

Negative Effects of Social Media and Technology

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Abstract

This paper is evaluating the negative effects of social media and technology. I wanted to point out all of the harmful things that can come from excessive use of different types of technology and social media platforms. People of all ages are affected by this issue. It is common to have no idea how to go about these destructive situations. Because of how widespread these issues are, society needs to be aware of it. While conducting my research, I was looking to explore the many negative outcomes that technologies and social medias are causing. There are many, however; I narrowed my findings down to the most important effects; cyberbullying, effects on mental and emotional health, and the fact that technology can encourage harmful behaviors. These are some of the many outcomes from this common habit more and more people are acquiring everyday. Despite the fact that social media and technology are starting to become progressively popular, there are consequences of this that people need to be informed of.

Keywords: cyberbullying, emotional health, mental health, social media, technology

Negative Effects of Social Media and Technology

A teenage girl is going about her normal day, spending time relaxing in her room, going on her third hour of scrolling through different social medias. Little does she know, her world is about to collapse in on her. As she thumbs through Twitter, an image pops up, she realizes it is her. Everything goes black. Now, her most regretful image brought her private life to the surface for anyone to see: her family, future employers, along with anyone else who has a Twitter account. This is extremely common and is defined as cyberbullying: the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating nature. It is sad to say that this happens daily and could happen to anyone, all because of the amount of people that have access to technology and all of these social media platforms. In society, everyone constantly has their faces shoved into a phone, computer, tablet, or even all of the above. While this should come to an end, many individuals even encourage the excessive use of technology. According to Rachel Sandler, “There is a disagreement in how platforms should balance being able to speak freely and balance abuse. 45% of people said free speech should take precedence” (Sandler, 2017, para. 8). This quote illustrates how conflicted people are when approached with this issue and are not even trying to take preventative measures. Little do they know, it could affect them or someone close to them in a harsh way. This is becoming a huge issue and most people do not even acknowledge it. Even though the use of social media and technology is becoming increasingly popular, there are many negative effects that can come from it; such as, cyberbullying, bad mental and emotional health, and other harmful behaviors that technology encourages.

Nearly 1 in 10 people reported being cyberbullied online for their physical appearance (Sandler, 2017). This does not even begin to describe the harsh bullying that happens online daily, and it is continuously increasing. Cyberbullying is one of the many harmful effects that can come from the use of social media and technology. The most common form of this harassment is name calling and purposeful embarrassment. There are people out there deliberately going out of their way to humiliate people and it needs to stop for the betterment of society. What is even more sad is the fact that almost half of people would rather speak their mind on the internet than protect and respect others. Not to mention, cyberbullying circulates sexism and racism. According to Rachel Sandler, “More blacks and hispanics said they were targeted online because of their ethnicity. And women were twice as likely as men to say they were harassed because of their gender” (2017, para 6). This just goes to show the spread of these cold-hearted ideas and how social media makes it that much worse. If there are ignorant people scrolling through different social platforms and seeing racist or sexist comments, it is very possible that they latch on to the idea thinking it is the right mindset to have. Society can be so uneducated about this concept of cyberbullying and most do not know the proper way to handle it. There is a huge lack of guidance from parents and schools. Almost a third of teens do not talk with their parents about online safety and about half of american teens do not receive knowledge or guidance from the school about cyberbullying (Noguchi, 2017). In fact, this is actually disheartening on both ends. Parents and school officials are not aware of all that happens online and are oblivious as to where they should even start. Then, on the other hand, teens are practically running rampant with all of this new social media and technology. It makes for a very difficult situation on both ends of the spectrum. Chuck Hadad stated how, “Almost all parents --

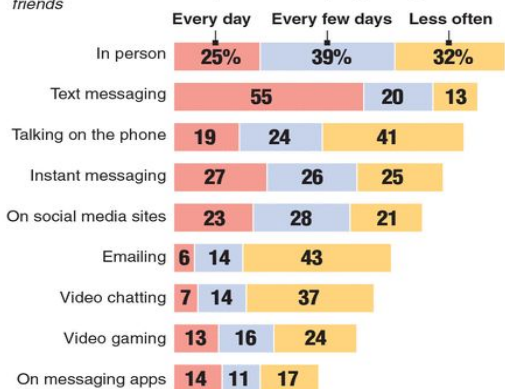
94 percent -- underestimated the amount of fighting that goes on social media” (2015, para 20).

The ignorance on this subject needs to come to an end, not only for the teens but for all those involved in the lives of people with social media. Overall, there is much harm that can come from technology and social media, cyberbullying being one of the most prominent.

As if this new type of bullying created by technology was not enough, the negative effects that social media and technology has on individuals’ mental and emotional healths is extremely appalling. There is a study to prove this; child development experts monitored teens social media feeds from across the nation. The results they found in figure one were shocking.

Teens interaction with friends

Text messaging is a key component of day-to-day friend interactions: 55% of teens spend time every day texting with friends



Source: Pew
Graphic: Staff, Tribune News Service

Figure one: points out the amount of communication that goes on for teens every day, every few days, and less often, and different types of communication used

As this figure illustrates, the amount of time teens spend everyday texting a person is more than two times the amount of time they spend talking in person. This shows that the ability to communicate with others in person is decreasing consistently. Technology is starting to prove that it is, in fact, addicting (Hadad, 2015). Robert Farris, who helped conduct this study states, “We see a lot of evidence of, if not outright addiction to social media, a heavy dependence on it.

There's a lot of anxiety about what's going on online, when they're not actually online, it leads to compulsive checking" (Hadad, 2015, para 5). This study points out the strain social media can have on an individual's mental well being. Accompanied with the possibility of being addicted to technology, it also causes sleep deprivation. As a study done by the RSPH points out, "The brain is not fully developed until a person is well into their 20s and 30s. That means sleep deprivation is singularly unhealthy for young people" (Zeltin, 2017, para 6). The addiction to social media is causing teens to stay up for hours on end and after having their face in a screen for that long, it is extremely hard for the brain to shut down and let a person sleep. Not to mention, social media is addictive, and can also make users dread being left out of things their social media friends are doing. The Royal Society for Public health in the U.K conducted a study to see the true effects social media has on mental health. They found that a big issue for young people is fearing that they will miss something going on with their social media friends (Zeltin, 2017). Most hear the term 'FOMO' (fear of missing out) and brush it off as if it is not a real condition, however; it is proven to be very real and anyone could be affected. It makes social media users compulsively check their feed to see what other users are doing. Additionally, the use of social media can make an individual have a very negative body image. The risk of low self confidence is always going to be there in today's times but, social media intensifies it. Young people are being constantly faced with images of others and it makes them compare themselves to the unrealistic photos. When comparing oneself to these impractical images it is likely that they will find fault in themselves, therefore bringing down their self confidence anytime they scroll through their feed (Zeltin, 2017). With the likeness of low self confidence,

FOMO, sleep deprivation, and addiction to technology all in account, the negative effects on mental health from technology are clear.

Lastly, technology encourages harmful behaviors. There are many innovative ways people nowadays mistreat technology. For example, it is common that students use technology to cheat on tests and things of that nature. According to Sara Noguchi, “Nearly one third of teens skirt school safeguards to access banned content and 29 percent admit to using tech devices to cheat in school - but more than twice that say they know of classmates who have cheated with devices” (Noguchi, 2017, para 1). This points out the amount of students trying to take the “easy way out.” This backfires on the students who are cheating, the students who are not, as well as the teachers. It is unfair for all involved and it all happens thanks to technology. Furthermore, having technology at hand increases the probability of the release of personal and private information. For social media users, it is easy to create an anonymous page and post whatever they please, likely not having any repercussions because it is hard to track down an anonymous user. Last year, police were informed that boys at several Bay Area schools were exchanging nude photos of female classmates (Noguchi, 2017). This is an example of one of the many incidents of revealing personal information that was not meant to be, and it could not have happened without the technology teens have at hand. Additionally, technology encourages the sending of messages and images the receiver did not intend to acquire. More than half of women ages 18-29 reported receiving explicit images they did not ask for (Sandler, 2017). From the use of technology to cheat in school, to revealing others’ private information, and the sharing images people did not ask for, technology obviously pushes individuals to behave poorly.

Despite the common use of social media platforms and technology for everything, there are many more negative effects that can come from it than there are positive; For example, cyberbullying, damage to mental and emotional health, and motivation to act destructively towards others. From the use of electronic communication for purposeful embarrassment, to the addiction and sleep deprivation that technology can cause, the harmful effects are clear. The use of technology and social media for malignant purposes needs to come to an end for the improvement of society. It will only get worse unless people are informed and aware. With the increasing negative effects that are coming from technology and social media, before you know it, it could affect you or someone you love.

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