



Digital Detox and Gandhian Simplicity: A Voluntary Consumption Reduction in the Age of Social Media Addiction

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ABSTRACT

The modern economy of attention marked by the social media produces the compulsive engagement and consumption, signalling to elevate a political-ethical issue; one that is concerned with autonomy and not just with the personal wellbeing. In this paper, the digital detox through the concept of Gandhian simplicity particularly *Aparigraha* (non-possession), *Swaraj* (self-rule), and ethical self-restraint has been analysed,

considering the voluntary reduction of digital engagement as a consumption restraint. To address this issue, the paper has employed the qualitative synthesis of the literature, using a critical review of existing interdisciplinary literature on the issue of problematic use of technology and interpretive textual analysis of Gandhian writings, which are combined to contextualise the urgency and the scale. The paper redefines the digital detox as maintaining the ethical forms of self-management in an algorithmically mediated space, instead of self-optimisation that aims at productivity. It further develops a normatively based, vows based paradigm of digital restraint that has the implications for the political ethics, digital citizenship, and platform governance.

KEYWORDS: Digital detox, Gandhian simplicity, social media addition, voluntary consumption reduction

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INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century is characterised by an unparalleled mass and scope of social media utilisation where the digital connection is becoming a systematic state of daily affairs and is not an extraordinary practice. According to the recent world estimates, over half of the global population are now the users of social media, and a number of social media users is still increasing in all parts

and among all age groups (Kemp, 2024). India is also one of the most prominent locations of such growth with the several hundred million active users and an accelerated growth rate through the use of cheap smartphones, cheap data, and localisation of the platforms (Kemp, 2024). The social media structures have severely changed communication, political mobilisation, culture, and economic interaction. Meanwhile, it has become entirely ubiquitous and raised anxieties regarding the compulsive use, attention capture, and perversion of subjectivity by the algorithmically mediated environments specific to optimising an engagement.

Although social media has made possible other forms of participation and visibility, the most prevalent business models have been on its monetisation of attention. The platform architecture is designed to extend the user interactions by providing the notifications, endless scrolling, personalised feeds, and other social validation feedbacks of excess use (Srnicek, 2017; Zuboff, 2019). Such dynamics not only defines the communicative practice, but also produces the consumption-oriented subjectivities of which desire, status, and self-worth are conditioned more and more by the digital visibility and market logic (Wu, 2016). The concept of simplicity, self-restraint, and *Swaraj* (self-rule) is developed by Mahatma Gandhi. In turn, the issue of addiction to social media cannot be narrowed down to the inability of the one to be strong and self-reliant; it also needs to be viewed within the framework of more significant political and ethical dynamics that involves power, autonomy, and regulation of life in its daily form.

Based on the increasing discomfort over the digital overuse, diverse practices, and discourses normatively categorised as the digital detox have become notable. The interventions are typically conceptualised as a psychological wellbeing, mental health, productivity improvement, or

lifestyle improvement, with some frequent borrowing of paradigms of therapeutic interventions or self-help practices (Radtke et al., 2022). Although these strategies present the effective suggestions on the experiential ills of the overuse of screens, they tend to personalise the blame and under-scrutinise the ethical and political issues that are presented by a digitally-mediated consumption and addiction. The focus on efficiency and self-enhancement threatens to place the idea of digital detox in line with the neoliberal principles of self-control and not to challenge the underlying moral economy of attention and desire.

The fundamental gap in the current academic deficits, which this paper fills, is the incorporation of the Gandhian ethical thinking into the prevailing approaches to the ongoing discussions of social media addiction and digital detox. Although the issue of problematic use of technology is maturing and many literatures have been written, covering the political economy of digital platforms, the classical traditions of ethics, especially the non-Western schools of ethics, are peripheral to the discussion provides a unique normative approach to reconsidering the problem of digital overuse not as the problem of technical or therapeutic problem but as the problem of self-government and voluntary restraint. Gandhi's criticism of desirability as an excessive value and his ideas about *Aparigraha* (non-possession) offer the conceptual background of the digital consumption as the extension of the larger tendencies of the desire and accumulation.

The topicality of the Gandhian philosophy is particularly applicable to the Indian conditions where the intensive digitalization is accompanied by the long-term discussions on the consumption, inequality, and moral accountability. Through the Gandhian interpretation of digital detox, the paper seeks to rethink a volitional decrease in the usage and consumption of social media as a question

of ethical and political agency instead of adjusting the lifestyle. The key point of the work is to work out a normative paradigm that would make this digital detox a part of voluntary consumption cut and moral restraint traditions. In doing so, this paper makes a contribution to the political theory and digital ethics on the issue through a culturally grounded and philosophically strong explanation on what could be provided in retrieving autonomy and self-rule in the era of social media addiction.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT OF CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The present study on the social media addiction and the problematic use of technology has grown quickly in the last ten years and attracted media studies, psychology, public health, sociology, and political economy. A substantial portion of this literature warns against the careless application of the term of addiction, especially to such an extent as to be used in a nonclinical context. The scholars are becoming more divided in recognising the difference between the clinically diagnosable addictive disorder and the compulsive/problematic use patterns conditioned by the social, technological, and economically induced environments (Montag et al., 2021). This difference is essential, because a large portion of what is being labelled as the social media addiction fails to serve the medical criteria of diagnostic levels but still creates the quantifiable negative effects regarding attention, wellbeing, and control. The recent studies thus tend to use the expression “problematic social media use” or compulsive digital engagement, and hinge on the behavioural patterns in daily life as opposed to the personal pathology.

In that context, the social media websites are seen not just as a socially-neutral communication tool, but as a socio-technical system that tries to capture and retain attention. The platform business

models are based on the political economy approaches as they are based on advertising the income, data harvesting, and behavioural forecasting, and the long user interaction becomes a structural requirement as opposed to the side effect (Srnicek, 2017; Zuboff, 2019). The use of infinite scrolling, algorithmically curated feeds, intermittent rewards, and social validation measures are the aspects of design that actively influence the user behaviour, leading to a habitual consumption behaviour that in most cases is not intended. In this sense, it is less a break in the personal self-regulation and more of an expected reaction to the spaces that are designed in such a way that they can be monetised in attention and desire (Wu, 2016). Knowing the difference is key since it moves the responsibility off the shoulders of the users and onto the design decisions of platform architects, along with their economic motivations.

An expanding field of study also associates such dynamics of engagement to the modern consumer culture. The boundaries between the communication process, identity development, and the participation in the market have been distorted to make the social media platforms their central locations of symbolic consumption, influencer marketing, and aspirational self-presentation. The trends that have been propagated through a careful curation, paid advertisements and algorithms of attention support the patterns of desire that have not just limited to the material goods but also involved their validation, visibility and social capital as well. Many studies in the field of voluntary simplicity and consumption minimization indicate that these settings increase the disenfranchisement and weaken the restraint abilities, thus enhancing the loops of dissatisfaction and excess (Rebouças et al., 2021). In this regard, the social media addiction cannot be discussed outside of the context of more general questions of

subjectivity based on the consumption and the politics of desire.

It is on this front that the movements of digital detox have cropped up as a response to counteract over engagement. The systematic reviews reveal that a temporary or partial change in the smartphone and social media, though less pronounced in wellbeing and sleep and perceived control, may allow some improvements (but findings are inconsistent, and the long-term outcomes of such changes are poorly studied) (Radtke et al., 2022). Notably, a portion of such literature articulates the detox interventions in terms of the instrumentation with reference to the mental health, or productivity improvements. These findings may be required, but the critics generally point out that they tend to individualise blame and that it goes against the ethics to entice the users to self-regulate in the inherently manipulative structures. Therefore, it seems that the digital detox is becoming a compensatory measure that has not altered the hidden power relations and the logics of consumption.

This is where Gandhian philosophy can be of a specific and underutilised normative prism. The model of ethical values, simple, restrained, and voluntarily restricted, was created by Gandhi through a critical reaction on the tendencies of the modern civilisation that appreciated unlimited and materialistic desires that were essentially insatiable (Gandhi, 1938). The most important of these concepts is the *Aparigraha* or non-possession, which is the conscious reduction of desires instead of the permanent growth of desires. The non-violent austerity, in contrast to externally imposed austerity, is essentially voluntary and morally appropriate and seeks to develop the self-rule (*Swaraj*) on the personal and social levels. Several researchers have highlighted that freedom to Gandhi was impossible without the self-discipline and

liberation could not be achieved without a control over his desires as well as those of the outside world (Bilgrami, 2013; Iyer, 1973). This kind of knowledge puts the self-control in the light of not merely being a virtue but also being an essential pre-requisite for freedom. The same perspective in the digital world provides an important way of looking at the voluntary social media reduction from an ethical angle of liberating oneself rather than being deprived of anything.

Beyond being translated into the Gandhian simplicity, the digital detox is repositioned as a moral effort by individuals and not as a medical procedure when it is placed in the context of modern discussions on the digital addiction. The overuse of social media can be perceived as the contemporary version of Gandhi when it comes to enslavement to wants, and the germination of algorithms that keep the urge to want and be distracted. In this light, showing the digital abstinence voluntarily is not a renouncement of technology as such but rather a claim of ethical self-regulation in those areas where the attentional autonomy is in a gradual decay. Gandhi's focus on the voluntary restriction is also able to circumvent the traps of risk of moral coercion and instead the practices of detoxing is in line with the persuasion, self-reflection, and commitment of the ethical obligation instead of prohibition.

The empirical indicators prioritise the need to come up with such normative frameworks urgently. A number of users of social media in the world has now reached more than half of the world's population, and the use of social media by the youth is especially intense and acute (Kemp, 2024). Quick uptake of the platforms in India has altered all aspects of the daily sociality, consumption behaviour, and political communication to render the questions of digital restraint as the socially and politically significant concerns, versus being peripheral. These

statistics, in themselves, cannot, of themselves, make the causal assertions concerning a pain, but they put these on a scale of how much attention capture and consumption-based subjectivities are being produced.

This section bridges a conceptual gap between the digital detox and the voluntary consumption reduction by combining the modern academic knowledge on how the social media usage leads to the problems with the application of Gandhian ethics. It establishes the Gandhian simplicity as the normative counter-system that can solve the ethical vacuity of existing discourses of detox. Through this, it preconditions a renewed definition of digital detox as a self-control and moral restraint in the discursive domain of the attention economy, thus contributing to the development of a more politics and the morally based concept of digital wellbeing.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research design applicable in this study is qualitative research that is based on the normative politics and ethical research design. As the main method of work, the ideas on how the validity and usefulness of the most important concepts of Gandhian philosophy as a whole are analysed, each being interpreted anew against the context of modern discussions on the problem of social media addiction and Internet consumption, the approach to research is the interpretation of the text. Gandhi's writings are not just considered as the historical artefacts; it is viewed as the source of normative information that can be utilised in the contemporary moral and political issues. The analysis relies largely on *Hind Swaraj* and few readings on *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* with reference to a continuous criticism of Gandhi over the excessive wants, moral discipline, and voluntary limitation as the main pillars of freedoms.

This is accompanied by a primary textual analysis, also performing a critical synthesis of the current academic discourse on the problematic behaviour on social media, the attention economy, platform capitalism, and voluntary simplicity. The search of secondary sources is performed according to the well-established criteria: first of all, peer-reviewed articles in journals and academic monographs published by the well-known academic publishers are taken into account, and more recent works, starting with 2020, are included to ensure the conceptual and empirical currency and relevance. The classical arguments that persist in shaping the current discourses, particularly in the field of political economy and digital ethics, are selectively included in the areas where they do have the useful analytical merit. The review is interdisciplinary in nature, drawing on media studies, political theory, sociology, consumer studies, and public health. At the same time, it maintains a coherent normative focus.

There are no statistical modelling, survey, and original fieldwork used in the study. Rather, it has a normative-analytical orientation, seeking a conceptual elucidation, moral judgement instead of causal explanation. The recent data in the world and India regarding the social media use, youth engagement patterns, and platform penetration are added to introduce them as the contextual indicators emphasising the magnitude and the urgency of the phenomenon under analysis. These facts, not being considered as a direct causality and clinical damage, are rather the background circumstances that determine the moral and political worth of the digital addiction and detox interventions. This distinction is maintained throughout to avoid the methodological overreach on methodology.

The analytical stages of the study are an interpretive process. To begin with, the

Gandhian ethical ideas are summarised into the analytically pertinent groups, namely the voluntary restraint, autonomy, and moral self-governance. Second, these categories are brought into a dialogue with the current characterizations of algorithmic attention capture, consumerist subjectivity, and digitally mediated desire. Lastly, the review assesses the possibility of Gandhian simplicity as a counter-paradigm to the current individualised and productivity-focused methods towards the digital detox. The transparency of the study, its coherence, and scholarly rigour is achieved by making its conceptual steps clear and basing its assertions on the pre-existing texts and scholarship.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The first finding of this study is that the digital detox could be redefined to mean as a modern manifestation of *Swaraj*, which in Gandhian thought is considered as the ethical self-governance and not as the political sovereignty. The concept of digital detox in the mainstream popular culture typically takes a form of withdrawal, such as leaving the platforms to relax or to work. Nonetheless, when it is placed in the political economy of the social network, it no longer comes into the picture as lack of its connection to the society but rather as the boundary conscious reclaim of agency over the situation crafted to mould the behaviour in line with the algorithmic sense of nudging. The social media platforms are designed in such a way that they play up an engagement as it is their major commodity (Srnicek, 2017; Zuboff, 2019). The infinite scroll, push notifications and algorithmic curation all work to take away the conscious decision-making of the user slightly in favour of the habitual response, undermining the ability of the user to make a reflective decision.

The sheer scale of platform penetration is the reason why this

argument is so relevant. The users of social media now represent materially more than half of the global population, and even India by itself boasts the hundreds of millions of active social media users; thus, the extent of digital interaction is a universal social phenomenon and not a marginal habit anymore (Kemp, 2024). In these circumstances, there is no reason, and ability to have abstinence in the case of the majority. There is an alternative, Gandhian reading, according to which *Swaraj* in the digital age is not the need to get out of technological systems but to consciously regulate the attentional life of a person there. When it is seen as such, the digital detox is not a civil or social withdrawal, as much as it is an ethical act of self-governance, an assertion of self-sufficiency in the face of algorithmically mediated obsessions.

The second finding shows that the Gandhian simplicity broadens a conceptualisation of consumption in the discussions on the digital addiction largely. Its traditional conceptualisation of consumption comprises mostly the material goods and services. Nonetheless, the social sites turn an attention, desire, and social comparison into the commercial assets, thus altering the non-material human capacities into the economic extraction sites (Wu, 2016). The time spent scrolling, engaging, and self-presenting is converted in any systematic way into a system of advertising, influencer markets, and consumer targeting of data. The consumption functions in such a field not by buying but by being part of a process of visibility, aspiration, and validation mechanisms that goes round and round.

One of the bases of criticism towards the modern civilisation by Gandhi rested on the fact that uncontrolled desires and not unmet needs lead to a moral degradation as well as inequality in the society (Gandhi, 1938). What mattered to

him were his ideas of simplicity and *Aparigraha* (non-possession), which did not advocate a deprivation but were a request to be morally responsible with the self-knowledge. When scaled to the digital situations, the paradigm displays how the overuse of social media has contributed to the development of a kind of consumption, which is driven by the status performance and comparative self-esteem. The desire becomes more intense due to the influencer cultures and algorithm amplification, which engage the user by repeatedly exposing the users to the curated lifestyles and therefore strengthen the consumption desire that goes beyond the material acquisition to the symbolic and affective space.

The voluntary withdrawal of the digital activity, conceived in this perspective is equivalent to the Gandhian restraint, instead of austerity. It is not scarcity imposed but it is a voluntary statement, which is made by the ethical reasons and not the necessity. Such a difference is important, particularly because it will establish the digital detox as a habit of returning the balance between needs and wants to normal, but not a moralistic denial of pleasure or technology. The digital detox is, therefore, evaluated in a new way, as a method of opposing the inflation of desire that the platform-mediated consumer culture makes people submit to.

The third key finding is the need to discuss the social media addiction but not to create any confusion between the clinical diagnosis and the ethical and social issues. Research now is becoming more worried about a careless use of the terms of addiction, with the most social media users failing to display a diagnosis that is linked to the substance-related or behavioural disorders (Montag et al., 2021). Such a differentiation is extremely significant in view of the danger of the pathologization of what, in many cases, amounts to the socially and structurally

induced uses of the Internet. However, the international public health institutions have started accepting the reality that there are some kinds of digitally mediated behaviour that can result in the production of harm. Having included the gaming disorder in the ICD-11, the World Health Organisation (WHO) demonstrates that on the one side, certain digital behaviours potentially cause a clinically significant impairment, although the scope and definition remain controversial (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2019). It must be noted that such an acknowledgment should not automatically apply to all types of intensive social media usage because that would take away from the very essence of the issue in question.

On the same note, WHO Europe has also pointed to the consequences of excessive screen time in many adolescents such as the effects on sleep, mental health, and social development (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2022). These advances offer a valuable contextual background, but they cannot lead one to take all the intensive use of social media as a medical situation. This paper thus sees the issue of addiction as more of a social-ethical and governance issue, as opposed to a diagnosis. It is centred on the interaction of environments, which are conducive to the behavioural capture with the human vulnerabilities, generating the behavioural use patterns, which compromise the autonomy and reflective agency.

The analysis by countering the medical overreach leaves room to the ethical responsibility and political criticism. It does not pathologise the users and is still able to acknowledge the actual harms, thus complying with the principles of Gandhian ethics, which were focused on the moral reform and self-control rather than on the punitive or technocratic remedies. In this type of framing, the digital detox is an ethical solution to excess that has been generated by the

structures as opposed to a treatment that addresses the pathology in an individual.

The last finding of the study is creating a vows-based model of digital restraint of Gandhian persuasion, which is offered as a useful theoretical output. The ethical vows were most often stated by Gandhi in the form of vows (*Vratas*), to be interpreted as the self-disciplines that were to be followed voluntarily so as to instil the moral principles, and not by coercion. The application of this strategy to the digital arena enables an expression of the policies that help in restraint without any compulsion.

The *Satya* of attention, such as telling the truth about the time spent browsing online, thinking honestly about the way attention is being borrowed or squandered, is one of them. The practice stands in a direct opposition to the opacity of algorithmic systems in that it reinstates the self-awareness into the digital world of routines. The second principle is *Aparigraha* online that presupposes the decreasing online clutter the decline of unnecessary applications, obsessive saving of material, and indiscriminate harvesting of information that is impossible to process and engage with meaningfully. The third principle may be defined as the *Swadeshi* of information which urges the users to focus more on the knowledge based on the local ground, community specific facts as opposed to the virality of content and the artificial flow of sensationalism.

The other vow relates to the curtailing self-display consumption by being aware of the resistive views to the status-performing dynamics, which aggravate the comparative, envious, and market-driven aspiration. This does not necessarily mean leaving the field of social expression; rather, it means rediscovering the motives behind the visibility and involvement. Lastly, a more comprehensive pledge of technological self-control makes these practices part of a consistent ethical code

of appropriate usage, making a technological involvement consistent with the actual demand and not an artificially induced desire.

In totality, these promises bring about the application of Gandhian simplicity in the digital era. They describe the digital detox as not something performed on a sporadic basis, but as the long-term ethical disciplining of technological systems. This model provides the conditions of reinstating autonomy in the situations of ubiquitous digital mediation and attention capture by defining restraint as voluntary, reflective, and rooted in the sphere of morality.

In combination, these results prove the digital detox as a kind of Gandhian *Swaraj*, a disciplinary and still enabling act of voluntary consumption reduction that reacts to social media addiction as an ethical and political issue instead of a purely psychological one.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest the shift of digital detox as an element of the personal intervention of lifestyle change to an issue of the political ethics. The existing discourses tend to make the detox more therapeutic or productivity-oriented, and their default position is that the bad of overusing social media is best treated by the self-management. In comparison, autonomy, manipulation, and moral agency are the ethical issues that are foregrounded by a Gandhian reading. Once the attention is being actively designed by structuring the platform, the ability to decide freely ceases being an individual psychological facility and becomes a politically relevant phenomenon, conditioned by the power structures about which are built the technological systems (Srnicsek, 2017; Zuboff, 2019). In this respect, the digital detox is a practice where people challenge the ways of subtle domination that takes

place in the nudging behaviour, not through coercion.

There are also some implications of this reframing to the democratic theory. A democratic participation assumes the ability of the citizens to be attentive, reflective, and resistant to manipulation. The process of commodifying attention endangers these abilities by disintegrating the discourse of the masses, as well as rewarding emotionally charged materials, which focus on establishing an engagement over the rational argumentation (Wu, 2016). The digital detox, as interpreted through the Gandhian ethics, is not a retreat out of the democratic life, rather, it is an endeavour to defend the moral and cognitive preconditions of the democratic agency. By making the self-rule (*Swaraj*) an ethical discipline, the analysis establishes the digital restraint within the tradition to tie freedom to responsibility making it possible to debate the political theory about autonomy to the digital realm.

The main criticism of ethical descriptions of digital detox is that it runs the risk of reinventing the rhetoric of individual responsibility that shifts the regulation responsibility onto the user but not the predatory platform designs. This criticism is quite justified in the areas where the self-care discourses are consistent with the neoliberal governance, which promotes the adjustment of people to the conditions that would harm them instead of changing the situation. The Gandhian ethics, however, provides a more complicated association between the individual and the system. The personal discipline was not a goal to Gandhi but a means of opposition to the unfair structures. The ethical restraint was also used in exposing and confronting the systems that survived on surplus, exploitation, and complacency (Iyer, 1973; Bilgrami, 2013). In this way, the Gandhian ethics does not free the platforms and institutions from their responsibility,

rather it insists that the individual self-restraint must work hand-in-hand with the systemic change. In the domain of digital technology, this translates to the fact that the digital detox can be viewed as a form of ethical protest against the manipulative architecture of platforms.

When this is applied to a digital context it holds that a voluntary restraint and structural reform do not tend to exclude each other but to work together. The digital detoxes as the personal practices may be interpreted as the expressions of ethical opposition that brings to focus the manipulative character of attention economies. Concurrently, the aspect of Gandhian ethics does not free the institutions of their responsibility. Contrarily, it requires that the social arrangements should be assessed in terms of their impacts on the human dignity and moral agency. It means that there should be the institutional design constraints, such as making the algorithms curation more transparent, restricting the targeted advertising, especially to the vulnerable groups, and the more robust governance tools that can make the algorithms and platforms responsible in extracting an attention. In this context, the ethical self-discipline is not adequate or unnecessary, it is an initiator that has to be followed by the political and regulatory interventions in order to resolve the structural asymmetries of power.

The applicability of such a framework has been especially high in the Indian setting, where the scale and pace of social media usage have rendered the digital operations a subject of public concern rather than a private matter. In India, where the hundreds of millions of users have the platforms fully integrated into education, politics, commerce, and everyday sociality, the digital wellbeing cannot be managed as an isolated individual concern. Its form is rather a governance problem overlapping into the youth development, rhetoric of

democracy, and culture of consumerism. The case of India also underscores the digital restraint cultural interests as the platformisation is developing in the fast parallel to an old ethical controversy on the plainness, savvy, and social accountability.

A good example of such issues entails the youth involvement. The presence of comparative evidence of its occurrence in other settings like the United States shows that a significant percentage of teenagers are online practically all the time implying a crucial change in the attention standards and socialisation trends of the generation (Pew Research Centre, 2022). Although such data cannot be directly applied to India, they provide a comparative point of reference that will help to highlight how global the issue is. The ethics of being continuously connected is thus taking the increased urgency in India, where the digital connectivity has risen in connection with the inequality in education and the fact that the authority of regulation is very uneven. The Gandhian simplicity with its focus on the voluntary restraint and moral education has provided a culturally appealing way of dealing with these challenges without any moral panic or technophobic denial.

The current study has a number of limitations that should be considered. First, the paper is both conceptual and normative; it does not form the cause-effect links between the use of social media, patterns of consumption, and ethical implications. Although the contemporary empirical evidence is relied on in putting the analysis into the context, the study does not profess to determine the efficiency of digital detoxes practices and quantify their effects. The future research could be built on this framework with an empirical research, such as the qualitative research of digital restraint practices, or the policy studies on the platform governance research.

Second, time spent and engagement metrics created by the industry differ significantly between the sources, as they represent the differences in the approaches and business interests. Even though such data comes in handy to point into the scales and trends, they must be triangulated with the independent and publicly accountable sources. This paper consequently considers the statistics of usage as indicative and not definitive and will not over-rely on any particular statistics.

Lastly, there is also an inescapable interpretive distance when attempting to apply the Gandhian idea of ethics into the modern digital context. Gandhi was specifically writing about the industrial modernity and not algorithmic capitalism, and any extension of his concepts to the digital realm will have to recognise this context difference. The analysis herein expressed is not in the spirit of saying it is one to one, it is a critical re-interpretation that draws on the ethics of Gandhi, and does not lose the sensitivity to the historical difference. These limitations make the argument stronger, not weaker, as they place the Gandhian idea in a larger context of the discussion between the classical ethical traditions and modern technological realities.

The above discussion should point to the importance of defining the digital detox as a political ethics problem. Rather than losing the Gandhian essence, fusing these concerns with the recent critiques of the attention economy, allows the paper to contribute a strategy that must acknowledge both the individual moral agency and the need to amend the structure. This bilateral focus can provide a more effective answer to the social media addiction than either of the two interventions (self-management and regulatory intervention), and this is an essential element of digital government in the twenty-first century.

CONCLUSION

This paper has posited that the digital detox as based on the Gandhian simplicity is an ethically significant solution to the problem of social media addiction and the consumption overload of the digital era. Instead of considering the digital overuse a case of personal pathology or lifestyle inefficiency, this study reshapes it as a political and ethical issue, one mediated by technology and shaped by environments designed to capture an attention and fuel desire. Having placed the digital detox within the framework of Gandhian premises of *Swaraj*, *Aparigraha*, and voluntary self-restraint, the paper demonstrates that decreasing the digital activity can be understood as an act of ethical self-rule and not a passive concession to the modern life.

The significance of this study consists in transforming the concept of digital detox into the voluntary consumption reduction. The Gandhian frame positions, moral moderation, and reason as separate forms of freedom in contrast with the dominant accounts that tend to focus on the productivity, mental optimisation or recovery efforts. Consumption is therefore redefined, as something that involves the material purchase along with attention, desire, and displaying status, which are all becoming commodified more and more in the platform capitalism. In this regard, the digital detox results in a form of resistance against the wants generated by the algorithmic systems and market-based cultures of visibility.

Beyond its contribution to the concept, the paper has a wider implication for the political ethics and digital citizenship. When the manipulative design and extraction of attention destroy the autonomy, the ethical self-rule becomes a civil and individual issue. The Gandhian simplicity suggests a vocabulary for defining the responsibility without moralism and restraint without coercion, thus adding to the current discussions

about the democratic agency and democratic governance in the digitally saturated societies. Notably, the analysis has opposed the reduction of digital wellbeing to the personal responsibility alone, and highlighted the necessity of institutional changes that would deal with the structural asymmetries of power in the platform economies.

To sum up, the idea of Gandhian simplicity must not be interpreted as a nostalgic cultural retrogression in the face of technology or romantic recovery of life before digitalization. Instead, it presents a critically pertinent moral paradigm in terms of navigating the challenges of modern digital culture. The Gandhian thought provides the avenues to rethinking a way people and communities may utilise technology without losing free will and self-respect guided by the voluntary restraint, moral agency, and self-governance. Such an ethical disposition is not only appropriate in a time characterised by a ubiquitous connection and engineered attention, but a moral necessity in the twenty-first century.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there are no financial, personal, or institutional conflicts of interest that could have influenced the research, authorship, or publication of this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

I declare that this manuscript is my original work.

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