The Technology Dilemma - Defining the Line Between Need and Addiction

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Abstract

It is possible that addiction is a subject that bears philosophical investigation due to the widespread nature of the problem and the degree to which it is intimately recognizable to us. The field of psychology, with its primary focus on clinical modes of discourse, has historically been the only one to undertake research in the area of addiction. Developing an effective treatment strategy for addiction is a very different challenge than merely comprehending the nature of addiction itself, especially if we add technology to the equation. However, if philosophy is able to contribute to such an understanding, then it may not be owing just to the insightful musings of philosophers, but rather to the increasingly provocative nature of the problem, issue, or even reality that is being investigated. It is possible that addiction is more of a forerunner of shifting cultural horizons and a symbol of an impending (human) crisis than it is merely a medical or clinical condition. If this is the case, then addiction is indicative of an impending crisis. By presenting a point of entrance to this historical fork in the road, it is possible that the subject of addiction can become debatable, or in other words, transform into a philosophical conundrum. This paper is trying to give in insight of the thin line between need and addiction in using technology.

Keywords: technology, addiction, Internet, need, digital devices

1. Introduction

In today's world, technological advancement has become so pervasive that its application has practically stopped drawing attention to itself. When we use portable electronic gadgets, an iPhone or any other smartphone, technology seems to become virtually an extension of each of us. A person's overreliance on such hand-held devices can itself develop a distinct dependency in its own right, that is, become "addictive," even if only in a metaphorical sense. Not only does technology open up new ways by which individuals can become addicted, but it also opens up new avenues by which individuals can become addicted. Even a brief break from using "smart-phones" may result in a variety of phobias and anxiety problems developing in the user. In the simplest terms possible, the emergence of the Internet in the 90s and its portability because of the advent of "cellular" technology throughout the next decade proved to be a game-changer. The ability to access the "information superhighway" from the palm of one's hand throws up a new Pandora's Box of entertainment and diversions, which dwarfs the influence of television even if simply by offering digital access to it through one of many "applications".

As the Aldous Huxley's novel Brave New World demonstrates, the introduction of new technologies often coincides with profound shifts in humankind's cultural beliefs and values, particularly in relation to how they perceive themselves and the world around them. As a result of the proliferation of global technology, we tend to regard our fellow humans in the same manner as the resources we make use of, that is, in terms of the value they provide to us practically (Schalow, 2017). Universities, for instance, are starting to lose their ivy charm and are behaving more and more like corporations in that they are trying to process degrees for the maximum number of students. But as the world continues to get more impersonalized, there is no need for us to be surprised by the growing number of people who are hooked to substances, not to mention the myriad of ways in which they can become addicted although, at the same time, technology is the foremost tool to fulfill our needs on a personal and professional level. We need only look at the growth in cases of addiction to online gambling or adult sites to see that the internet is a depersonalized medium that only enhances the chances of people looking for a "quick fix" and getting "hooked" in the process of doing so.

Despite the fact that these examples exist, technology cannot alone be held responsible for being the "cause" of addiction. Instead, technology amplifies the likelihood that human beings will become addicted to anything, so

giving broader reign to the changes in human capacities by which each of us is more likely to give in to the impulsiveness of our needs. The rate of change in both one's perspective of oneself and one's perception of the surroundings is sped up by the use of technology, which is relevant insofar as addiction is characterized by a dual dynamic that includes both of these aspects (Schalow, 2017). When it comes to one's perception of themselves, technology fosters an environment of instant satisfaction, which is fashioned after the increasing speed at which one may acquire information from the internet. In terms of the way an individual views the surrounding environment, the proliferation of technology has made it easier to gain access to any "source," whether it be a substance or something else, that offers the chance to satiate an individual's desires. The significance of a shift in either our perception of the surrounding environment or the manner in which we assign space cannot be understated. Because advances in technology have shrunk the size of physical distances, the "within reach" of substances has expanded to include practically any and every location on Earth.

2. What does the Data Say?

App developer Kevin Holesh came to the realization a few years ago that he wasn't devoting enough time to his family and realized that he needed to change this. The offending piece of technology was his smartphone, which was also the primary perpetrator. Holesh developed an app called "Moment" because he was curious about the amount of time he spent on his phone daily and wanted to track it. Moment monitored Holesh's daily screen time and kept a count of how much time he spent on his phone on a regular basis. "The app stops tracking when you're just listening to music or making phone calls," Holesh explained when asked about this feature. When you are staring at your screen, such when you are sending emails or browsing the web, for example, it starts up again. It felt like a lot of time that Holesh was glued to his screen, as he sat there for an hour and fifteen minutes every day. There were a few of his pals who shared his concerns, but they were also unaware of how much time they wasted on their phones. Therefore, Holesh distributed the app. When respondents were asked to give an estimate of how much they used it in a day, most of them were off by about half. The usage data for the app was as follows:
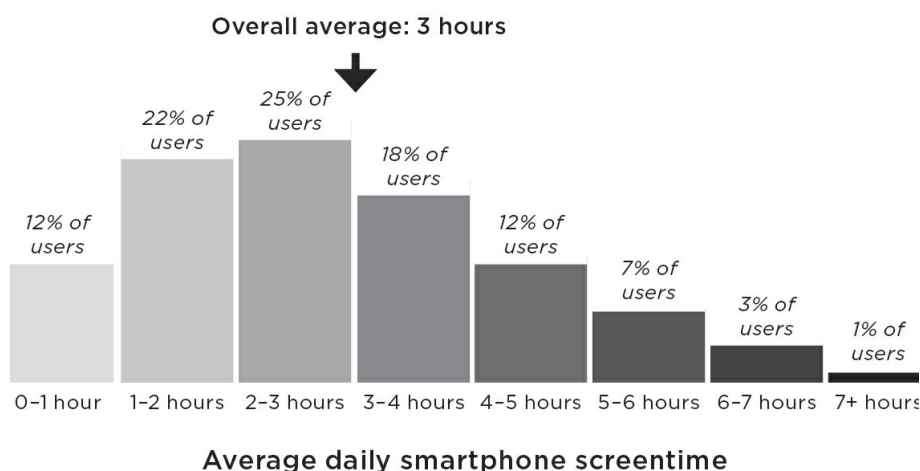

Figure 1. Daily smartphone screentime (Alter, 2017)

The very existence of smartphones is detrimental to our mental health, in addition to the time they steal from us. In 2013, psychologists conducted an experiment where they asked four groups of strangers to talk to one another while confined in a small space. The psychologists offered a suggestion for a topic in order to make the procedure go more smoothly: why don't you talk about anything interesting that's happened to you in the previous month? While some of the couples conversed, another person in their group took notes in a notebook instead of using their phone. For other couples, the phone was not there at all. Every couple was able to connect with one another to some degree, but those who met for the first time in the same room as a smartphone had difficulty doing so. They felt that the quality of the connections that developed was worse, and that their partners possessed less empathy and trustworthiness as a result (Alter, 2017). Even when they are not being used, mobile phones have a disruptive presence just because they are around. Because they bring our attention to things that are happening in the wider world, they are a nuisance, and the researchers concluded that the only way to address this problem is to do rid of them entirely.

3. Behaving through Passion

Compulsive behaviors, such as obsessive thoughts or compulsive behaviors, are closely related to addictive behaviors. Compulsions are behaviors that a person can't stop engaging in, whereas obsessions are recurring ideas that a person is unable to quit thinking. There is a significant distinction that can be made between addictions, obsessions, and compulsions. Addictions offer the possibility of experiencing immediate gratification, often known as positive reinforcement. On the other hand, avoiding engaging in an obsession or compulsion can feel like enduring excruciating pain. They guarantee respite, which is also known as negative reinforcement, but they do not offer the alluring benefits that come with fully satisfying an addiction.

Obsessive passion is a third type of relative that is related to behavioral addiction. In 2003, seven Canadian psychologists, led by the researcher Robert Vallerand, collaborated on a paper that proposed a dichotomous interpretation of the term "passion." They described passion as an inclination directed toward a certain activity that people usually like, and at the same time they find it very important, and for which they invest a lot of time and energy. A strong predisposition toward an activity that one enjoys, finds meaningful, and dedicates time and attention to is known as passion. The model train system that an old guy has been working on since his youth or the series of abstract paintings that a middle-aged lady paints in her free time are both examples of harmonious interests, which are highly beneficial activities that people choose to undertake without strings attached. According to what was stated by the researchers, individuals are not compelled to do the activity, but rather, they freely choose to do so (Alter, 2017). When it comes to this kind of passion, the activity in question takes up a sizeable but not overpowering portion of the person's personality and coexists peacefully with the various other areas of the person's life.

Obsessive passions, on the other hand, are not only unhealthy but can also be hazardous. They are likely to generate behavioral addictions because they are motivated by a need that goes beyond the basic desire to enjoy themselves. According to the definition provided by the researchers, the individual "cannot help but engage in passionate activity."

4. Inside the Technology Box

Technology has evolved to the point where it is now an essential component of our daily life. One type of technology or another is involved in every step of our routine, from getting ready in the morning to winding down at night. One of the reasons that technology, in whatever field it may be applied, has been a focal area for scientists and other professionals is because it makes our day-to-day tasks more convenient while also reducing the amount of time we spend on them and raising the overall quality of our lives.

In comparison to how we used to live our lives ten or fifteen years ago, many things, including but not limited to our smartphones, which are helpful to us in more ways than we can even begin to think, as well as a variety of kitchen appliances, computer systems as important communication means, transportation system, and online shopping, have changed. The benefits that technology bestows on our everyday lives in both more general and more specific senses are the driving force behind the ongoing effort to make additional progress in technological advances. Technology makes it simple to work together.

Because we live in a society in which collaboration is crucial, technology has significantly altered the ways in which we work together. Businesses, in particular, derive a great deal of value from the collaborative advantages offered by technical advancements such as those that make it possible to communicate virtually from any location in the globe. Businesses now have an easier time taking advantage of possibilities to broaden their customer base or grow their operations to new geographic locations.

Handling vast amounts of data and making important business decisions based on the insights obtained from the data is now easier than it has ever been because of the development of technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning (Barseghian, 2017). In addition to this, the utilization of technical resources improves the precision of decision-making processes by lowering the likelihood of errors resulting from the use of manual processes.

Due to the fact that robots are far quicker than humans, a lot of tasks that may usually take an extraordinary amount of manual labor and careful attention to detail can be readily completed with the assistance of technology. Additionally, technological advancements allow for greater precision.

Additionally, the application of technology in particular domains might help contribute to the reduction of considerable expenditures. For instance, switching from paper-based communication to digital communication and using machines to do jobs that could take significantly more time to complete.

Because it has so many different applications, technology has made it easier for individuals to launch new businesses in today's world. People who have ideas may find ways to put those ideas into action and convert their

ideas into the next big thing (Barseghian, 2017). They can also design business plans that are game-changing and take the first steps toward starting a business with greater ease. Technology has the additional benefit of being easily scalable, which can improve both the sales to customers and the procedures carried out by employees.

People from all walks of life are now able to access a wider variety of resources because of the advancements that technology has made possible. Additionally, technology is being utilized to equip people who are in need of a certain type of support to improve their quality of life and enable them avail themselves of chances that would otherwise be inaccessible to them. This is being done so that they can take advantage of opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to them.

The challenge for organizations is to increase their output while simultaneously decreasing the number of resources they put into it. This is where technology, and automation in particular, may completely transform the game. Because they are automated, actions that are repetitive or redundant involve very little time or effort while assuring the result that is expected.

In this day and age, when businesses compete with one another more fiercely than ever before, technology may be one factor that gives a company the ability to outperform its rivals. In many cases, technology can also function as a unique selling proposition, which is something that distinguishes one firm from another in the eyes of prospective clients and customers. Businesses who have access to more advanced technology have the opportunity to produce higher-quality goods, which, in the long run, can help those businesses increase their revenue.

Technology has established itself as the most helpful resource for practically every industry's ability to advance and create development. Upgrades not only assist companies advance their standing in the industry, but they also make day-to-day operations simpler for employees and for people in general (Goldstein, Nora, 2017). This highlights the significance of technology in the process of generating inventions, which has the potential to benefit a vast number of people.

Even though the vast majority of individuals who use technology will not have any issues – in fact, there are professional and recreational benefits that may be derived from using electronics - a small percentage of people may get addicted to using technology and experience effects that are comparable to those that are caused by abusing substances. In point of fact, research have demonstrated that the likelihood of acquiring a substance use problem increases in tandem with the severity of internet addiction.

Therefore, the use of technology has the potential to become an addiction. People start participating in activities such as gaming, internet, social media, texting, or anything similar, and then they get caught up in the pleasure of it all. Soon enough, the activity goes from being something that they do to generate emotions of joy and satisfaction to being something that they do to prevent themselves from feeling worried, angry, or unpleasant.

Emerging addictions have been brought to our attention. During the COVID-19 epidemic, for instance, there has been an increased usage of online dating apps, adult websites or text chats. The popularity of playing games online has also skyrocketed. One of the most worrying features of online gaming is the fact that firms are now hiring psychology labs to improve the efficacy of their products. This practice is very similar to the way that tobacco companies engaged scientists to improve the addictiveness of their products.

But how can a person tell whether they are hooked on something? There are those who say things like "I know it's bad for me, but I have to keep doing it" and they are examples of those who continue to use technology while being aware of the negative implications of such use. Lying to people who hold significance in your life about how frequently you engage in the activity is another serious red flag.

5. Is there a way out of the Box?

We believe that people should not make any attempts to get the addicted person into a rehabilitation center so that they can be "cured." They can locate a psychiatrist, ideally with experience in addiction, who can evaluate the patient for a number of issues and provide you with an in-depth report. It's possible that the individual in question suffers from clinical depression, anxiety, or a more severe psychiatric condition such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, but they're passing it off as an addiction to technology.

On the other hand, can parents guide their children toward responsible use of various forms of technology? Parents should always provide a positive example for their children to follow and be consistent in the regulations they enforce. For instance, it is inappropriate for parents to announce that dinner time is a "cell phone free" period, and then proceed to check their email while the family is eating. If parents remove electronics from their children's bedrooms in order to encourage healthy sleep hygiene, then the parents themselves are responsible for adhering to these regulations (Hargrove, 2013). The pleasure centers of the brain are affected by technology in a manner that

is analogous to how narcotics do. It can alleviate boredom, serve as a social lubricant, and give an escape from the realities of life, all of which are similar benefits that may be derived from the use of alcohol and other narcotics.

Video and computer games, smart phones and tablets, social media and the Internet give a variety of access points that might increase dependence on technology and harmful repercussions for kids. These include the following:

The World Wide Web as a multipurpose instrument that brings us unusually near to a vast amount of information at speeds never before seen, the Internet has the potential to become addicted. Access to the internet is now available on all of our devices, including watches, tablets, phones, and PCs, and it is designed to be as user-friendly as possible. "Fear of Missing Out," also known as "FOMO," is a term that's often used to describe a condition that's popular among adolescents and young adults. In this phenomenon, young people have an increased feeling of needing to stay connected to the Internet in order to ensure that they aren't the last to know about a news item or social event.

In a manner that is analogous to the fear of missing out, some users of social networks, for example, have reported that they make use of the web-based social media platform as a method of choice to alleviate their anxiety or despair (Conrad, 2017). Because of how readily available it is to use, the Internet is not only simple and enjoyable to make use of, but it is also difficult to refrain from doing so at any given time during the day.

Video games and those played on computers. The desire to feel capable, independent, and connected to other people is one of the defining characteristics of the human psychological condition. Players of challenging video games are able to get the perception that they are skilled at something. Players have access to a wide range of options within a game, which can foster a sense of independence in adolescents who would experience a lack of control in other contexts.

The same aspirations that push people to work hard and achieve their goals in the "real world" may also be found in virtual worlds like video games. When a player invests time and effort into a game in order to progress through levels and collect virtual riches or prestige, the player has the potential to convert that virtual wealth into a version of true recognition, such as the ability to make monetary purchases in an online game or community.

Games, much like the Internet itself, are becoming more readily available to adolescents by means of applications downloaded onto smart phones. These games never leave the hands or wallets of young people. Even if there is space in the gaming universe for social connection, this space also offers an escape from the everyday reality into a digital realm where players get to adopt new identities that are more alluring than those they have in real life.

Mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets, as well as other lifestyle technology, in other words all these extremely mobile and adaptable gadgets have the ability to maintain a connection at all times (Lin, et al. 2012). Smart phones and tablets, as well as the emergence of various smart gadgets, promote or may cause addiction by taking the time lapse from jobs and activities that traditionally required logging into a deskbound. This makes it possible to complete the duties and activities much more quickly, which in turn makes it easier to become addicted.

Various forms of social media, the quickest means to access information that is individually relevant are made available by social media in the form of centralized and personalized portals. Examples of these are a newsfeed on Facebook, a YouTube subscription, or a Snapchat following.

It doesn't matter if it's a Skype talk or a Twitter reply, social media satisfies our need for human connection since it enables us to communicate with people who are physically, temporally, or socially distant from us. This can be done through a variety of platforms. For our emotional and mental well-being, as social animals, we require interaction with other people. The allure of social media lies in the fact that it satisfies our social requirements without subjecting us to the difficulties or constraints of direct human interaction.

6. Conclusion

The usage of technology is only going to increase. Finding a healthy balance in ones' life is essential for preventing juvenile addiction to technology. This will ensure that adolescents do not use their devices as a crutch to avoid dealing with their feelings, interacting with others, or defining themselves in the real world. Adults can assist children and adolescents in developing healthy interactions with technology by providing an abundance of healthy council, some of which can be accomplished offline. The manner in which teens utilize technology is of critical importance. In moments when teenagers are participating in video games in addition to other types of leisure activities, we should evaluate whether they get as thrilled about "leveling up" as they do about having dinner with their friends? Or do they turn on their PlayStation or XBOX so that they don't have to deal with a life that they aren't happy with? All these issues are of crucial importance that should be evaluated so we can find proper methods to overcome any negative outcome.

People should also maintain a good balance between exercise levels and their levels of productivity. Life requires energy, and many times, adolescents feel as though they do not have enough energy to spend on the numerous demands placed on them. If kids aren't shown by adults how to find healthy ways to refill their energy resources, they may resort to overusing simple fixes for amusement or stress relief that foster addiction to technology. This could set them up for a downward spiral of dependency on technology.

In the actual world, foster the development of a socially responsible identity. When it comes to assisting children in finding out who they truly are, adults need to be proactive, innovative, and enthusiastic. When adolescents discover an activity in which they excel and have an interest, they will naturally become strongly linked to that activity. It is far simpler for teenagers to construct an online persona, but it is significantly more beneficial for them to establish authentic objectives and identities within the context of their families; inside their schools, and as a part of their communities.

When there is an issue, treatment should be considered. To begin the process of treating a teen's addiction to technology through inpatient care, the adolescent must first be disconnected from the Internet and isolated from the people and places that contributed to the development of the addiction in the first place. This is a sort of therapy that is considered to be intensive. Other treatments may involve finding ways to enable people who are addicted to technology perceive the offline world as a more joyful place, all while keeping the online component of their lives in some capacity.

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