

Are computers
making people
dependent on
technology?



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Technology comes in many forms and no aspect of our lives is untouched by some form of technology or another. Technology is defined as “ the practical application of science to commerce or industry”. Technological development into present day has been meteoric to say the least. With the advancements of nearly every aspect of human life having some tie with technology, one might start to see a synergistic relationship between humans and technology. However, while some would believe this relationship has been beneficial for us, we believe there have been detrimental effects from our growing dependence on technology.

Technology is changing our culture in such a way that we may be expected to be available and “ online” at anytime of the day or night. The technologies that started out to provide assistance in completing our daily tasks have now become a vital part of survival. This paper argues that humans have formed a detrimental symbiotic relationship with technology in its many forms. This paper will investigate the changes that technology has affected, and show that we are becoming less dependent on ourselves and more detrimentally dependent on our technological accomplishments.

The way society does business and commerce is very dependent on the reliability on technology and thus, technology failures will cause markets to stop and bring the whole economy to a halt. Vital banking transactions and services may stop and cause wastage in human resources and time. For example, even though the exact reason is still disputed, London Stock Exchange (LSE) had to stop trading on the 8th September 2008. The two main reasons were due to the network software issues that link data from many programs as explained by LSE while the other was due to buggy <https://assignbuster.com/are-computers-making-people-dependent-on-technology/>

software upgrade as speculated by external professionals. This had left traders unable to conduct any business which intriguingly could have been one of the best days for markets around the world after a bail out of two large United States mortgage lenders. Reliability of technology cannot be guaranteed at all times.

Technology crashes can also cause big companies to lose billions of dollars. An example event known as the “Flash Crash” (Nanex) on 6th May 2010 illustrates this point. Just hours before the market closed, the market plunged drastically by an average of 5.7% causing major markets around the world to go into a state of panic anticipating an imminent European financial crisis and caused great losses to companies. An investigation was done by Nanex (Nanex) stating that the crash may be due to a software design flaw in time-stamping procedures that accumulated to become a problem. Backlogged requests caused a long queue in the computer server and produced non consistent results to the requester. This further evidenced that such a dependency on technology is detrimental to the society as sudden reliability issues can create chaos all around the world or even cripple an economy.

Research shows that people consume 12 hours of media a day, on average, and compared to just five hours in 1960. Rising income in the developed world has led to an increase number of people’s ability to afford personal computers, and connecting them to the World Wide Web (WWW). Rising incidences of internet addiction in one of the worlds largest growing economies, China, illustrates our point. Of the greater than 300 million internet users in China, there are over 40 million who play online games <https://assignbuster.com/are-computers-making-people-dependent-on-technology/>

(Sheridan). That makes over 40 million young, impressionable youngsters in China online daily, playing games, mingling in chat rooms, replacing their reality with an online substitute. Communication and socializing becomes something which can be replaced by actions online. One can imagine how suggestible adolescents can find a life online to be appealing. Common adolescent angst from the real world can be replaced by a life online.

Addiction is a term describing a physical or physiological dependence on something habit forming. One may argue that this addiction, to computers in this case, may simply be a phase. However, it can be seen as a serious condition when one considers the fact that centres for dealing with this type of addiction are springing up, some of which are a sub-facility under centres that treat addictions which have long been accepted as severe, such as drugs and alcohol. If the treatment for this is similar to other addictions which are widely accepted as bad, why is this phenomenon not receiving as much attention?

Multitasking is a skill often prized in today's fast paced society. However, studies have shown that our brain 'on computers' operate differently from a natural brain. The attention of the present generation is often split between multiple information sources, and it seems vital to be able to be able to manage them all, be they instant messaging (IM), checking e-mails, reading the news, taking phone calls, and so forth. However, some scientists say that these short bursts of information, leading our attentions in many directions, are changing the way we think and operate. Research shows that people who are heavy multitaskers have problems focusing and selecting relevant information. Researchers claim that after prolonged exposure to this kind of

operation, the brain is 're-wired' and the problems associated with multitasking, such as lack of focus are then carried into the natural state of the brain. In a study published in the "Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences" (Ophira, Nass, and Wagner), a group of over 250 students were surveyed to study the effects of multitasking. The results clearly illustrated our point; that the lightest multitaskers were able to perform better than the heavy multitaskers in simple psychological tests. The tests highlighted the fact that multitaskers were less able to filter out unrelated information. Furthermore, other tests conducted showed that the heavy multitaskers continuously sought new information, instead of using older, more valuable information.

Our reliance on technology has dramatically improved communication, making it more robust, efficient and informative. In the current times, the ease of communication has allowed vast amount of data and information to be transmitted all over world instantly. For example, soldiers fighting the war in the Middle East are able to call using Voice-Over-Internet-Protocol and webcam technology to communicate with family members. This has allowed families to be assured that their loved ones are safe especially when news of casualty can be broadcasted within minutes, 24 hours a day.

However, with the current efficiency of instant messaging and social networking, more and more people are becoming overly dependent up to the point of addiction. Issues have been raised over employees spending up to 40 minutes per week on social networking sites during working hours, costing employers an estimated US\$2. 25 billion. The loss in productivity arises not only from the direct loss in the hours working but also from the <https://assignbuster.com/are-computers-making-people-dependent-on-technology/>

reduced productivity of employees from social networking sites becoming an additional distraction.

On the other hand, social networking sites are also becoming excellent resources for human resource manager as it offers revealing information of potential and current employees' social activity. Furthermore, it has been linked to another issue of society becoming dependent on social networking and posting potentially sensitive personal information such as where one is at or what one is doing. The dependence on technology for communication in the society has also meant that humans are increasingly communicating through a device; which reduced human to human first hand interaction. The decrease of interpersonal interaction in turn reduces ones interpersonal skill which is one of the most basic and fundamental way of communication (Wheeler). Interpersonal communication cannot replace communication through emails, text messages and calls as 55% of the communication is conveyed through body language. Eye contact, gestures and facial expressions and the use of tone and inflections in voice communication are often lost through modern communication technology resulting in less expressive communication or miscommunication.

In conclusion, we believe that we have presented facts which support our argument that we have grown detrimentally dependent on technology. We have explored the many facets of technological development which are firmly embedded in most aspects of modern life, and we have strived to analyze how the effects of these developments are detrimental on society. We maintain that the ramifications of our reliance on new medicine, social media, and technology in education, commerce and communication are a <https://assignbuster.com/are-computers-making-people-dependent-on-technology/>

disservice to society. While we think that these bindings are detrimental, we do not support a complete disconnection from them. We conclude with the fact that while there are indeed benefits to be had from these advancements, but we, as a society should learn to harness the useful ones, instead of allowing them all to run our lives.