Influence of Technology by Generation

Owen Tatlonghari

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Technology, specifically social media, has influenced and altered society and the lives of many throughout recent years. Although its introduction is fairly new, its effects were seen almost immediately shifting the human way of life for both the better and the worst. The mobile cell phone and similar products have made advances in methods of communication, learning, entertainment, consumption, etc. supporting a better way of life for individuals. They have done this through apps of connectivity and networking that support a more efficient way of life. However, along with this came some negative effects as well that many individuals often are unaware of. As stated before, the humane way of life has shifted to robotic and automated lifestyles welcomed and adopted by most. It affects each generation of individuals in different ways, all of which being very drastic. This paper will be discussing the effects of these technologies on the demographics of children, adolescents, and adults and will be pertaining to the topics of attraction, ubiquity, and versatility in individual’s lives.

When addressing the effects of technologies on children today, it is easy to notice the immediate benefits. Technologies most involved with children today include handheld mobile devices used by both parents and children. Second to it happens to be television which is no big surprise. The benefits that come with these innovations happen to be the exceptional learning opportunities coming from educational apps. Apps on these handheld devices allow for children to have a fun time, whilst engaging in learning experiences almost anywhere they go on demand. It allows for the development of cognitive and language skills through online social interaction and communication. Another benefit is its easily accessible entertainment through both television and handheld devices. These devices can access television, music, and games on demand with relatively no effort. It is able to keep children amused while parents can relax. The new handheld mobile devices are able to allow for engaged learning, entertainment, and relaxation. With this being said, doctors, teachers, and professionals have begun to see possible drawbacks stemming from these devices that should be talked about as well.

Most disadvantages with these technologies pertaining to children happen to come from theories pertaining to early addiction leading to long lasting effects. Many believe that such amounts of exposure to devices creates an absence of physical activity and a strong attachment to said devices. The exposure often begins with parents who are also strongly attached to their devices. They see greatness within the technology and marvel at how effective the technology is at engaging with a child. This is concerning, however, because often times the sheer amount of exposure to the technology is overlooked. Young states, “However, early signs of problematic interactive media use can go unnoticed or be seen as annoying rather than pathology requiring care—until the young person is impaired severely enough to have physical problems, academic failure, or social dysfunction,” in her novel discussing internet addiction within the young population.[[1]](#footnote-1) Many believe the exposure is beginning to lead to long term effects in social, attention, and critical thinking situations. These children who are given handheld devices often don’t socialize the way children have been doing for all of history, and therefore don’t learn socialization skills for later in life. Screen time for the most part is independent, prohibiting children from social interaction. Not only does it affect child-to-child interaction, but child-to-parent interaction. As said before, many of the parents willing to allow their children such screen time are often attached themselves. This causes issues regarding the child development that usually would come from child-to-parent interaction. This can be seen in a cross-sectional survey given to parents and children regarding screen time in families with one or more children. A conclusion stated, “It is well-established that quality parent-child interactions are the foundation to support healthy development by encouraging serve-and-return, parental responsiveness, and sensitivity.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Because of the potential known and unknown risks involved with excess screen time, it is important for parents to understand and acknowledge how their behaviors may be affecting their children. Not only does it prohibit physical activity in some circumstances, but psychological factors occur as well that often times grow larger and more apparent in teenagers.

The cell phone and social media have revolutionized the lives of adolescent teenagers worldwide. The functions of these technologies have created a new world of connectivity widespread across demographics, beginning with the adolescents. Mobile phones have transformed the way teenagers can communicate, access information, and interact in the world. It has allowed for an online life that is both connected to the real world and entirely separate. It has made communication and socialization across distances easy and effortless. Along with this comes an entryway to creative expression, encouraged through the many collaborative options. Although this technology may seem astonishing at a glance, in a similar fashion to children, its captivating versatility creates many issues ignored by many.

Stemming from an early age, adolescents are continuing to experience addictive symptoms regarding their devices due to their obsession of them. The device’s natures of attraction and accessibility create a constant compulsion to consume the device. Along with this comes a frequent phenomenon involving adolescents and their fear of missing out. It creates a feeling to need to remain on social media because of the fear of disconnection. The compulsions alter the brain’s reward system creating very addictive lifestyles. An academic article discussing social media addiction among student millennials stated, “These “dependents” cited that their overuse of the internet caused problems consistent with other established addictions, such as alcoholism and gambling. The problems experienced by dependents were classified into five categories, namely, academic, relationship, financial, occupational and physical.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Because this generation is the one that has been exposed to technology for the largest proportion of their lives, its impact correlates in magnitude completely. It isn’t an understatement to say that it has the power to completely influence and control one’s life which is another issue regarding technology and social media.

The online world that mobile phones have created may be great for communication and socializing, however, it can often contribute to severe mental illnesses as well. Because people give so much power to their online image, they sometimes value the internet over their real life. A cross-sectional study researching social media addiction states, “Put simply, people are found to be increasingly dependent on social media platforms and online networking sites to construct their social identities; as opposed to focusing on their identity in person, they instead turn to building and improving their identities online.”[[4]](#footnote-4) When this happens, it often creates an alternate reality that is often artificial and unrealistic. This reality is most of the time sought after by those who are exposed by it creating a desire that is impossible to achieve. When constantly comparing oneself to others, poor mental health is developed due to unrealistic standards. In a scholarly article discussing the positive and negative links between social media and depression, the author makes the claim, “Therefore, depressed adolescents with less life satisfaction may be more prone to negative online social comparisons and this may further worsen their life satisfaction even as these comparisons are unlikely to be based on reality,” based on several other research surveys.[[5]](#footnote-5) This experience involved in social media creates depressive symptoms that have been infecting the generation of adolescents for years now. It is a pressing issue that only seems to get worse and worse. While much of technology in adolescents lives’ pertains to their social network throughout life, for adults it seems to involve more of their work life rather their social life.

With adults, the addition of technology greatly changes the work life atmosphere, while also modifying the nature of many tasks. The introduction of new innovational technologies allows for more intuitive jobs and overall greater efficiency in many fields. By revolutionizing the work place with these different technologies, processes become easier and quicker in turn optimizing efficiency. Not only is the workplace changed by technology, but at home work life is as well. With the networking and connectivity, mentioned before, that mobile phones can enable comes ease of communication between boss and worker. It makes planning and scheduling easier and allows a connection between workers in the office and at home. In a similar fashion, workers can use this connectivity and perform the same quantity of work at home with a simple laptop computer. This process was seen heavily during the Covid-19 pandemic and continues to be seen today. While the advantages of technologies in the workplace have proven to be immense, the negatives have become present across adults as well.

As mentioned before, the enhancing of technology in the workplace has changed the environment for workers entirely. While efficiency is great for optimizing tools and resources, it has begun inflicting a toll on many workers. The innovation of jobs across fields is usually performed through machines and automation of labor. The automation of labor may ensue great efficiency, however, it leaves little satisfaction for the worker itself. For example, McDonald’s uses a standardized process requiring different amounts of technology in order to create a consistent product every time. While this process may be highly rational, efficient, and consistent, workers often become robotic and machinelike, which in turn affects the daily life of said workers. It creates a mundane lifestyle with little joy and satisfaction effecting the quality of life of many. Along with this comes the anxiety that machines will soon replace workers in different fields. Because of this anxiety, adults take on the mindset that they are competing with machinery leading to high stress and negative health outcomes. In a study discussing the health risks involved with automation it is said, “that job insecurity associated with automation risk could result in greater job demands, lower pay, and/or layoffs, resulting in more immediate job-related stress and strain and long-term negative physical health outcomes.”[[6]](#footnote-6) This stress and anxiety that comes from the introduction of advanced technologies affects the lives of many adults in the workforces today. On top of the automations of work life comes the change in connectivity brought about by the use of mobile phones and laptops.

As stated before, mobile phones and laptops allow for work life to enter the home of many today. Because of the connectivity it allows for bosses and workers, the option of working at home becomes available. While this may seem great at first, in some cases, it can negatively impact an individual entirely. Many believe that because workers are so accessible by their bosses, the constant need for performance becomes expected. When work life invades an individual’s homelife, stress becomes constant, affecting many workers and bosses today. When an individual is not able to distinguish between personal time and work time, effects on the individual take place leading to exhaust and burnout. In a study on the predictors of employee burnout it is stated that, “When confronted with work intensification, employees need to mobilize extra mental and physical effort, which could lead to feelings of exhaustion and, therefore, to higher levels of burnout and lower levels of work engagement.”[[7]](#footnote-7) With both the automation of work and the constant connection to it comes greater productivity and intensity. The technologies today may allow for optimal efficiency and production, however, often lack in terms of worker well-being. It is an issue experienced by adults all over the world which is backed up by a global study finding 85% of people dissatisfied with their jobs.

The technologies today affect each generation in fascinating ways. Technologies such as handheld tablets, mobile cell phones, work machinery, etc. all work to further individual, communal, and societal growth in areas spanning from education, to socialization, to the workplace environment. Although it may further progress of society in terms of efficiency and accessibility tremendously, there are also several negative factors to be aware of as well when accepting these technologies. Technologies have the potential to provide the same amount of loss as they do opportunity. When assessing technology, it is important to study how it can be seen affecting each existing generation as they are the first to live with such constant exposure to it. In the world we live in today, technology proves to assist in educating and entertaining children, however, it can also lead to early addiction and attention issues. Adolescents are able to experience an entirely different world with access to information and connectivity, however, experience intense obsession and mental health issues stemming from unrealistic comparison. Adults live in the most efficient era of work, however, have the burden of adapting to technology as it comes in areas never seen before. While the advantages of technology in society are clearly extraordinary, an understanding of the risks is an important part of implementing it into society.

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