their well-being [1].

Another reason behind the shift towards digital minimalism is the growing concern over cognitive overload. With constant notifications and an endless stream of information, people find it harder to concentrate and engage in deep work. Nicholas Carr, in The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains (2010), argues that the internet encourages superficial reading and short attention spans, making it difficult for individuals to engage in deep, focused thought [2]. As a result, many digital minimalists aim to reclaim their ability to focus by reducing their reliance on technology and reintroducing habits such as reading books, engaging in outdoor activities, or practicing mindfulness. For many, the decision to unplug becomes an opportunity to reset their attention, giving them space to pursue personal goals and relationships without the constant pull of digital distractions.

The movement towards digital minimalism is also fueled by a desire for improved mental well-being. Studies have shown that excessive social media use is linked to higher levels of anxiety and depression, but by cutting down on screen time and adopting a minimalist approach to digital consumption, many individuals report feeling more present, less anxious, and more connected to their offline lives. Social media platforms, with their constant barrage of curated images and posts, often lead to feelings of inadequacy or

isolation. As users begin to take control of their digital interactions, they feel less overwhelmed by comparison or competition, which are common triggers for social media-induced anxiety [3].

Despite its benefits, digital minimalism is not without criticism. Some argue that technology is an integral part of modern life, and avoiding it entirely is unrealistic. Instead of rejecting technology, some experts advocate for a more balanced approach—one that involves using technology mindfully rather than eliminating it altogether. For example, Nir Eyal, in Indistractable: How to Control Your Attention and Choose Your Life (2019), suggests that individuals can develop better digital habits without completely disconnecting from the Internet [4]. Eyal emphasizes that technology itself is not inherently harmful, but it's how we engage with it that matters. He advocates for intentional use—such as setting boundaries around social media or using tools to limit distractions—so that people can enjoy the benefits of technology without losing control of their time and attention.

In conclusion, digital minimalism is a growing response to the overwhelming presence of technology in modern life. By reducing digital distractions, individuals seek to regain focus, improve mental well-being, and foster meaningful real-world connections. While some argue that complete disconnection is not practical, the core principles of digital minimalism—intentionality, focus, and mindfulness—can help individuals navigate the digital world without being consumed by it. As technology continues to evolve, the conversation around its mindful use will become increasingly important. People are no longer passive users of technology; instead, they are becoming more conscious of how they interact with it and how it impacts their lives. Digital minimalism may not be a solution for everyone, but it offers a roadmap for those looking to reclaim their time and mental space in an increasingly noisy world.

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