

MALADY OF DIGITAL STRESS

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ABSTRACT - This paper explores the issue of "Digital Disorder" which is driving lives away from reality. And explains how the digital world has redefined the performance of day to day activities. It takes one through the historical development of digital stress and brings us to the current times where technology and our adept dependence on electronic gadgets have trapped us, and at the same time how internet has penetrated deeply into every aspect of our daily life. It describes its impact on business, communication, education, mental health and society in general.

It also, explains Psychological & behavioral disorders and symptoms due to digital stress and offers recommended strategies used to reduce the possible harm considered potentially dangerous to the person's psychological, Physical and emotional well-being.

Methodology: This study has used general literature survey from journal articles, books and magazines

Keywords: Digital stress –Techno stress, Psychological disorders Impact of technology, coping up strategies, technical gadgets, internet, virtual world, Health and society

1.INTRODUCTION:

"The real problem is not whether machines think but whether men do" - B. F. Skinner

We are living in an age where the word "Digital" is often heard, seen and felt. Be it media services, communication, entertainment etc., one gets to be exposed to all types digital parlance such as digital marketing, digital signatures, digital banking, digital theatres, digital tutors, digital data, digital records etc. Digital technology seems to be used in almost all sectors including, agriculture, art and crafts like, digital prints, digital design, digital touch and colors too. Also, we often hear our present honorable Prime Minister Mr.Narendra Modi using the slogan "Make in India"&"Digital India" while addressing the nation. The word "Digital" itself seems to denote a progressive mind set taking technology to a higher level, where common man cannot escape its influence on his day to day existence.

Ever since civilization, human society never had the comforts as it has today. The kind of comforts and conveniences that even kings did not have a hundred years ago are now available to a common man. Present day pursuit

for these comforts is so vigorous that the current generation is unaware that it is being cleverly enslaved and trapped subtly in the digital world, where an average individual seems to be spending at least 2 hours, with his/her gadgets, yet ironically they don't seem to be happier than their previous generations.

Through advanced technology, there is a clear provision for creating an outwardly perfect life while the quality of inner life seems to be very fragile and delicate. Social belief and social values are being driven by technology rather than on trust based human system. Every single transaction is being digitized, leaving no space for human interaction; most transactions are carried out by digital and in the virtual world. Evidently, around the globe, focus is shifting and leaning more towards technology based development and gradually losing out on human touch.

Technology has penetrated into all walks of human life; people are becoming more and more slaves to technical gadgets, rather than controlling it for their comfort and convenience, they seem to have helplessly surrendered to it. Though social media platforms such as twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and what Sapp has helped people connect instantly across the globe, it has at same time created havoc and wreaked many lives, individuals get lured away by its superficial attractiveness and colorful illusions created in the virtual world, luring people away from forming real friendship and face reality.

Present generation is so enamored and obsessed with technology, and it is intriguing to note that the digital world has captured society's imagination like never before, and has made a mockery of human sensibilities and a mass slavery to modern gadgets and tools. Burning issue is to understand the reasons for such an addiction and the impact of technical gadgets on the human life and society. Though such gadgets were not available for use 30 to 35 years back, People used to live happily and in a much healthier way. Today we are witness to relationships standing on digital platforms that exists only in the electronic world; feelings are created, shared and broken via social media platforms rather than face to face.

This paper makes an attempt to address the issue of 'Digital Disorder', which is driving people away from reality, and explore possibilities of overcoming this disorder. Technology has helped in creating virtual web of unreality that has trapped the whole society. It is very essential to

remember that use of science and technology is made to save time, create convenient and secured living in society rather than succumbing to it.

2. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF DIGITAL STRESS:

The concept of stress is realized may be in the last quarter of the 20th century, and become a serious problem in the early part of the 21st century. The reasons could be introduction of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG) concept along with heavy use of ICT. People are experiencing high level of stress either in the form of a predator or the pressure of a deadline is seen in almost all environments. Thus, in terms of stress there is sufficient evidence that humans pay the price for their stressful existence.¹

Earlier generation parents never took corporeal punishment of the child in school seriously, in fact, the child's behavior was shaped and molded not only by the atmosphere at home but was also by the society he lived

¹ Bell, C.R. (1977). Informal Learning in Organizations. Personnel Journal 56, no. 6 (June) 280-283, 313. (EJ 160 136) in. Today corporeal punishment is a taboo, teachers can't cane the child for any disciplining, at the same time the child is totally stressed out by end of the day due to study pressure, peer pressure, performance pressure etc, earlier this was unheard off.

But much of the stress, we experience today is because we are constantly chased to meet deadlines, performance review, meet target, goals to be achieved, all these are the creation of social by products and conditions. If one thinks about the most stressful experience in any environment-personal and official, they're often our lives, jobs, promotion, health, relationships, money, the list goes on. Those, of course, elicit chronic levels of stress.

Information as societal resource emerged in a big way after World War II and applied with scientific and technological approaches to phenomena dealing with many entities in human society like cell theory to human feelings, and management of small institutions, understanding of global concept, traditional methods have been replaced by modern methods and record keeping by a new industry of data processing. As a primary vehicle of communication over both space and time, it has come to form the core of modern information technology. What the English-speaking world refers to as "computer science" is known to the rest of Western Europe as 'informatique' (or 'Informatik' or 'informatica'). Much of the concern over information as a commodity and as a cultural resource derives from the computer and computer-based communication technology.

Today's world is becoming more technologically advanced each day, use of technology has changed life dramatically in the last five decades, with increase in the usage of technology, the amount of stress put on our brains too is enhanced, thus effecting overall human health.

3. CURRENT MALADY OF DIGITAL STRESS:

In the current fast paced world, technology is being used more than ever, it is easy for People to become stressed, with many gadgets and easy access to digital applications and information services, thus one is forced to spend chunk of time with smart phones, laptops, tablets that are glued to eyes and ears, apart from health hazards of technology to one's eyes, spine, limbs, it also effects the person mentally leading to stress and ill health One needs to understand or question oneself, if this kind of a change or progress is necessary or beneficial to the individual and to society as a whole. Is all these technological stimuli healthy for the survival of human society and social health is a big question one needs to ponder.

According to recent statistics, 78% of American adults and 95% of American teens are online with 61% of them admitting to being addicted to the Internet. In 2010, it was reported that these media (TV, phones, computers) was about twelve hours a day, up from only 5 hours in 1960.²

An average computer user checks 40 websites a day and switches computer programs 36 times an hour. That means tasks are switched every 2 minutes. And while that might sound that more work is being done, but neuroscientists have a different theory to put forth. Series of studies reveal that, technology overload can lead to extra stress on human brains. This stress can negatively affect memory, accuracy, productivity, empathy, goal setting and decision-making. For example, people who are constantly interrupted by e-mail report increased stress, which have been shown to reduce short-term memory. Some neuroscientists believe that our brains were not designed to handle the amount of information that we take in on a daily basis.³

Digital stress abounds in today's tech-centric society, an average person consumes significantly more media than before and people have become multitasking far more than they used to be, and that's where the trouble lies. Human brain can manage two tasks at a time but, when it comes to a third task, brain becomes overwhelmed, and as a result the accuracy drops. In a digital context, this drop in accuracy could manifest itself in several ways, like picking up extraneous information over relevant or task-related information, having a hard time switching from one task to another, or poorly filtering out irrelevant information, etc.⁴

2. www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/teens-fact-sheets/
3. <http://brandongaille.com/the-psychology-multitasking-and>

4. <https://www.payscale.com/carer-5.news/category/infographics/page/24>

There are many more troubling effects of digital stress – like when the brain is overwhelmed, it triggers a ‘fight or flight’ reaction, which in turn causes regions of the brain that deal with empathy to shut down. Those who use the Internet excessively may suffer from grey matter atrophy, which hurts decision-making, concentration and goal-setting abilities.⁵

4.IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON MENTAL HEALTH:

It is a paradox to see how technology is influencing all spheres of life both at the macro and micro level, the various types of technology driven transactions and services provided in all business sectors, at the individual level, technology is pushed to handle issues online be it mental, physical, emotional or spiritual aspects.–how it is influencing one’s life is evident in every aspect of one’s daily life. Human mind has achieved everything by the power of imagination. It is by the virtue of imagination that man has ushered in an age dominated by revolutionary technological developments. From the day of landing on moon to a trip to Mars, from the introduction of Microsoft Windows to the inception of 3G and 4G technologies, from tape recorders to Apple iPods, from rarely available landlines telephones to abundantly available breed of smart phones, QWERTY phones and I Phones, from the origin of world wide web to web 2.0 and web 3.0 technologies etc, from revolutionary internet search engines to addictive social media networking websites, from blogging, twitter forums to online shopping, technological developments have impacted human life in a way that it is next to impossible to imagine in their absence. The technological developments have made life amazingly easier, simpler and comfortable; anything is just a click away. Similarly, it has also brought in several negative health impacts - Psychological, Mental, emotional and Physiological, disturbances and problems in day to day life.

5.IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON SOCIETY:

Since early 1970’s the developments in the field of technology has led to a far better, comfortable and

⁵https://cmhc.utexas.edu/stressrecess/Level_One/fof.html
content life for people of this century. But, on the other hand, it has equally created innumerable problems. Mostly, these problems have erupted due to misuse/abuse of technology. Population studies highlight a surge in the use of antidepressants and anti-anxiety medicines among people, while clinicians see increasingly complex presentations of stress, anxiety and depression among all ages groups. Societal patterns and trends over the past decade like the early onset of puberty among girls, easy access to internet, single parent families create mental disturbances, leading to individual emotional breakdowns and physical wellbeing. Societal expectations haunt them throughout their lives,

even in an increasingly evolving cosmopolitan society like ours. Achieving a work life balance still remains a challenge. Different people respond differently to stress, tell-tale signs of stress and anxiety include worries or fears that are out of proportion, avoidance of feared situations and lack of control.

Studies in the past have pointed to increasing prevalence of depression, mood swings, anxiety thoughts of self-harm and substance abuse, the recent National Mental Health Survey has now confirmed it with empirical data. It says that one in every 20 people in India suffer from depression. Conducted by NIMHANS depression was reported to be higher in women in the 40-49 age group and those residing in metros. Equally high rates were reported from among the elderly with 3.5% of the population affected, the survey conducted in 12 states, said that common mental disorders that include depression, anxiety are a huge burden on society affecting Nearly 10% of the population, and was closely related to several non- communicable disorders such as diabetes and cardio vascular disease thereby contributing to a significantly increased health burden on the society.⁷⁷. The Hindu Survey: One in every 20 people is depressed, 25th October 2015, pg:3

As B. F. Skinner puts it, ‘The real problem is not whether machines think but whether men do’ sends a strong message, that since human mind has developed these technologies, hence, it has to understand and use technology as a tool, carefully and shrewdly to benefit mankind not to succumb as a slave to it.

6.THE AREAS WHERE MUCH INFLUENCE OF TECHNOLOGY IS SEEN ARE IN THE FIELD OF-

6.1.Business:

Internet technology has transformed people’s lives in several ways. It is difficult to keep track of them. International trade and business has become quicker, efficient and more dependable today, than compared to last fifty years. It is simpler and faster to book flights, railway tickets, and bus tickets online from the comforts of home. Bill payments bank transactions and account related works of every business is easily managed and driven by online facilities available.

Financial sectors such as Banks, Income tax, Investment banking, excise duty and other financial institutions have embraced technology and online system and this has made transactions much safer and transparent. These days people need not go to a bank, wait in a line for long hours to have money transactions. The ATM technology has made banking transaction of money withdrawals faster and simpler. In today’s technologically driven world, it is impossible for any type small or large businesses to thrive without a web presence and on line transactions. Region and geographical location, makes no difference, whether one is a, stay at home

mom or an entrepreneur, the outreach and profitability of one's business model can be guaranteed to a large extent, based on the connectivity established over the internet and use of technology to suit one's business advantage.

Google maps, GPRS, Adwords and Google AdSense have made remote travelling, online advertising as the greatest growing businesses. Be it local shops, restaurants, shopping malls, retail stores, almost every place have installed swipe machines and are fitted with Pay TM they are well managed with the help of technology. Businesses in every field have become quicker, competitive and challenging. The impact and influence of technology on business can be experienced everywhere. Information and knowledge are fuelling the growth of business in every sector.

6.2. Education:

Technology has penetrated in every sphere of life. There's a noticeable effect of technology on education, the way people are learning has undergone a series of changes, there are virtual classrooms, virtual tutors, students and online coaching and learning, there are some of the typical examples of the way lives have been changed by technology. Our previous generations never got the opportunity to study in interactive classrooms with 3D images and projectors and they never had an access to the ocean of knowledge, the Internet and various other technological facilities. Computers, PowerPoint presentations and the Internet technology have given teaching an altogether different dimension.

In the last one decade, technology has completely dominated education sector. It has become computer dominated and has gone beyond live teachers, classrooms, notebooks and blackboards. Computer education has become an integral part of elementary, primary and higher education across the globe, as it is the key to make the students competent enough to meet the industry requirements. In recent years, online education and distance learning courses have changed the way of gaining knowledge. Now, it is not very important to be present in classrooms to hear a lecture or understand some intricate concept. This doesn't mean that student - teacher interaction has been replaced by technological developments instead, it is the audience and students located in different nations, can easily get access to any lecture being conducted in any country through you tube and video conferencing. Many websites also promote online tutoring, when there is continuous Internet access, learning a concept is not a problem even in the absence of a tutor or a teacher around.

6.3 Communication

Development in the field of technology has transformed the way people interact and communicate. Social media and, networking websites are the order of day. Websites like Facebook and Twitter have given birth to the concepts of social media marketing. And, Business networking to personal online dating - Communication was never so fast and easy compare to present times. Meeting new people online has given way to the billion dollar industry of dating. Latest gadgets and gizmos have become a part and parcel of everyday life. Geographical boundaries have melted away, distances do not matter where people are, or what they're involved in, Whatapp calls, media, Skype interaction has made it possible to interact with people at any time of the day with the help of modern communication technology. In the last couple of decades, communication has become increasingly faster, kudos to the Internet that has brought email and chatting facilities at finger tips. Instead of posting letters to their respective destinations, it is easier to send an e-mail. Advantages and disadvantages are prevalent side by side like two faces of the same coin, along with the advantages; communication technology has brought in some disadvantages too. The negative aspects of technology are the threats of Internet security, hacking and scams are increasing day by day, cybercrimes and security are becoming a global issue, governments of every country are trying hard to make rules and bylaws regarding cyber access. Moreover, lifestyle habits have changed drastically and nowadays, psychologists are frequently using the term, 'Internet addiction' to address certain issues in the lives of people who are constantly glued to their computers. It is true that technology has brought in lot of changes in every bodies life. It will certainly give us power and also make a difference in our social, official and personal lives if used wisely. It depends on individual user who uses it judiciously and derives benefit from it, instead of getting addicted and becoming a slave to technology.

6.4. Technology: Digital Stress and Psychological Disorders

In today's world, stress has become a person's new best friend, psychologists and counselors use this term frequently while treating their clients. The 'Human body' doesn't distinguish between physical and psychological threats. When body is stressed over a busy schedule, an argument with a friend, in a traffic jam, or a pile of bills, body reacts strongly, that is when stress begins to set in. Digital stress occurs when, current day possession and use of multiple gadgets has left with very little time or no time for relaxation and patience for maintaining physical fitness and personal relationships. Carrying home incomplete files and slogging late night to meet deadlines have been around since long. But today, technology has almost extended to home more efficiently and people are bombarded with information from all sides.

Alongside, we have also promoted the development of multitasking function i.e simultaneously using - Cell phone, desktop computer, laptop, mp3player, e-book reader, Tablet PC, iPod etc. Though human brain is not fashioned to cope up with this, and people are not ready to change the hectic lifestyle. As a result, brain shuts down some regions and slowly becomes incapable of filtering relevant information and extracting facts from short term - long term memory to employ for working memory. Atrophy of grey cells subsequent upon long hours of internet use, and altered behavior patterns are said to be other unsavory results like cardiovascular disease, nervous disorders, gastrointestinal problems, and depression etc.

Digital Stress -Problems and danger	
Cognitive Problems include	Emotional signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Memory related problems ability to concentrate judgment capacity Pessimistic attitude Anxious thoughts Chronic worrying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moodswings Short temper and irritation Uneasiness and mental agitation Easily triggered Feelings of loneliness Distress and depressed
Physical Problems are	Behavioural changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nervousness Digestion, stomach upsets Nausea, dizziness Chest pain, raise in blood pressure Loss of sex drive Frequent cough and colds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Either eating more or less Less or more sleep Like to be alone Procrastination or neglecting responsibilities Use of drinks, drugs, cigarettes for relaxing Nervous habits (eg. nail biting, toe tapping)

7.MANAGING DIGITAL STRESS/ WAYS TO COPE UP WITH DIGITAL STRESS:

Stress has become a common word in our daily conversations and it is mostly seen in all age groups. Chronic stress, if ignored for a longer period, can lead to a mental and physical breakdown. Each person deals with stress in different way based on his level of experience, knowledge and capability to deal with stressful situations. For majority of people it is not possible to do away with computers and cell phones in everyday life, but letting them over whelm on individual self is certainly not very healthy. Though stress is not always a bad thing, positive and right amount of stress is needed for people to achieve their goals with perseverance and determination.

Stress is best dealt as soon as it's been felt. In order to manage one's stress levels, it is important to follow a practice or habit that helps keep it under control and not affect one's life negatively. Here are some ways to deal with digital stress-

7.1.Switchoff all gadgets after work hours:

When, an individual constantly makes one self-accessible, after working hours, is simply inviting trouble. While it is reasonable to respond to an emergency, work can wait till the next day at other times. Inform colleagues/work related personnel and make a rule that there is no place for office work after office hours. Switch off your telephone/cell phone, computer and allow yourself to unwind and relax.

7.2.Try for face-to-face conversation:

A common problem encountered while communicating mostly via email, social networking sites or text messages, is that, there are times when it becomes difficult to detect the tone or actual meaning of the person on the other side. A face-to-face or a telephonic conversation creates lesser misunderstandings. Also, waiting for a reply can cause anxiety. To avoid unnecessary stress, try and have important conversations face-to-face and keep the emails and SMSs for appointments or casual talk.

7.3.Be selective of the contact lists and be sure about who you have on your contact lists:

Reading regular social media updates during busy schedules or getting trivial mails and messages is not a healthy habit. Be selective about to whom you are available, where and when etc. Do not get connected or feel compelled to accept each and every friend request or exchange personal contact details when asked for i.e. inviting trouble on your own. Prioritize your contacts on basis of importance or set up two accounts — one for co-workers and the other for friends and family.

7.4.Develop resistance to trends/ don't give in to trends:

Knowledge of the current trends in one's own field is important. But one should have enough knowledge to ask oneself how much important it is to know and have it all. Perception of absolute necessity to have the latest gadgets and to have accounts on every popular social networking site is very much necessary. These things are there to improve personal and professional life, but not to take away from it. And if any of these causes stress, it is obvious that something somewhere is going wrong. Sticking to the absolute essentials is wise than to pressurized or/and stressed by catching up trends.

7.5. Be unavailable:

Studies have shown that many people spend a shocking number of hours connected to the virtual world or on mobile phones. Not only does this lead to dysfunctional relationships, it can also ruin one's social life. Experts suggest for a regular digital detoxification, i.e. disconnecting laptop or cell phone, and spend an hour (or more, if one can) daily without these gadgets and never to compromise on sleep and exercise is very essential.

7.6. Techno-stress:

Electronic devices impact health directly or indirectly, but one can be smarter about how one uses the smart phones, simple lifestyle changes like avoiding sleeping with cell phones under the pillow, physically distancing cell phone and laptop, adopting to texting, keeping the speakers on while using cell phone, will certainly help people experience less techno-stress.

Whenever an individual cannot adapt to or cope with information technologies in a healthy manner. They feel compulsive about being connected and sharing constant updates, feel forced to respond to work-related information in real-time, and engage in almost habitual multi-tasking. They feel compelled to work faster because information flows faster, and have little time to spend on sustained thinking and creative analysis. Techno-stress is the result of altered habits of work and collaboration that are being brought about due to the use of modern information technologies at office and at home situations.

8. CONCLUSION:

Life in these turbulent times is getting complicated and warrants undue expectations on people who access and use these gadgets. In addition, demands time, energy and financial resources for regular updating and maintenance. Therefore, people stretch their patience and strength beyond limits to fulfill these without realizing the extent of damage it causes to physical and emotional health. Relaxation turns into an alien concept, and people have become slave to work/activity.

Thus, there is a need to practice control over spending quality time with people as well as technology. These gadgets are to make life better and efficient and allow space to enjoy the simple pleasures of life with less dependency on technology.

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