Mahnoor Mirwani
5/11/24

Essay : People Have Become Overly Dependent on Technology

Outline

I. Introduction

Thesis Statement : Technology has crossed the bounds of a mere necessity; people have become excessively dependent on technology; with concerning repercussions, this progressive dependence can be slowed down if not reversed with certain initiatives.

II. Defining Technology and Determing its Scope.

III. People Have Not Become Overly Dependent on Technology : A Counterview

    A. Man is a rational being — The Lockean perspective

IV. How People Have Become Overly Dependent On Technology

  A. Increasing use of social media to run electoral campaigns.

    1. 2015 UK general elections (Labour using Blue State Digital and conservatives, Facebook ads.

  B. Overuse of electronic media to influence public opinion through propaganda.

    1. Building zionist narratives

  C. Students' unhealthy reliance on the internet and AI tools

    1. Example: Chat GPT

    2. Wikipedia assignments

  D. Teachers required to use AI detecting tools + technology to counter technology.

    1. GPT Zero

    2. Winston AI.

  E. Introducing AI in the medical field

1. 'GPT medical' by HKUST.

F. Virtual meetings replacing real-time gatherings
   1. Example: Zoom, Microsoft Teams.

G. Mushroom growth in the use of games and gadgets
   1. 26 million Roblox user under the age of 13.
   2. Three billion people play video games globally (DFC Intelligence report).

H. E-commerce Industry on Rise.
   1. Registered e-commerce merchants in Pakistan increased by 76% between 2020 and 2021 (ISSI).

I. Computers in industries and smart technology in agriculture are replacing manfore

J. Dependence of businesses on ads for marketing
   1. Facebook processes 5 million ads per day (Forbes)

K. Gamification of violence
 1. Mass shooters inspired from online games and using them to propagate extremism

V. Repercussions of The Excessive Use of Technology
 A. Spread of hate and extremism
  1. militants of 2022 Anarkali blast used PUBG to communicate (Sohail Habib)

 B. Substandard academic performances
  1. Example: poor quality papers (MIT)

 C. Psychological impacts in the form of anxiety and depression
  1. 70% increase in self-reported depression (NIH).

 D. People falling prey to cyberbullying
  1. Every one in six children faces cyberbullying (WHO report)

 E. Dissemination of disinformation
  1. Lahore rape case.

VI. Way-forward: Containing The Overuse of Technology

   A. The role of parents in upbringing and grooming children

   B. Educational institutions in shaping positive attitudes

   C. Regulating The use of technology
      1. Example: Digital Services Act of EU.

   D. Conducting empirical studies to analyze current extent of technology usage and devise better solutions accordingly.

VII. Conclusion

People Have Become Overly Dependent On Technology

The use of technology is exponentially growing. It has made way into every sphere of human life. Subsequently, people have become overly dependent on technology. Although the Lockean view negates man being irrational, ground realities present an alternative perspective. The over-reliance of people on technology is evidenced in various ways: electoral campaigns highly depend on social media, governments and non-state actors use electronic media to influence public opinion; in the academic arena, students depend on the Internet and Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and teachers use technological tools to detect plagiarism. Moreover, AI has made a maiden entrance in medical field as well. In the social sphere of people, virtual meetings are increasingly replacing real-time gatherings and games and gadgets take up the leisure e time of most people. Technology also holds an unwarranted presence in economic field. Rise in e-commerce, usage of computers in industries

and agricultural sectors, and marketing strategies have made economy electronic. Furthermore, extremists use technology to propagate extremism. Consequently, people are facing the repercussions of overindulgence in technology. The spread of hate, poor performance of students and academicians, anxiety and depression, cyberbulling and dissemination of disinformation are a result of its unbridled usage. Thus, it is true that technology has crossed its bounds of a mere necessity and people have become excessively dependent on it; with concerning repercussions, this progressive dependence can be slowed down if not reversed with certain initiatives.

In order to understand the correlation between people and technology, it is pertinent to know what technology is. Technology is is the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes. It is an aid for people. It involves tools, machines and systems intended to solve problems and make tasks easier. Like any other human invention, the use of technology can be productive or detrimental depending

upon its usage.

Idealists like John Locke propounded that man was a rational being. Thus, man cannot be irrational in anything, not even in the use of technology in modern times. Man is born with reason and therefore, knows to what extent should he utilize an invention. The use of technology is limited and any disproportimate implication is beyond the control of human beings. Such a naturalist view would have been acceptable had the ground realities not presented an alternative perspective.

Beginning with the political domain, it is obvious that people have become overly dependent on technology. Electoral campaigns today unduly rely on social media. political parties run campaigns to promote their manifestoes and gain public support. Such reliances began in 2015 general elections in the United Kingdom. The bi-party system used multiple platforms in the electronic media to gather maximum hinge. The Labour party, for example, used

Blue state Digital, an online fundraising and consultancy of campaigns to gather mass support. Simultaneously, the Conservatives relied on Facebook ads to market their party.

Social media campaigning has since taken roots and is being outrageously used by candidates contending for elections.

Furthermore, the undue use of electronic media by governments and non-state actors to influence public opinion through propaganda is in practice. Incumbent parties and non-governmental entities have shifted their focus from print to electronic media. Of the recent examples is the initiative by the West to build a pro-zionist narrative among the people of their nations and beyond. This portrayal is done through limited broadcasting of the truth, fabricating news and exaggerating information to the point that it turns into disinformation. This is further fuelled by the increasing use of electronic media by general public extending the reach of social such propaganda to more people.

The use of technology is unreasonable in the academic arena as well. Students rely on the internet and AI tools at unhealthy levels. The works and assignments of learners lack in-depth understanding and research leading to what people call 'wikipedia Assignments'. Similarly, the use of Artificial Intelligence for projects and even dissertations have limited the cognitive understanding of students. Tools such as ChatGPT by OpenAI have crept into the daily practices of disciples. To aggravate the situation, softwares and systems of the likes of Quillbot to humanize AI-generated works have made way into their practices. Using AI to humanize texts and documents seems to be a scenario of a parallel universe.

The outrageous use of technological mechanisms is not limited to students. In order to catch up or even counter the overrule by students, teachers use technology to counter technology. Since the works of students are presented with the help of modern innovations which, sometimes,

can be unethical, teachers resort to similar tools to deal with them. For example, the instructors are required to use AI detection tools such as GPT Zero and Winston AI to ensure minimized plagiarism. Moreover, recent reports have revealed that a monotony in research papers submitted by academicians are a result of immoderate use of academic softwares. Thus, people are overly relying on technology even in rational educational institutions.

Not only this, technology has also crossed the bounds in the medical sector. It is to be acknowledged that technological has been revolutionary, in positive terms, in the field of medicine. However, the entrance of AI tools in such a sensitive department raises some questions of concern. GPT Medical by Hong Kong University of Science and Technology is a very recent innovation. This AI tool can diagnose up to thirty types of cancers and other diseases. It even recommends treatments for respective diseases. Such reliance on human inventions that are often criticized as being error-prone

and generic can be detrimental if used without checks and with such inordinate dependence.

Gradually, but surely, technology has also crept into the social spheres of human life. Virtual meetings are exceeding replacing tangible gatherings. This shift saw an leapfrogging during the Covid-19, when people were bound to stay indoors and work from home and communicate through electronic devices. The quarantine extended to longer than expected periods and people got accustomed to their devices. The works took place through softwares like Zoom and Teams; educational institutions followed the suit. Gatherings went from actual meetings to Zoom meetings and FaceTime. Now, years after the social distancing has ended, people remain physically disconnected, owing to their overindulgence on technological gadgets.

Another evidence of the people being overly dependent on technology is the

mushroom growth in the use of games and relevant gadgets. A report presented by Pakistani security analyst, Sohail Habib, revealed that there are 26 million Roblox users under the age of 13 alone around the world. Roblox, like many other games, presents a 'virtual universe' or a 'metauniverse' to its users. Another report by DFC Intelligence uncovered that there are over three billion people who play video games, globally. This makes up about 40% of global population. Such a massive participation evidences how exorbiently people are invested in technology.

Not only in the social domain but also in the economic realm, people show excessive indulgence in technology. Firstly, the e-commerce industry is on rise like never before. Taking Pakistan as a case study, the Institute of strategic Studies Islamabad reported that the registered e-commerce merchants increased by 76% between 2020 and 2021. The same reports attributes this abrupt rise to covid-19 where much of the world went digital. E-commerce refers to the buying and selling of goods

and services over the internet. Electronic commerce is multidimensional, and thus can occur in four ways: Business-to-Business (B2B), Business-to-Consumer (B2C), consumer-to-consumer (C2C), and Consumer-to-Business (C2B). Examples of e-commerce include platforms such as Daraz, Olx and Temu. With 'click to pay' and 'delivery at doorsteps' people are exceedingly resorting to online businesses.

In addition to e-commerce, computer industries and smart technologies in the agricultural sectors are replacing manforce. Owners and investors, having realized that investing in technology is more beneficial in the longer run, are updating their systems from man-run to machine-run. Smart agricultural practices are the need of the hour. Due increase in population and subsequently in demand in agricultural practice products, it has become impractical to rely on labourer alone to meet those demands. Latest technologies are required to keep up with the growing pace of such demands. Similar shift in the industrial sector has made people

more dependent on technology than ever before.

Furthermore, marketing is the bedrock of any business, requires one technology or another. Be it social media, television acts or poster system, they use of technology for such economic ventures is inevitable. A report by Forbes disclosed that facebook processes 5 million ads per day. This is the daily record of only one social media platform. The numbers of all social media platforms and other means will, undoubtedly, be very high. Given the figures, it becomes nearly impossible to imagine to promote one's business without the use of technology. Such reliance on a human invention is out of all proportion to human capabilities.

The excessive use of technology has led to its misuse. A relatively new concept is on the rise— gamification of violence. This refers to the use of gaming platforms to propagate extremism. A report, also previously mentioned by Sohail Habib disclosed

that mass shooters of the likes of Anders Breik who killed 77 people in the 2011 and the christchurch criminal were both inspired and training~look from online video games. The names of the games, as mentimed were World of Warcraft and Fortnite, respechvely. The over-dependence of this level, whose repercussims extented beyond self-harm, highlight to what extent, extremist in this cause, do people rely on technology.

The act of excessively using technology is not a neutral one; it comes with repercussions. Firstly, it has led to the spread of hate and extremism. This includes gaming among other electronic media. for its propagation. The scenes behind the blast of 2022 in Anarkali bazar which took three lives are shocking. Investigations relevant to the attack revealed that the militants had used Player Unknown's Battleground, popularly known as PUBG for this attack. One of the militants involved in this heinous crime confessed that they had used the gaming platform for recruitment and coordination. Thus, the disproportimate use of technology

has culminated into extremist activities.

Secondly, the overdependence on technology has resulted into substandard academic performances among students and even instructors. The massachusetts Institute of Technology conducted a study where it revealed that poor quality papers and fake journals are becomming common. This is extremely concerning given the fact that the implications are not limited to the present era. Such acts compromise the quality of knowledge and research for generations to come. While technology is a result of academic excellence, the product is now negatively impacting the producers due to its uncurbed use.

Thirdly, there are also psychological repercussions of the unreasonable use of technology. They are manifested in the form of anxiety and depression. The two mental disturbances are more common in the youth, not surprisingly the largest sector among the users of modern technologies.

The National Institute of Health, US in a report disclosed that more frequent digital media led to mental health issues. This was backed by Royal Society by Public Health, UK which identified social media to increase rates of anxiety and depression in young people by 70%. Thus, the increase in the frequent use of technology has <u>linear correlation</u> between the with mental health.

Finally, dissemination of misinformation is a major drawback of the disproportionate dependence on technology. In our tech-savvy era, it is very easy to devise and propagate a wrong information. The Lahore rape case which sparked uncontrollable protests throughout the province and resulted in the death of a security guard and arrest of many students is an example of grave concern. Although, it sheds light on the power of technology in spreading a news for good causes as well, this particular case gave a glimpse of how powerful digital media is. for causing unrest.

Notwithstanding the concerning repercussions, it is not too late to get on a constructive trajectory with regards to the dependence on technology. The first initiative towards the positive approach is the active participation of parents in grooming their children in order to bring a positive attitude in them. Children are very easily influenced by their environment. Subsequently, they will adopt an approach towards life based on their upbringing. Parents must encourage physical activities instead of letting the children alone with electronic gadgets. Today's parents are a busy generation with both partners working simultaneously. In such a scenario, it is very common easy for the children to go unattended for longer periods and resultantly relying on technology. Parents must utilize their time, productively, to raise socially-aware children.

In addition to the role of parents in constructing a productive society, educational institutions play an important role in shaping positive attitudes. Children enter schools in very young age and leave the education premises when adults; they spend much

of their learning age in these institutions. Therefore, it is very pertinent for the academic entities to realize their role. They must differentiate between the right use and misuse of technology for their own good as well as for the greater good. Children must be taught that technology is to make things easy and not to complicate them.

Furthermore, regulating the use of technology, particularly at administrative level, is very crucial in maintaining the efficient use of technology. Legal actions are needed for any prospective overuse or misuse of any form of technology. A model for reference is the Digital Services Act as adopted by the European Union. Under this Act, the EU can charge companies involved in spreading disinformation with exorbient amounts, one that companies would do anything to avoid. The reason that laws were made is because human nature in general is opportunistic. In absence of laws, he may resort to unlawful actions.

Thus, regulatory measures are extremely necessary so that human reliance on technology is only productive and not detrimental to himself or anyone else.

Finally, conducting empirical studies to analyze current extent of technological use is imminently required. Empirical studies are ones whose conclusions are exclusively derived from concrete, verifiable evidence. This means that the data collected in the studies can be relied on and thus, better, more suitable solutions can be devised in coping with the unbridled use and dependence on technology. These data can be collected at national levels and then, through international collaboration, can be effectively utilized so that people around the world can benefit from it.

In conclusion, people have become overly dependent on technology due to its versatile use in all spheres of human life. What began as a tool for human assistance has now enslaved people making them exceedingly dependent on it.

People rely on technology in the political domain, be it for elections or for devising public opinion. In the academic arena, both students and teachers excessively take help from technology. Along with a strong presence in the medical realm, technology also has an unwarranted dominance in the economic sectors. The use is so extended that even extremists depend on it for terrorist activities. The repercussions of such excessive dependence are evidenced in the form of prevalent hate, substandard academic performances, psychological issues and spread of disinformation. However, with initiatives like better parenting, improved educational strategies, regulatory use of technology, and analysis-based studies, the technological slavery can be converted into technological proficiency.