

## Teens and Technology

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*Technology is a double edged sword;  
It can be used for good purpose or bad purpose!*

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### Reprint Request

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Received on | May 04|2017  
Accepted on | May 23|2017

### Abstract

Adolescence is a period of rapid, physical and psychological development. It is a time when critical behaviours are shaped that will have impact on the rest of the life. The invention of the cell phone, appearance of computers, laptops, and internet communication has become a vital link in communicating with others. Though technology has innumerable benefits, it can affect teens future, if not used cautiously. Overuse of technology *results in poor health, lack of interest in studying and poor study habits.* They may become screen slaved, socially challenged persons also as narcissist or violent persons. They may become victims of cyber criminals. Parents, elders, teachers and people interested in social welfare should take active measures.

**Keywords:** Adolescence; Teens.

### Introduction

Adolescents constitute 1.2 billion of the world population. In India, there are 243 millions of adolescents in which 41% of India population is less than 20 years (UNICEF- 2011 in *State of World's Children Report*). Adolescence is a period of rapid, physical and psychological development. It is a time when critical behaviours are shaped that will have impact on the rest of the life. It is also the period of excruciating shyness and self consciousness which makes self-presentation and self disclosure a perilous business. Technology when used wisely is a powerful tool which enhances and enriches the communication and also shapes the adolescents personality. No doubt, technological advancements have made the world a better place to live in.

### History of Internet Technology-Important Achievements

- 1934: The first person who imagined a

'Radiated Library' in 1934 was Paul Otlet.

- 1974: The first Internet Service Provider (ISP) was born with the introduction of a commercial version of ARPANET also known as a 'Tele net'.
- 1976: Queen Elizabeth II sends her first e-mail.
- 1979: USENET forms to host news and discussion group
- 1981: The National Science Foundation (NSF) provided the Computer Science Network (CSNET) to university computer scientists.
- 1983: The Domain Name System (DNS) established the familiar .edu, .gov, .com, .mil, .org, .net, and .int system in order to name websites.
- 1986: The National Science Foundation's NSFNET goes online and connected supercomputer centers at 56,000 bits per second.
- 1990: Tim Berners-Lee develops HyperText Markup Language (HTML). This technology continues to have a large impact on ways how

humans navigate the Internet in present days.

- 1991: CERN introduces the World Wide Web to the public.
- 1992: The first audio and video were distributed in Internet and the phrase “surfing became popular.
- 1997: PC makers removed or hid Microsoft’s Internet software on new versions of Windows 95.
- 1998: The Google search engine was born and changed the way users engage with the Internet.
- 2004: Face book went online and the era of social networking began.
- 2005: YouTube.com has been launched.
- 2010: 400 million active users have been reached in Face book.

#### Some Facts about Growing Technology....

1. Mobile phone sales totaled 349 million in 2016 and 78% of these are smart phones (The Indian Express May 19<sup>th</sup> 2016).
2. PC sales lowered 269.7 million in 2016 (Business Insider India – Jeff Dunn 2017).
3. Nearly three-quarters of teens have or have access to a Smartphone, while just 12% of teens say they do not own cell phone.
4. African-American teens are most likely to have a smart phone, (85%) compared with 71% of both White and Hispanic.
5. Fully 91% of teens go online from mobile devices. 23% of teens have a tablet and among these “mobile teens,” 94% go online every day.
6. On an average, 8-18 year olds devote 7 hours and 38 minutes to games and other entertainments every day.

#### Varieties of Media Technology

The invention of the cell phone, appearance of computers, laptops, and internet communication has become a vital link in communicating with others. We can see a reflection of technology everywhere in our lives, such as TV, telephones, computers, cell phones, PDAs etc., email, online banking, online shopping, online education, online liberalities, online books, online gaming, paying bills all are made to be on our finger tips. The effects are much more than and as powerful as they were never before.

#### Use of Technology by Teens

One of the criteria that define teenagers is *the degree to which they are connected!*

*Face book* is the most popular and frequently used social media platform among boys. Snap chat is popular among teens from affluent households. 71% of teens use more than one social network site. Girls prefer the *Instagram*. On an average, each teen have 145 Face book friends (Teens, Social Media & Technology Overview, 2015). According to Pew research centre, a typical teen sends and receives 30 texts per day. 18.7 billion text messages are sent every day excluding the Whatsapp and Face Book messages which were much more (60 billion per day).

#### Attractiveness of Technology

*Why is the craze for technology?* Technology allows its users a sense of increased controllability which in turn allows them to feel secure about their self-identity, communication and thus freer interpersonal relations? There is a saying that Curiosity killed the cat. Many teens without knowing the dangers become victims of cyber bullying. Boredom is the key factor in the initiation of internet use. The other factors include, availability at affordable cost, lack of limitations and conflicts in the families and in schools, over trusting, hyper vigilance and innocence on par of parents, lack of spirituality and emotional disorders.

#### Advantages of Technology

- Anonymity- establishing identity without embarrassment of self.
- Power to reflect and change what you want to communicate before sending.
- Any time (All time) availability (Billions of websites are available)
- You can be in touch with innumerable members and you have wider social contact.
- Any type of information you can access. Communications are made quicker, easier, to anybody and to any part of the world.
- From or to, any part of the world, in no time, without involving anybody, to anyone, from anywhere you can communicate
- Gives feelings of confidence, helps to overcome shyness, awkwardness which are present in face-to face communication.
- Technology is an effective educational tool. Technology helps to access incredible array of

information without any obstacles. Users can learn almost everything and this promotes independent learning in students.

- Helps to develop skill in handling computer. Technology also allows teachers to create an exciting ways and means to educate students with the use of Smart Boards, email, Skype, Power Point etc.
- Development of new teaching methods, such as podcasts, blogs and social media stimulates and sustains interest among students.
- Technology enables teachers to educate all types of students, including those with special needs as assistive technologies like voice recognition, text-to-speech converter, translator and software for word prediction are available.
- Technology allows us to perform activities of our own interest from the comfort of our home. Millions of money can be earned through e-business sitting in a chair or even in wheelchair.
- It is an excellent job search tool. It helps us to prepare the resume, teaches how to answer in the interviews and helps to find appropriate jobs. Profile of prospective employees can be checked by employers leading to rejection of candidates for jobs
- It helps to store, image, letter, videos of earlier days which bring happiness when recalled.
- Playing games and sports in the net, keeps our brain active, and away from boredom.
- The use of technology in the field of Medicine and Defense cannot be described in words adequately and is beyond the scope of this article.

### Disadvantages of Overuse of Technology

Majority of the time spent on online virtual world plays major impact on the real world.

- Linguistic performance of children is affected, communications can be easily misunderstood.
- Diminished ability to build relationships in the real set up. Information may be unrealistic and children may thus live in an imaginary world. Constant self confirmation may turn teens not only to become screen slaves, socially challenged persons also as narcissist or violent persons.
- Teens being productive can become more impulsive may not respond as adults and may not realize about the consequences of online communication.
- The average age at which a child first sees porn

online is 11 and 12% of websites on the internet have pornographic videos which is the cause of worry of 60% of parents about their kids reputation (Pew Research Center, 2013).

- Teens using online often are rich source of information for predators involved in cybercrimes, bullying, etc 13% of teens, ages 14-18, report being bullied online and 7% report being bullied via their cell phone text messages.

Disadvantages of Technology in Education  
Overuse of technology results in a lack of interest in studying and students are likely to develop poor studying habits. Students can skip school because they can study lessons, online. Students may forget the basics of studying e.g. spelling of words because they often use spell checkers. Their ability to solve mathematical problems also decline as they get instant assistance from computers.

Technical problems and computer malfunctions can cause loss of study materials, resulting in high levels of stress. While using a tablet students may easily get diverted to play games or spend time on social media compared with textbook learning. The overall value of in-person education and face-to-face interaction between teacher and student provides a more satisfying experience than on online learning. Students enrolled in online courses have higher chances of failing, dropping out and are less likely to benefit from them compared with students studying at school.

### Technology Addiction

*Ekimberly Young, Director of the Center for Internet Addiction Recovery, defines technology addiction as a habitual compulsion to use technology instead of addressing life's problems. It is also called, Internet use or Internet addiction disorder (IAD) a new phenomenon, prevalent commonly among adolescents.*

#### *Characteristics of Addiction*

According to Dr. Hilarie Cash, Co-founder of the Restart Internet Addiction Recovery Program, symptoms of IAD include the following:

- Compulsive checking of text messages
- Frequent changing of display picture and "selfies"
- Euphoric while using the Web
- Social isolation
- Lack of interest in activities that don't involve a

computer,

- Feelings of restlessness when unable to go online
- IAD has also been linked to stress, sleep disorders and depression.
- Change of attitude, loss of self-esteem, attention deficit and depression are the symptoms of addiction.

Though boredom is the key factor in the initiation of these communications, compulsion to use technology in favor of exciting life events. (e.g. vacations, parties) signify addiction. Uncontrollable use can lead to problems with relationship, physical ill health, disorganized behavior, lack of confidence and slowed academic achievement. Health, nutrition, sleep are affected adversely.

Behavioural changes due to IAD, at school include, repeated surfing or e-mailing during class time, difficulty concentrating more hours of night-time use, frequent complaints of being tired, falling asleep in class, school lateness or absenteeism and withdrawal from all activities such as sports practice, friends meet, social engagements music lessons etc.,

The World Health Organization states very clearly that there are serious health risks from current exposure levels to electronic fields coming from Wi-Fi, laptops, mobile phones and iPods. Exposure increases the health related risks such as cancer, brain tumors, autism, diabetes, chronic fatigue, neck and back pain, head ache, vision and hearing problems, hay fever, tumors of brain, depression etc,

Technology can damage your health and only one group of people benefit. *It is not you!*

What can parents do?

*Talk to your teen!* Experts agree, if you suspect your teen is up half the night chatting on-line, something else might be going on. You need to watch them to come out of it.

### **Recommendations**

- Limit the time your teenager spends on the internet
- Disconnect the router
- Turn the machine off
- Use technology to restrict access on the web
- Have family sessions- bring the computer out in the family room so everyone is involved
- Don't allow an internet connection in your teenager's room
- Become a safety sleuth- observe these websites

for yourself

- Give them alternatives to boredom i.e. positive outlets through family centered alternatives
- Join them- listen and become involved
- Discuss with them what they are watching
- Change locations- move computers to a common area

*Delete Day Programs can be Celebrated with the Following Objectives.*

- Delete inappropriate pictures or comments from their Face book pages.
- Delete "friends" whom they didn't know personally.
- Delete personal information that could be dangerous to share.
- Delete their membership in groups that might be hurtful or offensive.
- Delete Form spring pages.
- At each computer station a "Delete Day Pledge" can be kept for the participant to sign and take home, as well as a comment card with solicited information, ideas, and reactions about the student's experience at the event.

### **Conclusion**

Anybody could be one of the next two billion sufferers, your sister, brother, mother, father, grandparent, grandchild, friend or colleague, *or even you!* It is high time to take responsibility for guiding our teenagers. Parents, elders, teachers and people interested in social welfare should take active measures.

*It is time to take responsibility!*

*It is time to take action!*

*It is time to DELETE!*

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