Technology Addiction – Too Connected?

Sidney R. Sanders

Yan Wu – CS 3000

November 24, 2019

Abstract

In recent times technology is moving so quickly that in order for some to stay up to date or ‘feel’ up to date is to have a phone on their person all day long. We can see that people are becoming more reliant on technology and becoming worse at differentiating between reality and what is on our screens. Technology is addicting. There is always something new to see or play. The new generation is becoming increasingly addicted to technology where research has started seeing a similarity from technology usage to drug usage. In this paper issues around technology addiction will be discussed and will cover risks, consequences, and prevention techniques. Nick Siclair will also give an insight to effects in the professional work environment.

Technology Addiction – Too Connected?

Modern technology is evolving faster than we truly understand. What we need to know is what it is, how did it start, what is the cause, and how we fix or reduce the occurrence. What makes technology so addicting that it gets to a point that it is being diagnosed as a problem and is changing the mental state of the user. In an article written by the FCD Prevention Works, technology impacts our minds and “provides some of the same reward that alcohol and other drugs might: it can be a boredom buster, a social lubricant, and an escape from reality” (“Technology Addiction.”). Technology has the power to condition our mind and can happen without realizing. Technology addiction can also take a physical toll on your body, according to Khosrow-Pour “being addicted to technological devices, the internet, social media, and virtual communities can cause physical discomfort and medical problems such as dry eyes, carpal tunnel syndrome, backaches, neck aches, severe headaches, eating irregularities (such as skipping meals), and sleep disturbance” (Khosrow-Pour)

# History of Technology Addiction

Technology addiction has been on the rise in the last few years. In an article explaining the science behind the addictive aspects of technology he released the fact that millennials are picking up their phone and unlocking it over 150 times through put a day (Osuch). On November 14th I recorded that my phone was picked up a total of 117 times, it was unlocked for a total of nine hours throughout the day. Teens can be affected by this addiction in a serious way, from a survey in an academic journal, Thamarai Selvi said “the addiction toward the technology at this stage is slightly dangerous which may lead to various problems mentally and physically” (Thamarai Selvi). When understanding the history of technology, we see that applications play a part of the problem that attracts the attention of users.

Social media plays one of the biggest roles in technology addiction. Social media grabs attention from users and keeps it by providing a feeling of inclusion. Applications like Facebook, and twitter introduce likes and shares that encourage people to react to posts by other users or share it, so their own followers see the post and are prompted to like and share. This can trigger the fear of missing out. The fear is that if they are not on the app and know everything that is going on they can feel like they are missing something important if they are not connected all day long (Osuch). People want to stay connected to people around them, but the people that are connected to may not be people they know, it could be a video game with online players, or random people from social media, or even celebrities they want to know everything about.

# What is Technology Addiction

Technology addiction is defined as “an inability to control one’s technology use due to a dependence developed through emotional, psychological, social, environmental, and biological factors” (Cook). This can be an issue due to that fact any type of addiction is not good and having the inability to help being connected. Many probably don’t know how technology can be seen as an addictive source but having anxiety over not being to look at a screen after a short time period has the same feeling of going without a cigarette after a while and having that craving that pulls you out to feed the addiction. Technology is consuming and can hook a person into surfing an application for extended hours without realizing how much time has passed (Gregory). An addiction to the technology is when a user does this constantly wasting their life away connecting to virtual beings and things that would not affect their daily life if disconnected.

Technology addiction is sometimes conditioned, peer pressure from either peers or family (Cook). Peer pressure doesn’t even need to come from peers, we are surrounded by a society of people who are constantly looking for validation from likes on Instagram and views on our YouTube videos. Some key components to social media addiction are “social interactions and relationships; positive responses, and encouragement; and information acquisition” (Cook). People are becoming addicted to the feeling of the interactions of users that follow their posts and comments. People lucky enough to get a big enough following on a social media site started to get paid for the content they release that get views. Those that get the views can also become addicted to the advantage of being connected and addicted to technology through content that is in style or reports on news or gossip that everyone wants to know about.

# Pros and Cons of Technology Addiction

Professional life is opening up to more technical career paths. Some career paths can be an influencer, which is when a person posts content to a social media for example YouTube and get paid for the amount of views the video gets and by ads showing during their video. Another career is an Instagram model where they can be sponsored by a brand to post images of themselves on their personal account and get paid for users using their reference code and from views. That is good for them that they can make enough money to sustain a professional career from their content but what toll does it take on the body and mind from staring at a screen and putting your life on a screen for millions of people to see and judge you. Mentally people can exhaust themselves from trying to find validation from people they don’t know and don’t care to truly know the person behind the camera.

Due to the advancements of technology around us some are becoming addicted with the chance of becoming an influencer or Instagram model. Many people have an unachievable goal of becoming a part of that side of technology and get addicted to the idea of becoming famous off of a video or a viral photo that they become addicted to the validation they seek. In a book titled Internet and technology addiction: Breakthroughs in research and practice they emphasize that “many of them suffer from low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy, leading to depression and anxiety” them being referred to all the users that dedicate their time to technology and social media.

# Preventions to Technology Addiction

Not everyone is addicted to technology, tech is a big part of our modern lives and most users can go a day, or days, without feeling the need to be online gaming or checking social media. We are surrounded by technology but still need to have the ability to disconnect and interact with people and be able to communicate with out a keyboard.

To be able to prevent technology addiction you need to know if you have an addiction. A few different signs of an addiction can be being nervous without your phone around, being paranoid if your phone battery runs out or low, constantly checking for a signal if connection is lost even if you are in a safe location, noticeable difficulty from being away from your phone or laptop (Cook). Being able to recognize you have a problem you can try to help yourself by disconnecting yourself from your device for a few hours in a day to help condition yourself that you will survive without a connection.

A few ways to prevent technology addiction include participating in a non-tech hobby, find a healthy way to relieve stress away from the screen, be creative and find something you are good at and start adding it to your routine. If technology addiction seems like it is a true problem and can’t use home remedies to help, consider going to get treatment by going to therapy and adding a healthy balance to your life.

# Concluding Technology Addiction

Having any kind of addiction is bad, being that technology addictions are new and most of the time self-diagnosed, we need to take every step in trying to help the people and users around. Everyone needs to take some time to step away from tech and sound sometime away from their screens. Preventing the start of the tech addiction by having a balance between online and offline can prevent this epidemic of tech taking over our time. Social media is the largest contributor to technology addiction and is nowhere close to slowing down its reign. Social media platform Instagram is trying to take a stand against technology addiction by taking away the number of likes an image has to try and stop the need for validation and focus on the content shared. Once more platforms start to take a stand to technology addiction we will be able to see the difference we can make and the action we can take to control technology and stop the technology from controlling us.

References

Cook, Sam. “Technology and Internet Addiction: How to Recognize It and Recover from It.” *Comparitech*, 19 Apr. 2019, www.comparitech.com/internet-providers/technology-internet-addiction/.

Gregory, Christina. “Internet Addiction Disorder - Signs, Symptoms, and Treatments.” Psycom.net - Mental Health Treatment Resource Since 1986, Remedy Health Media, 22 May 2019, www.psycom.net/iadcriteria.html.

Khosrow-Pour, Mehdi. Internet and Technology Addiction: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice. Edited by Mehdi Khosrow-Pour, Information Science Reference/IGI Global, 2019. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2019-36170-000&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Osuch, Michael, and Steven Turner. “Addiction to Modern Technology: What the Science Says.” Elsevier Connect, 2 Aug. 2017, www.elsevier.com/connect/addiction-to-modern-technology-what-the-science-says.

“Technology Addiction.” Hazelden Betty Ford, FCD Prevention Works, 16 Mar. 2017, www.hazeldenbettyford.org/articles/fcd/teen-technology-addiction.

Thamarai Selvi, V. T., et al. “Teens and Technology Addiction - A Survey.” Drug Invention Today, vol. 11, no. 3, Mar. 2019, pp. 663–665. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=135479076&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

# Appendix

This interview was conducted in person.

What is your name, company, and title?

*Nick Siclair from Emprise Technologies, and I am a Software Engineer.*

Have you heard of technology addiction as a diagnosed mental illness before this interview? If yes can you give a brief summary of your understanding?

*No and I don’t believe in it.*

What do you believe technology addiction means?

*People being unable to pry themselves from digital devices/techniques that they rely on.*

Do you consider yourself addicted to technology?

*I don’t think I am. I think I enjoy using technology a lot but am not addicted. I believe I am willing and able to go without technology. I think there is a difference between having an interest in technology and being addicted to it. I love technology, but it doesn’t mean I couldn’t go without it.*

How do you balance online and offline activity?

*Just make sure that you have things to do outside of being on your phone. Things like social interactions.*

Do you see instances of technology addiction in your place of work or personal life?

*I don’t know if I can say I can see it, but I know that a lot of people I work with don’t have much of a life outside of technology when they go home. My brother constantly wants to play Xbox or watch TV and it affects his school work and hinders his ability to have social interactions.*

Do you think technology addiction is a true problem with today’s teens and young adults?

*No, I think it’s sad how much it is abused sometimes, but I don’t think it’s a problem to the point where it has potential to affect their future in a negative way.*

Are there any lasting comments you would like to share about technology addiction?

*Technology is how the future is progressing and how humanity will continue to evolve. It has the potential to enhance everyone’s lives. Everything will only get more complex over time, so we need to embrace it.*