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### Impacts of Smartphones on Young People

Technology and society are very much interconnected in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. When was the last time you were together with a group of young people who owned smartphones and not a single moment was interrupted by checking their smartphone, sending texts, googling some information, taking pictures, uploading videos and photos to Facebook, Instagram, Vine or other social media? In this contemporary world, smartphones are playing an imperative role in people's lives. A smartphone can keep people connected with the world at their fingertips. Millions of people around the world are carrying around smartphones that keep them constantly connected to the internet. In fact, "56% of American adults are now owners of smartphones" (Smith). It has become very common to walk down a busy city street and see people glued to their smartphone. Out of 78% of teenagers who have cell phones, 47% of them own smartphones (Madden et al.). People are now very fond of smartphones due to the many advantages that they offer. One can have increased connectivity, immediate access to data and information, play games and do office work with this hand-held device. Smartphones are altering the world in a remarkable manner by becoming an essential commodity for young people and drastically providing options such as having a personal assistance that can help in almost all demands. Smartphones gained popularity recently; however they already have a huge influence on human behavior. For instance, people are giving their smartphones more attention than their spouses which may create cracks in their relationship (qtd. in "Could texting ruin your

RELATIONSHIP?”). Furthermore, teenagers are checking their smartphones at every meal regardless of whom they are dining with. Surveys have shown that 33% of adults that own smartphones use their smartphones while dining or on dinner dates (Kelly). Young people have changed on how they see and value their smartphones that they have become so attached to their devices plus the features that they offer that they sleep with them under their pillows. Notably, losing their smartphone is far more dramatic than anything else. It should be considered that it is due to smartphone’s internet compatibility and application features that people now have boundless access to their families, friends, photos, videos, games, music, news, and basically all knowledge accumulated by humankind everywhere they go. Imagine the time before the excessive use of smartphones; it was impossible to shop online without a PC or laptop but now with the support of smartphones, shopping online is as easy as making a phone call. Smartphones are changing the way people shop and bank. Some people have changed their shopping, financial and payment behavior as a result of owning a smartphone and these people are called "Smartphonatics" (Mcgarvey). These reasons show how smartphones have become an important device which people cannot leave home without. There are many people with smartphones who are using their device for leading productive lives, bettering the quality of their life (Ferren).

Smartphones have impacted people in the way they communicate, function in their daily lives, operate and engage in problems. They have presented or provided many applications that can execute one’s needs and interests. These applications can assist in every manner needed which will help for productivity, effective time usage and energy efficiency. Smartphones have brought a whole new meaning to people’s lives by providing many application that will assist the people using smartphones to perform or execute various tasks at the same time. Smartphones encourage doing multiple things at once, which is not physiologically healthy because one

cannot do multitude of tasks at one time since multitasking lessens one's ability to focus on what is relevant (Croteau, Lane). Researches have shown that 94% of people who own smartphones were multitasking on their phones simultaneously watching TV, exchanging email, sending IMs, texting, talking or social networking (qtd. Fox). People can shop using their smartphone and at the same time send e-mails, photos, texts to a family members while listening to the news. Since people have busy lives due to school, jobs and personal issues, they prefer these devices to help them and smartphones are there to do that. However getting all the demands one needs from a particular device is what leads the person to addiction or dependency on the device which is a negative impact of owning a smartphone.

Smartphones have their advantages and disadvantages towards those using them. The advantages that smartphones give are enormous and that is what makes people to be impacted. In fact, smartphones are considered as devices that have special features to perform tremendous operations. The special features of smartphone are having a well-built operating system, applications and being easy portable. From the many advantages of smartphones increased, fast and easy communication, offering many search tools and various entertainment options are the most that stand out. Many smartphone applications that are available today do impact the people who take advantage of them.

Smartphones do so many things but one of the most important aspects of their usefulness is the fact that they keep people connected. Smartphones give fast, easy and increased communication by integrating contact information and providing applications that can be easily accessed and allow people to stay in touch with each other. Texting, social networking, sending and receiving e-mails remain popular to connecting people (Duggan). A research discovered that young people from the ages of 18 to 24 exchange an average of 109.5 messages per day that

totals to more than 3,200 texts per month. The typical phone owners in this age group sends or receives 50 messages per day which sums up to 1500 messages per month (Smith). The survey in the research has shown that young adults are the most avid texters by a wide range. With huge powerful applications, smartphones allow their users to stay in touch with each other in their work and extend their social connection in many ways. Smartphones offer limitless access to news, social networks, games, entertainment, e-mails, media management, core functionality and utility applications, business, productivity and lifestyle applications. Smartphones give access to a wide range of social networks with each one having one or more dedicated applications. Social networks like Facebook and Twitter have a number of dedicated applications that let people read, post, share, like and follow from anywhere at any time. “29% of all teens exchange messages daily through social network sites” (Lenhart). Smartphones have enabled users to keep connected to anyone at anytime from anywhere. There are also applications that provide people more direct communication allowing to interact by voice, instant messaging and video conferencing which help people address their ideas, opinions and issues in an immediate and reliable way. “39% of teens make and receive voice calls on their mobile phones every day” (Lenhart). Moreover, many researches have proven that teens prefer to express their ideas and thoughts through text rather than voice calling.

Not only do smartphones connect people, with myriad of application can receive immediate information about local and global events by bringing news, stock and weather updates which will help the person to be up-to-date. Research has shown that young people feel that it is easier today than five years ago to keep up with information and the world that they live in (Purcell et al.). Smartphones can also serve live TV by the help of applications such as netTV that offer a selection of programs from around the world (Rothman). In addition, there are

different game applications on smartphones that are so diverse that the user will never run out of choices (Jones). Some of the game categories that smartphones offer from the simplest to the most complicated ones are action, puzzle, casual, gambling, sports and racing which help people for amusement. Smartphones can also be used to store music, books, photos and video clips and also play music, view and open documents which helps people to have access to their files whenever and wherever. 48% of adults that own smartphones listen to music using their smartphones (Duggan). Smartphones have the same advantages as computers, making smartphones more preferable and influential due to their size and efficiency.

The efficiency of smartphones are related with the use of the applications they offer. There are a number of applications that assist people to a particular lifestyle or a particular human activity. These applications assist people with health and fitness. There are applications that support while training, exercising or practicing a sport. As a matter of fact, there are applications that can do one's shopping and help in travelling by booking and checking flight.

Smartphones have positive effects on the way people combine work and personal life. "Being able to access e-mail via a smartphone means that it is possible to work from home, while on the move, and generally work more flexibly"(qtd. Urquhart). In offices, smartphones offer scanning applications that can help people to scan a receipt for tax purposes, a business card for work, a barcode for a price check, or a check to be deposited (Rothman). There are applications for storing credit card information and banking information that help people to have access of their money in case of need or emergency. 35% of adult smartphone owners bank using their phones (Fox). A user can transfer and check his bank deposit straight from a smartphone.

In business, smartphones are used for many purposes but the one that stands out strong is commercial purpose. A company can have its own application to reach out to its customer and

advertise its products which helps both the company and the customer to have a better socioeconomic relation which makes the whole system go much easier and help provide reachable way for both parties. “In most cases people had acquired smartphones to help them keep on top of their work” (qtd. in Collins). Many businessmen prefer to have a smartphone because it allows them to keep track with their business clients, checking e-mail, texting or surfing the internet while they are on the road. Smartphone’s mobility lets people to take advantage of the features when even the user only has a short amount of time to spare (Jones). Out of 56% that own smartphones, 52% of the owners use to send and receive e-mails on their smartphones (Duggan, Smith). Besides for communication, they use their smartphones to keep their program scheduled and organized because smartphones can function as personal organizers with electronic diaries and automatic reminders. Smartphone also has a GPS for navigation which can be used to locate places. Smartphones can even measure how high the ceiling is (Rothman). Researches clearly shows that smartphones have definitely been advantageous in people’s lives in many ways.

Like many other devices, smartphones also have their own negative impacts. People are well aware of cell phone radiation and its effect, but when it comes to smartphones people seem to forget all about the radiation; so much so some people take their smartphones to their bed and find themselves plugged in while they should be dozing off. As a result, the brain finds it hard to relax when all this information being fed and this is why smartphones are linked to many sleeping problems. Many scientific studies have examined that smartphones are disrupting people’s sleep by exposing them to lights that can interfere with melatonin which is a hormone that helps control the natural sleep-wake cycle (Sharon). People nowadays are texting while they are asleep and walking up to a text they don’t remember sending which is called sleep texting

(Haupt). An increasing number of smartphone owners are texting in their sleep and for people who communicate through text the impact on sleep quality is noticeable (“Don’t Remember Sending That Text? You Might Have Been Asleep”).

Another negative impact that people don’t notice is that the cost of smartphones when purchased and also damaged are too expensive, not mentioning also some applications require money to be downloaded and used. This huge amount of money invested on smartphones can cause a huge economic problem or even crisis to a person who want to own a smartphone desperately because of its benefits and different features. A survey that was conducted claims that 93% of application downloaders were willing to pay for the games and only 76 percent of downloaders are willing to pay for news apps (“Play before work games most popular mobile app”). The survey gave a realization that people are squandering their money on games and emptying their pockets for frivolous things. This, beyond a doubt, shows that people favor to use their smartphones for recreation rather than work and productivity.

Smartphones are also interfering with student’s study habits. Students would rather keep their hands glued to their phones than holding a book. Instead of conducting useful and helpful materials for their study, they are too occupied taking pictures of themselves and sharing it on social media. Recent study linked students who constantly use their phones to result in a lower GPA and unhappiness (LaBossiere). Another problem noticed in student’s life is texting and other smartphone-related distractions that have become a serious issue for failure. Accessing social media constantly and texting non-stop results in a dangerous cycle where students easily use their smartphones for entertainment and stimulation, but this need for instant gratification deflates their motivation to focus, to participate, to engage, to wonder, to invest of themselves, to inspire and be inspired which leads to dumbing the individual (Cheung).

Smartphones may be smart, but the constant use of smartphone could be dumbing a person who is using it constantly. Back before smartphones, people would use their mind to try and solve problems or answer a question. Today, smartphones are providing everything to the user. As a result, people developed the need to turn to their smartphone for every single question, instead of taking the time to think and answer for themselves. People should use their own brain to solve problems rather than having to develop a preference to use the applications on their smartphone.

Smartphones have also changed the way that people interact with each other. They allow their users to be in a conversation without showing their personal expressions. It has changed society's norms. Some people don't even know what should be said on texts and what shouldn't. People are using texting to tell each other secrets, bad news, apologies, condolences and even marriage proposals, divorces and embarrassing things through text. Smartphones have truly changed the way people communicate which made texting, one of the most preferable and primary way of communication these days because smartphones provide many application that will assist people to even text for free with the help of the internet and an application (Woolford, Blake and Clark). This type of communication may lead to many problems such as relationship problems and not being able to express one's self verbally. "22% of teens use instant messaging daily to talk to others and 63% say that they use text to communicate with others every day" (Lenhart). A survey conducted confirms that 7% to 20% of teenagers have sexted using their smartphones which leads to an understanding that smartphones give the opportunity for teenagers to engage themselves in these kind of activities while they shouldn't (Gilkerson). As a consequence, contact with voice call is being replaced by multimedia messages that smartphone applications offer. Accordingly, people are on the way of losing face-to-face contact or even



voice contact. Not only could this change the way that people contact each other, but smartphones also lead people to socially isolate themselves from the outside world. Smartphone users are often observed as being preoccupied with sending texts and e-mails, playing games, web searching, social networking and so on that they end up not paying attention to their physical surroundings and people and conversations that are taking place around them.

Although, many people love being able to stay reachable and connected through e-mails, texts and calls through their smartphones, it is the same constant availability that can lead to major stress problems. Every time a phone rings or alerts a new message they feel a slight tingle of anxiety. This is especially true for people with high stress jobs (Irvine). New researches have also found that college freshmen experience more interpersonal stress that was associated with higher levels of texting if they are overly reliant on their phone (Jacobs and Standard). Another issue with people chatting or updating their Facebook status or Twitter account with their smartphone is the development of the habit of shortening words which lead to grammar problems. Another disadvantage of smartphones that troubles most teenagers and adults is the risk of identity theft and hacked accounts. "Four in ten (40%) smartphone users in the United States agree that they don't understand cyber security well enough to know how to protect themselves." (qtd. in "Smartphone users still unaware of identity theft threats") These threats are often connected with accessing pornography.

Additional negative impact that smartphones impose on young people is the access of pornography at any given time in any given place since smartphones are able to access the internet either through Wi-Fi or data package. Having constant access to pornography is considered harmful both physiological and mentally. Pornography accessed from the phone can

result the owner to many problems also including identity theft by taking personal information that are already in the smartphone.

The most observed negative impact of smartphones is addiction, or developing a huge attachment or dependency toward using smartphones. Smartphones enable people to stay more connected than ever but the addiction continues to grow (Kelly). Smartphone addiction is a serious issue that needs serious attention. A smartphone addict is someone who checks for messages every five minutes, a person who finds it necessary to get up in the middle of the night or early in the morning to check for messages or a person that uses smartphone in inappropriate places or where it is unnecessary to use such as in churches, bathrooms, and while also dining. For some people all these acts might be normal or non-harmful activities but it is these same acts that interfere with a person's well-being and the well-being of society. Some people are so addicted to their smartphone that they are even disconnected from the people in their lives. Smartphones limit how humans interact by reducing the development of interpersonal closeness and trust and leading people to feel less empathy and understanding from their partners (qtd. in Suddes). People who are dependent on their smartphones do every activity on their smartphone and they constantly check it every single second. Many smartphone users are addicted to the features of their smartphones that they hear phantom text message vibrations when there is no message received (qtd. in Collins). Teenagers are alertly watching their smartphones. Due to this most schools forbid students the use phones in the school compound but some teenagers who can't live a day without their smartphones sneak their smartphones in any way to text or to do whatever they do on their device. This leads the students to suspension if ever caught and it also disrupts the learning process.

The problem of being addicted to smartphones is so severe that some researchers have unveiled that most people owning smartphones in America take their smartphones to the bathroom to do different tasks such as texting, social networking and even talking on the phone during their stay in the bathroom (Mello Jr). From the findings of the research texting was the most popular smartphone related bathroom activity (Kelly). Other shocking places people use their smartphones are at church or a place of worship (19%), in the shower (12%), and 55% admitted texting while driving (Kelly). This survey has shown that people are very addicted to their smartphones that they use even in inappropriate places. The issues of being dependent or addicted on smartphones need to be recognized and people need to take control of their lives.

Briefly, smartphones have impacts on people's lives both positively and negatively. From the information provided it can be conclude that smartphones are definitely changing the society in both productive and unproductive ways. On the positive side, smartphones assist on productivity, effective time usage and energy efficiency. On the negative side, they are changing the norms of society in a wrong way. The more one connects to his or her smartphone the more he or she disconnects from the real world. The development of being on a smartphone 24/7 shows that the device has impacted people's lives in a deeper level. People need to wake up and realize what is going on and need to take control because smartphones as any other technological products, will always have issues, complications, troubles, and challenges that demand to be labeled. More importantly, people need to use smartphone features to their benefit. But again, you observe people that are so addicted that they abuse the use of their smartphone which leads them in harm's way. As long as people are using smartphones constantly, they grant their device to impact their lives both positively and negatively. It mostly comes to an individual's liability to make the best his or her device and take control of the life he or she leads.

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