Communication technology: for better or worse

Technology

Technology is a double-sided coin. The growth of internet has created many beneficial and profitable prospects with the ability to cut the work load, time, and consumption of money. While the internet has become the bases of lifestyle, its increasing influence has created a stir in many research organizations as they theorize its side effects on today's technology obsessed population. The growth of communication technology has led to the increase of various psychological issues that is having adverse effects on a global scale.

The increase in the use of these easily accessible technologies have resulted in the rise of addiction, mental depression, loneliness and a growing debate between actual relationships versus virtual relationships. This expository essay investigates and further analyzes the researches that deal with these issues in order to have a better understanding of the adverse affects of communication technologies. Communication technology includes all aspects of media and social networking websites which allow virtual sharing of ideas.

The latest leading social networking websites are Facebook and Twitter which have a tremendous impact on people, mainly teenagers, as they get obsessed and unknowingly suffer from addiction. Addiction is anything that hinders normal thoughts and functioning as one is forced to continually reserve the mental processes to just one particular habit. Mental depression and loneliness are closely linked to each other as they both attack the thoughts as one feels dejected and reserves them to just themselves rather than maintaining healthy relationships with people around them.

This is also a common consequence of the increasing influence of communication technology as it creates an imbalance between actual-real

life relationships and virtual-online relationships. One of the many important contributions of technology is the rapid and efficient method of communication between people from any parts of the world. The use of e-mail, various chat rooms, and mobile phones are a great way of bringing people virtually closer to each other.

It results in large groups and communities to be more insightful about the world and results in decreasing loneliness in society. It also has the potential to decrease the work input as, for example, the invention of communicating machines or online interactions to buy and sell as " It is faster and more efficient" and one does not have to " wait in line with the other customers who are lined up alongside the conveyor belt" (Marche, 8). The new innovations have developed to the point where they are used to even escape the general trend of uncomfortable social interactions.

Thus with these inventions, technology has the capability to create virtual interactions between distinct people, make daily lives easier as well as create a stress free lifestyle. Despite all these benefits offered by technology, it is important to point out the negative aspects that are associated with it. The vast research in the field of communication technology provides facts that give a greater analysis of the points made so far. The increase in the new way of virtual interactions has had a great impact on how people interact with each other in reality.

After an in depth analysis, it is concluded that loneliness has been rising drastically over a couple of years. As mentioned above, technology has been a great help in decreasing the work load, but it has also lead to the decrease in social interaction. This has been linked to loneliness as " it is clear that

social interaction matters" and as " we meet fewer people [and] gather less[, the] bonds [become] less meaningful and less easy" (Marche, 3).

Today's generation is leading towards an era where everything functions with the aid of machines which is leading to increase in interaction with machines but decrease in actual face-to-face talks. Face-to-face interaction is necessary and just as vital for it incorporates emotional attachments strengthening the bonds between individuals. The internet has the ability to provide great information through virtual communications with other people on chat sites, Facebook, or Twitter but it is also leading the generation towards a structural breakdown of actual relations in the society.

The research conducted on these grounds demonstrate how there is a " contradiction between an increased opportunity to connect and a lack of human contact, called the Internet Paradox" (Marche, 5) which proves how the greater use of these technologies is closely associated with the decline in the communication between actual familial relations and thus increasing both depression as well as loneliness. This demonstrates the true colours of virtual interactions using technology as it breaks down the well established social structure of our society. The great rise in virtual relationships has proved to be a major source of mental depression.

Social support plays a very vital role in maintaining proper mental health. Mobile phones and personal communication devices result in creating distances in relationship as people are getting farther away from reality and are jolted towards the virtual periphery. In his article, See you think I'm not very interesting, the author mockingly points this out as he describes his experience at a dinner table. He says, " It provides a convenient way to let

people know they are not very interesting" (Feschuk, 1) as he makes a very important point that people are losing their touch with reality.

Actual friends and family members are being ignored and greater attention is given to virtual relationships. " The fear that Facebook [and other social networking sites] are interfering with our real friendships, distancing us from each other, making us lonelier; and that social networking might be spreading the very isolation" (Marche, 2) further strengthens the argument of Virtual versus Actual relationships as it demonstrates that the increase in efforts people put in maintaining virtual relationships is at the expense of sacrificing their time for actual bonds.

This lack of efforts to maintain actual relationships further results in the creation of gaps and ultimately leads to loneliness and depression. Depression due to virtual relationships can be further explained by using the actress, Yvette Vickers' example as she suffered through similar experiences. The loss of actual relationships only to maintain virtual relationships can sometimes lead to tragic events due to the lack of a true bond between people.

The fact that " Vickers had made calls not to friends or family but to distant fans who had found her through fan conventions and Internet sites" (Marche, 1) demonstrates her act of cutting of actual relationships and the heights of her loneliness. Vickers' experience proves that the more detached one is with reality, the greater are the chances of becoming lonelier. Therefore, emotional support by friends and family members is important to protect one's self against stressful life events linked to depression and social isolation which have been associated with the risk of depression.

The above points play a significant role in identifying the risks and side effects that are associated with the increase in the affiliation with communication technologies. The greater the use of these technologies, especially if not used properly, the greater is the chance of becoming lonely and suffering through depression. Although there are many effective and beneficial uses of technology, it is very important to understand both the limitations to its use as well as its adverse effects. Technology is designed and operated by humans, containing it is very important in order to not have technology operate humans.