

Effects of technology on behavior



Technology: Changing Our Behavior and Relationships for the Better or Worse?

Most of us are familiar with this scenario: A group of friends out on a lunch outing, each with their cell phones or laptops out, busily texting, catching up on the latest news, and surfing the internet instead of conversing with the people in front of them. Today, we are living in the era of digital technology where it is difficult to not be encompassed by the realm of digital world. More than two billion people use the Internet, and about five billion people are cell phone users. Technology is growing at an increasingly fast pace. It seems like everywhere we go, we are constantly surrounded by the presence of technology. In compliance with the increasingly advanced technology, our lifestyles are adjusting to keep up with it. In the increasingly technological society with new gadgets in the market, acquiring technological devices seems like the only way to fit in with the crowd. However, have you ever thought about the effects that heavy technology usage might have on your behavior and personal relationships? Overusing technology, such as cell phones and the internet, can cause us to neglect the people around us, and, ultimately, cause our behaviors and relationships to change detrimentally.

It is of no doubt that technology is pervasive throughout our lives. A 2014 study done by Nielson reveals that the average American is digitally connected for approximately 11 hours every day (in-text citation). Social networking sites, email, online games, are among the most popular interests of the digital world. Although young adults are the dominant group of internet users, a study done by the Pew Research Center reveals, " Over the past year, the biggest growth in usage was among older users. Nearly half of

Americans ages 50-64-and a quarter of those 65 and older-now use SNSs” (Clemmitt 5). For years, the heated topic of debate centers upon whether technology changes our lives for the better or worse. With the rise of smartphone users in the recent years, many have complained about being neglected by their family and friends, who are constantly engaged by social media networks, text messaging, and taking pictures of themselves. There is discussion on how the rise of social media sites invades our privacy and create a thin line between our private and public lives. As of this year, Facebook membership skyrocketed to over 1.35 billion users. Mark Zuckerberg, the creator of Facebook, argues “ People have gotten really comfortable not only sharing more information and different kinds, but more openly and with more people” (Clemmitt 3). Along with the rise of Facebook and other social networking sites, the number of people sharing more personal information about themselves, and the time they spend on these sites has escalated. A Facebook account can surely reveal a spouse’s infidelity, a suicidal teenager’s thoughts, and much more than we are aware of.

The internet is tool that we use to communicate with family and friends, as well as to publish information on mediums to a large audience. A study done by Nielson, a leading global information company whose primary objective is to seek understanding of consumer behavior, reveals that Americans spend approximately 23% of their online time on social media networks (Kessler 1). This number is on the rise every year, as more people are becoming exposed to the digital world. For many of us, it is extremely difficult to ignore the impulse to check our cell phones for a new update or an incoming text

message. Some experts worry that soon social media will dominate face-to-face interaction, resulting in increased narcissism, decreased relationship quality, and lead to serious issues like cyberbullying.

Many analysts argue that technology pushes our society to become increasingly impersonal and causes people to spend less time having face-to-face interaction. Thanks to technology, our society is relying more and more on text messaging, video chatting, and social media sites as means of communication. A survey conducted to find the preferred modes of communication discovered that people born between 1990 to 1999 prefer texting and social networking above all other forms of communication. For this generation, face-to-face interaction is the least preferred form of communication. In contrast, all of the generational groups born between 1940 and 1989 chose face-to-face interaction as their most preferred form of communication, and none of these groups listed social networking as a mode of communication. (Clemmitt 2). Today, many people forgo face-to-face conversation in favor of digital communication because it encourages more brevity and openness. Katie E. Davis, a professor at the University of Washington, asserts, “ It feels much safer to broach uncomfortable subjects when you don’t have to look someone in the eye” (Clemmitt 5). In other words, digital communication allows us to delve into topics that we are normally uncomfortable conversing.

However, there are several issues that arise when technology is used as the primary mode of communication. First and foremost, technology doesn’t always enable people to express their thoughts and emotions without being misunderstood. When people communicate by text messaging or through

social media sites, several nonverbal communication cues, such as body language, tone of voice, and body gestures are unavailable. As a result, it is easy to misinterpret an unintended message. Furthermore, it is often difficult to interpret face-to-face conversations that do take place without an adequate understanding of these cues.

Some people argue that technology is a valuable asset to people who have trouble having face-to-face interaction with others, such as those that suffer from autism or psychological disorders. They maintain that these people find solace in the digital world, as well as a place where they can socialize without being ostracized. However, I beg to differ. Social media sites create the illusion of companionship, and does nothing to help these people develop proper social skills. Many of these people suffer from depression and loneliness in the first place, and by solely interacting with others online rather than in real life, these problems will worsen and they will be further detached from society.

Another crucial aspect of technology is that it affects our attention span, thus causing us to become ignorant of our priorities. Several studies and researchers point out that students have difficulty focusing in class and adults have trouble concentrating at work when their cell phones are nearby. Michael Suman, a professor at the University of Southern California, asserts that even with their phones off, students are unable to fully concentrate on their education because they are under the influence of technology.

Technology is one of the leading influences in our relationships with our families and friends. By delging into our personal lives, technology changes

how we interact with our loved ones. Although the digital world can be an asset in many aspects, it can also destroy relationships and trust. Steve Tucker, a relationship counselor, claims that many of his clients have come to him after they discover a racy text message, exposing their partner's infidelity. Some of these affairs begin in online chatrooms, which proceed to flirtatious text messages. He insists " People have actually jumped out of a marriage and filed for divorce and never met the person who's the new object of their romantic interest" (Newsome 3). Although most of these affairs are

not even sexual, they ruin the arguably most important aspect of a relationship, trust. In addition to infidelity, online games and pornography are equally distracting and detrimental to establishing healthy relationships. A lot of people are so enamored with online video games that they spend hours in front of their computer screen, forsaking their jobs, education, and relationships.

However, it is critical to note that technology has also opened the doors to happiness for many couples, who have found love online. Although this is true, there are several possible issues that arise, such as the possibility of identity fraud when finding a romantic partner online.

Furthermore, in some incidences, a suicidal individual's life is saved when someone reports their provoking thoughts and messages. Yet, it is often difficult to tell whether the person is authentic, or just trying to seek attention.

Furthermore, technology also impairs relationships with its distractions and interferences. Technology has made it difficult for us to ignore the impulse to check for updates. A study completed in 2011 discovered, “ Smartphone users are developing checking habits-recurring 30-second glances at social media such as Facebook- as often as every 10 minutes” (Clemmitt 5).

Consequently, it makes us oblivious of others around us. Clifford Nass, a professor at Stanford University, states, “ Today, people think it’s okay to text in the middle of dinner, at a meeting, in class, wherever” (Greengard 18). As a result of the society that is becoming more interdependent on technology, it is now not unusual to see a father more intent on texting at his son’s football game, rather than on watching his son play. Accordingly, family members spend less quality time with each other when they succumb to the addiction of heavy technology usage. For instance, in a technology dominated household, the father might spend all his time watching television, the mother could spend hours shopping for the latest fashion trends, and the children may perhaps endlessly play online video games.

Although some people claim that technology connects family and friends across the globe, many studies have pointed that even if our loved ones are around us, we turn a blind eye and retreat to our technological devices.

Moreover, technology gives us the delusion of Technology gives us the illusion of intimacy.

“ Constant connectivity offers the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship.”

Two educators at the University of Essex, Andrew K. Przybylski and Netta Weinstein, conducted an experiment that demonstrated cell phones do indeed affect relationship quality. The study divided the experimenters into two groups, one with their cell phones with them, and the other without. The participants were told to have a conversation. At the end of the experiment, the group with their cell phones nearby reported that they experienced a conversation with less empathy. which demonstrated that cell phones detrimentally affect relationship quality.

Paragraph: Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is one of the few fundamental issues that arise from heavy technology usage. By definition, cyberbullying is the use of technology to threaten, defame, or harm someone. Every year, thousands of lives are claimed due to cyberbullying. According to a national study conducted by Jaana Juvonen, a psychology professor at the University of California at Los Angeles, “ More than 70 percent of heavy Internet users ages 12 through 17 — mostly girls — said they had experienced at least one incident of online intimidation via e-mail, cell phones, chat rooms and other electronic media in the previous year” (Billitteri2). Although many cases are moderately harmless, some cases leave long-term effects.

A study done by Justin W. Patchin, a professor at the University of Wisconsin, reports “ Between 10 and 30 percent of children and teenagers report having been on one side or the other of an online bullying incident at some point” (Clemmitt 5).

Works Cited

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