

Technology and kids revision essay sample

[Technology](#)



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Introduction

There are two primary nouns in this essay- technology and kids. Even saying these words together can trigger some reactions. Some would cringe at the thought of coupling children these days with technology, and others would applaud at how easy and connected the world has become. Before exploring the purpose of this paper to argue the viability children's dependence on technology nowadays, it would be prudent to have both these verbs defined and understood clearly. Technology has been defined as the application of knowledge to the practical aims of human life or to changing and manipulating the human environment (Encyclopedia Britannica Online 2007), and in this paper it will occasionally referred to as Information and Communications Technology (ICT). For the purpose of this assignment, the focus group for the end-users of technology is kids: children as young as they can get, till about 17 years old.

To put it simply, most civilized portions of the world regards ICT to be stationary or mobile access such as computers, video games and mobile phones, not forgetting the whole new virtual world, the Internet, endless application upgrades enabling us to do more things with less human contact. Having said that, this factually driven essay will demonstrate that the world today is extremely dependent on technology, and its negative effects have been inadvertently transmitted to the younger generation. This essay will attest that technology has become a curse to children today and before our very eyes, they are becoming physically inactive and facing risks of obesity, socially challenged, more unappreciative of the human touch, losing

perspective of fantasy and reality and ultimately leading them down the path of social and communications destruction.

Technology Yesterday and Today

Going back to the days when technologies available today was unheard off: 776BC, our ancestors used pigeons to communicate. Today, of course, it may be regarded as highly romantic to some, but it is indeed unpractical and cumbersome. In continuance of the communication breakthrough came the papyrus, human messengers, fire messages, Morse code, typewriters, telephones, radio signals, televisions, computers and the list goes on and on.

We have been made to believe that, in the civilization today, if we do not conform to the speed the world is evolving, we might be lost in transition and might hamper our fight for survival. Technology has indeed created a new social space in which we communicate, work, learn, obtain information, transact, have fun, and even socialize! It has become a part of life.

Technological change, according to Zuboff in her book "In the Age of Smart Machines" is said to be "the horizon of our material world as it shapes the limiting conditions of what is possible and what is barely imaginable". (47)

The Bare Truth: Shortcomings of Technology to Kids: Mobile Phones

So, how dependent are we, really, on the fancy gadgets and communication mechanisms today? Adults have made technology a part of their lives, and this dependence has spread like cancer to their children too. The unrestricted access to technology such as the mobile phones with multiple features has increased the total amount of time children spend with it at the

expense of other activities, thereby putting them at various physical, social and emotional risks. Younger and younger children are beginning to get the opportunity to be familiar with almost all technology available to adults today.

Mobile phones. What started out as a new fad in the telephone family has now penetrated deeply into various markets transcending age, gender, nationality and income level, and has become today's crucial must-have accessory. It is now no surprise that kids, as young as four or five years old have mobile phone with stunning features simply because they do not want to be left out in creating their own social network which has stemmed from peer pressure.

From a parental perspective, children are being spoilt into believing that the phone also becomes a contingency tool for security and safety, whilst given them an assurance that their children can be reachable at any time of the day. Children a decade or two ago say goodbye to their friends after school saying " I'll see you tomorrow" and these days it's " I'll text you later, and we can chat online". Technology has become a part of the kid's life and failing to conform to it will leave them disconnected from their social group in school, and subsequently leading to isolation and demotivation.

A prominent UK mobile phone operator called O2 had conducted a study on the broadcast of mobile phones, and the results were made known to public in January 2007. It had suggested a positive outlook with close to 83% of users testifying that they were satisfied with the mobile services. Following this, Ofcom, the regulator for communication services in UK published a

paper in March 2006, examining media literacy amongst children aged 8-15 years across the country. The report also had sections that provided insights into the usage and attitudes towards TV, radio, Internet and mobile phones amongst children. It also revealed that the findings mentioned that 65% of kids had their own mobile phones with the ownership increasing sharply from ages 10-11.

These studies have also shown that children have strong emotional attachment to their mobile phones which eventually becomes a part of them. Approximately 40% of the children which took part in this study have shown that they were given their first mobile phone at the age of ten. This is indeed no surprise given that the age of 10 is about the time closing in to their commencement of high school, by which parents and guardians would want them to experience greater independence and freedom which they may have not been exposed to in the past.

The Bare Truth: Shortcomings of Technology to Kids: Internet, Software, Video and Computer Games

With the ever increasing use of technology in the workplace, many homes have computers, and people are relying on it for administrative tasks, surfing, printing, entertainment and so on. Children, having discovered the wonders of the Internet and mobile phones, are also using it as one of their primary methods of communication. Although we do marvel at the fact that kids these days are probably more technology-savvy than adults, we do wince at its possible consequences on their communication skills, and this is a whole new dimension altogether.

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It is undeniable that face-to-face communication is crucial in the development of a child's social and interpersonal skills as it educates them on how to behave when they meet people from different walks of life on a daily basis. The face-to-face relationship we have with everybody seems to be dying off. Things as simple as kindergarten enrollment, requests for baby-sitting services, purchase of lunch and dinner can be done through phone or online.

When looked from this angle, it appears that one of the major recurring themes is that the communication element of a child's progress is marked for concern due to the detrimental development of a child's communication skills.

With the whole new world of computer games and Internet, children are becoming more and more hooked and tend to lose perspective on which is real-life and which is simulation. Researchers are now beginning to study how this shift from fantasy to reality can affect children's development. A researcher who has been working on this topic, Sherry Turkle discovered that some children might be having trouble understanding the boundaries between real and the fantasy life when they get hooked to the computer games (90). The effects of this gets more horrifying if the games the kids are addicted to are of the violent nature.

Apart from sending messages via the Internet or cell phones, the younger generation is often more comfortable to express themselves to objects rather than in person. How often have we heard children saying that they are more comfortable sending a text to their mother, instead of calling to say

that he / she will be late for dinner. It is in fact not right for families to think that cell phone communication makes daily planning easier- the consequences are actually the direct opposite! Waiting till last minute to plan and decide on something, and then getting the children to call the parents for an update is a highly ineffective style of parenting, and they serve to be bad role models to the children. It would be better to mould them to be learning to plan and learn to stick to it for better time management and scheduling skills. It is after all the duty of the parents to have a well planned arrangement with their children, unlike total reliance on technology to communicate and live their lives.

Continuous encouragement to such communication method would probably lead in questionable interpersonal skills once they are thrown in the professional world, and eventually, we may start losing the human touch altogether, and the horrors of technology might end up becoming a reality.

To quote an example from a real life study, Jane Healy[1], the author of a book *Failure to Connect* detailed her experience studying the learning pattern of a six year old boy called Justin. He has been somewhat passionate about computers since the tender age of two, and has used it for his learning. During an interview, Healy asked Justin's parents if he socializes with other children, and to that his father responded that he is very much "eager to learn" and they were doing their best to facilitate his education just using the technique Justin is comfortable with.

Subsequently, Healy paid a visit to the little boy's school and in his classroom, she found that all the children were learning in pairs and we

sitting in small groups engaged in their respective activities. However, Justin was the only odd one out who was in a corner studying rock formations all by himself. Further discussion from the teacher revealed that he was more interested playing alone and was very disinterested with school activities and connecting with the other kids. The school psychologist was of the opinion that he had spend more than half his life in front of the computer, instead of interacting with people and hence, this created a precarious impact on his social skills, thus hampering his ability to make friends (Healy 171).

The time spent on online chatting has been deemed to be the number one method of socializing these days, but the safety and productiveness of the entire mechanism can indeed be questioned. Kids become virtually unprotected in the cyberspace when they sometimes, due to childishness tend to reveal too much information to a stranger under the name of socializing. We have to admit the more mature children in this category do invest their time online by actually discussing matters of substance, areas of interest and education, but what is the percentage, really, of children who do this? Unnecessary waste of such time could have been devoted to more fruitful social activities or could have been used to spend more time with their family.

To some extent, this high-tech world has also made children more ignorant to costing. Being brought up in a the mobile telephony environment, they have become very much at ease of it, that they prefer to use the mobile phone even when there is a fixed line available at home. They tend to be more oblivious to the cost factor, and are usually not extremely concerned

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with the difference in pricing of both mediums of communication.

Communication skills aside, all this innovation may have an impact on the children creative thinking capabilities as well. During an interview with children as a part of their research paper, Selwyn and Bullon had inquired on the reasons to computers being a far more entertaining tool to learn from, most of them had answered that it made their life easier since their homework can be done faster. Some had even mentioned that doing art in the computer has far more productive outcomes since the drawings from the computer has a better look than their own handiwork using hand, colors and paper (Selwyn 325). It is indeed sad that children spending so much of time with technology have limited their physical and mental activities.

Conclusion

Any new innovation comes with its good and bad. And, everything has to be in moderation. Children becoming over-dependent on cell phones are implicating their own social skills with loved ones and the society. Children using the Internet could be lured into something very dangerous, such as information theft, chatting with immoral individuals and even pornography. At the end of the day, it is the responsibility of the parents, educators and education system to teach children that technology is there to assist, not to dominate. Parents need to capitalize on the advantages of technology and take measures to actively guide their children through it.

The society and education system has to realize that technology has such crucial implications and efforts have to be made to bring the attention of this predicament to ensure that the negative implications of computers and

mobiles should be minimized in a child's environment, be it in school, at home, in the library or even in a youth centre. There is a pressing need for research to understand the social, physical and emotional impact of excessive technological dependence amongst children in school and at home. Such research should be directed to the issue of communication and it should be treated as priority if technology is going to be accepted as the backbone of the education system.

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[1] Jane Healy has been an educational psychologist and professional educator for more than thirty-five years as a classroom teacher, college professor, reading and learning specialist, and elementary school administrator.