MODERN MEDIA TECHNOLOGY: A THREAT TO HUMAN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract
The frequent usage of modern media technology to interact is now a global phenomenon. It has made it possible for the world to become a global village through the use of electronic gadget like mobile phones, computers and the introduction of social media as tool for communication. Through modern media technology as tool for communication, distance is no longer a barrier especially with the aid of programmed application like Facebook, Twitter (rebranded as 'X'), WhatsApp, Tiktok, Email, etc. The negative aspect of these applications is that while it can be used at ease it has created wide gap in physical communication among relations, friends and associates. This days, people hardly have time to visit loved ones, or family for holidays or vacation. They will rather prefer to chat, ping, mail, or send videos, pictures, or voice notes instead of been physically present. While modern media technology offers us more convenience, human beings are now losing their ability to physically socialize, communicate and care for others. On this grounds, this paper observes that modern media technology has continued to accelerate the loss of human co-existence, affect individual control over their own lives, and undermining interpersonal relationships. Considering these negative impact of this technology, man must be wary of technology in order not to lose the physical bounds that is needed in inter-personal relationships in the world. The paper therefore, recommend that while modern media technological advancement has both positive and negative benefits to man, its usage should be minimized or better still regulated in order to produce a human society where man's inter-personal relationships with others are not threatened.
Keywords: Modern Media, Technology, Human, Interpersonal, Relationships.

Introduction
Modern media technology refers to the tools, platforms, and systems used to create, distribute, and consume various forms of media, including text, images, audio, and video. These technological advancement is at its highest peak of development as we have never experienced before. It has been impacting every single aspect of our lives from our habits, choices to way of doing things. However, man's experience has been transformed since smart technologies were adopted into our daily routines. For instance, in homes, institutions of learning, public and private organizations, companies, religious institutions etc. there is radical integration of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and 4G networks, social media networks and application into their processes in the production of goods and services. Basically, everything is receiving its share from that rapid change. With these advancement, our attention and lives have been constantly altered without resistance.

In today's rapidly changing world, man's interpersonal relationships is in becoming a threat. In the sense, great time spent using modern media technologies in reaching out rather than been physically available. Digital devices which are now an inseparable part of our lives is constantly making man lose its place and control. In today's world, the use of smartphones, computers, tablets, iPhone and all other digital tools are enabling people to be online 24hours of the day. The significant increase of online media and use of internet have both affected our society. It is common this days to see people neglect the social bounds that exists among them. For instance, the rate at which families, relatives and friends physically spend time together has drastically reduced. Physical or face-to-face interaction has been replaced with social media applications like Facebook, Twitter or *X*, Instagram, Email, Telegram, Whatsapp, Tiktok, etc. with the reality of psychological traits (Anderson, *et. al*. 2012). These have practically replaced man physicality in the society.

Despite this precarious condition of man in the society, scientists are busy with their agenda of digital transformation, and Artificial Intelligence (AI), hence overlooking the consequences of destroying the physical interactions among family and friends, and as well eliminate the empathy that existed among man. Forgetting the fact that, human interaction is not only physically beneficial, but also imperative for mental health (Charlotte, 2020). Therefore, how do we checkmate this disturbing effect of technological threat to interpersonal relationships? This statement problem is what the paper aim to resolve. Hence, the paper recommends the practice of digital minimalism in obliterating the

threat poses by the wide spread use of modern media technology that a great danger to human interpersonal relationship.

Modern Media Technology and Human Interaction

As stated in the introduction, modern media technology are tools, platforms or systems that makes of use of Digital media which includes digital audio, video, and images, as well as digital publishing and online media. It also comprises of Social Media Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn that enable users to create and share content. Also, there is the use of Broadcasting Technology like radio, television, and online streaming platforms. The use of Print Media Technology also includes digital printing, online publishing, and e-books. Lastly, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) Technologies that create immersive and interactive media experiences.

Although these modern technology or technology as the case maybe involves the application of knowledge for achieving practical goals in a reproducible way. It plays a critical role in science, engineering, and everyday life *(Skolnikoff, 1993).* Consequently, the era and progress of these technology has redefined the world. The presence of technology made all things digital have power, where iPhones and social media networks have become a necessity, thereby play replacing the presence of man if not in all ramifications.

The impact of modern media technology on human interpersonal relationships is a topic of ongoing debate. The impact of Media Technology span from global connectivity. Here, Media technology has made it possible for people to connect with each other and access information from anywhere in the world. The democratization of media has as well enabled anyone to create and distribute media content, democratizing the media landscape. It has as well cause changes in consumer behavior because of the new business model like online subscription-based streaming services and online advertising with many preferring doing buying or doing business online.

However, while media technology has made communication more convenient and accessible, it also poses significant threats to human interpersonal relationships. Human interaction involves relating to one another, either through conversations or discussion (Charlotte, 2020) but because of modern media technological platform, we interact through numerous devices; smartphones, iPhones, computers, and social media networks or application instead of face-face communication.

Truthfully, humans are naturally relational being structured to interact both physical and interpersonal relationships. For instance, during the Coronavirus (Covid19) pandemic, much higher percentage of human interaction occurs online. Movements were restricted, social distances was adopted to curb the spread of the virus. This greatly affected, families, friends, learning, and human interaction to a large extent. Technology though helpful offer "anemic connection" (Charlotte, 2020). Notwithstanding, it should not take the place of man or bridge social interaction; modern media should complement man's shortcomings without it affecting the other negatively.

There is no doubt that, modern media technology is used in almost all-facets of life, but below are few areas where to understudy these modern media technology in our interpersonal relationships in life.

(a) Technology and Family Connectedness

Technology is practically everywhere. In families it is used to for interacting with one another especially when checking on members of the family. Teens, adults and parents text, chat, video call, Skype, voice notes etc. in checking their loved ones. Most times, the thought of physically checking on family members become problematic with the feelings that technological gadget will be used in reaching out even when it demand physical attention. Thereby contradicting the fact that, physical touch from others has the potential to improve one's health (Charlotte, 2020).

Further, technology and social media networks has affected modern marriages. Couples prefer to chat with their spouse when meaningful conversation is going on. Media technology has also, affected intimacy. In marriage, one important facet of relationship satisfaction is intimacy, which is the feeling of closeness in a relationship, as well as the willingness and tendency to self-disclose to one another in a relationship. However, in a marriage where there is low connectedness there is this feelings of distance and isolation among the couples. This can decreases relationship satisfaction (Hand *et al.*, 2013).

The present wave of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is worsening the situation. The Tesla and SpaceX CEO, Elon Musk and his company has developed a robot wife or humanoid woman called Optimus to replace women. Through Artificial Intelligence, robot wife which requires password, fingerprint and pattern to unlock is being developed to replace physical wife (Elon Musk, 2023). This technology is designed with the personality and characteristics and specification of the woman one requires. This robot wife can only function with the use of batteries charged for three days and can last for a month (Elon Musk, 2023). Chukwuemeka Ebuka (the popular Nigerian comedian Brainjotter)

was among those that has bought the robot wife for person use. If this continues, family, marriage, and friendship connectedness will be in jeopardy. And the world will be full of people without empathy.

(b) Technology and Friendship

In all we do as human, friendship defines our existence. Technology has defined the method and means of making and caring for friends. Nowadays, we do not need to move out in order to makes friends, a click in any of the online dating application one get linked to friends in any part of the world. The danger that comes out from such friends is countless; exploitation, abuse, deceits, immorality, etc. Most of the time, when people are interacting physically, most individuals neglect people around them to concentrates on their phones instead of interacting with their friend (Brown *et al*., 2016). The problem here is that, the more phones and social media one has and depends upon in reaching out with others the more threat it poses to interpersonal relationships with friends. This obliterate face-face communication, personal care, checking on good friends. Thereby promoting 'absent presence effect', which is exemplified through an individual's delayed responses, mechanical intonation, and a motionless body (Aagaard, 2016). Consequently, human being this days are increasingly seeing their peers as 'less human' due to the overwhelming presence and habitual usage of different modern media technologies, such as social medias and online dating (Anderson, 2012).

(c) Technology and Students

In higher institutions of learning, modern technology provides students with instant access to a large amount of information and resources. The internet and digital tools allow students to explore various subjects, conduct research, and access educational materials that may not be available in traditional textbooks. But this benefits provided by technology is not adequately utilized by both teachers and students. Instead, addiction to phones and digital networks continue to play a central role in various institution of learning. Students most especially are distracted with it. It is evident that, while the lecturer is teaching, most student prefer to operate their phones, chat on various social media networks like Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok, Netflix, etc. and commenting on one another's photos instead of learning. In otherwords, college students tend to rely on technology and social media for everything (Baym *et al*., 2007). The significance of this is that, as young people are spending more time online, they may be spending less time concentrating on their studies and face-to-face interactions with their lecturer; this has adverse effect on their student teacher interpersonal relationships.

(d) Technology and Job

In today's business world, the absence of technology is practically impossible. Business and work has always existed since the early times of man. Even though it only began with the simplistic barter system, technological advancement of today has completely taken over human business. All the major industries would fall into a catastrophic collapse if one were to take away modern technology from business, since majority of business operations and transactions somehow involve the use of technology.

However, modern technology is doing most of the job today. As the years go by, the business world is leaning more toward it, making it almost impossible to separate the two from each other. Innovation breeds business, and since technology paves the way for it, it can be gathered here that business needs technology to be sustained. This reason alone has made most job to be done by machine like robot with little or no effort by man. However, man is losing its place to modern technological advancement. These has contributed to high rate alienation of labour, and massive unemployment rate in the society. Unlike before, productivity, business meeting, job interview are done face-to-face but now we notice the use of robotic machine to perform jobs meant for man. Social media network is now used as a point of contact for business meetings and interaction. This alone decrease the interpersonal relationships that used to exist in business and other productive activities.

Negative and Positive Effects of Modern Media Technology
Negative

Social Isolation: Over-reliance on digital communication can lead to social isolation, decreased face-to-face interaction, and reduced empathy.

Decreased Attention Span: The constant stream of information from media technology can lead to decreased attention span, making it challenging to engage in meaningful, in-depth conversations.

Misinterpretation and Miscommunication: Digital communication can lack nonverbal cues, leading to misinterpretation and miscommunication.

Cyberbullying and Online Harassment: Media technology can facilitate bullying and harassment, which can have severe consequences for mental health and relationships.

Unrealistic Expectations and Comparisons: Social media platforms showcase curated versions of others' lives, leading to unrealistic expectations and comparisons that can damage self-esteem and relationships.
Positive
Increased Connectivity: Media technology enables people to connect with others across geographical distances, fostering global communication and relationships.
Improved Communication: Digital communication tools, such as video conferencing, can facilitate more effective communication and collaboration.
Access to Social Support: Online communities and social media groups provide access to social support, resources, and networking opportunities.

Modern Media Technology: A Threat
Technological advancement is all round the globe, with great impact in human activities. The ravaging one is the use of social media handle. Now, human is unable to practically function without technology. Instead of physical conversation, meeting, or discussion technology is rather preferred in place of man. Also, it is common this days to noticed where a person is being tortured, abused, or facing inhuman treatment; instead of helping out in such situation, individuals prefer to pop-out sophisticated phones for video recording with the intentions to post online on their various social media handles. The implication of this is that people prefer their phones and media handle to the person that in dire need of attention. Hence, unlimited use of technology is gradually leading to alienation and lack of empathy. The consequence of this over-prioritization of technology has led to dehumanization; a disposition towards others that debases the others' individuality as either an 'individual' species or an 'individual' object.
Technology has pushed man to lose our ability to converse with each other, to enjoy a meal without looking at our phones, to be present without constant interruptions, etc. We choose to neglect things like socializing with our family or friends and rather, to scroll through WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook for hours. As a result, we lose the basic human capacity to show kindness and empathy towards one another. We become hallow, indifferent and less human. In agreement, Heidegger states that technology has fundamentally altered how people think, see, and live in the world. Heidegger writes, "Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it … modern technology has turned humanity's relationship with nature into the second kind of order, merely instrumental" (Heidegger, 1977). Therefore, introducing technology for better human living, there is need for understanding when it is appropriate to use technology as a tool for achieving certain purpose; for human person is worthy of dignity.

On a contrary, man has allowed over-reliance on technology become part of what makes us human. Due to our heavy reliance on technology we as species have become so dependent on our devices that we are forced to learn how to use them in order to survive. However, while younger generations have become more proficient in the usage of various technological devices, they lack other basic skills. For example, secondary school students, and students of institution of higher learning cannot pass their examination without the use of smartphones. Even elementary school children are no longer taught how to write in cursive. Such basic skills have now been replaced by the presence of technology. In addition, younger generations lack some of the basic social skills which were once common knowledge. For example, when eating in a restaurant if a child is bored during a meal a parent often offers them a technological device rather than a book or crayons. Technology is often seen as the solution to ones problem. However, younger generations have become so dependent on technology that they are ignorant of the downfalls.
The invention of Automation Technology like robot and automated machine in workplace to reduce time-to-delivery and costs and increase the accuracy of work jobs has gained much attention. In fact, the future of work entails that man and machine will soon work side by side, as transactional and mundane jobs are given to machines, while man gets to spend time on more strategic work. Zoom videos are being considered to replace employer-employee conversations. This is an aberration. And with the unprecedented automated technology in today's times, this wide gap on interpersonal relationship is set to increase.

Most of the popular social media applications are designed specifically to steal man's time and attention. Not only is this making it increasingly more challenging to rise above distractions and be productive at work, its having a dehumanizing effect on society in general. The Huffington Post argues that "human beings are losing their ability to communicate in person. To smile at each other. To converse. To enjoy a meal together without looking at their smartphones… this is a tremendous loss that cannot be quantified" (Hazell, 2012). The goal of technology should be

to help in efficiency and solving problems. Instead, technology is an extension of the mind, and you are never able to unplug. This reduces man's creativity and problem-solving.

Hence, the 21st century society needs to put technology-versus-humanistic interactions in perspective. So as to achieve a balance between the two. Human being should not allow technology play a dominant role in shaping who we are as person with rationality and dignity. Because, technology is a human product and doesn't become inhuman. Putting this in mind, will help salvage the situation whereby technology has threatened interpersonal relationship that long existed among the human person.

Conclusion

No doubt, Technology brings huge advantages to human society. It has connected the world, creating nearly limitless opportunity for growth, expansion and speed. While this brings tremendous benefits, there are also equally powerful downsides. As the world continues to grow and advance in the realm of technology, friendships and other interpersonal relationships are changing (Twenge, 2017). A lot of individuals are using mobile phones and social media, and individuals are using technology more as a way to engage more in their relationships with others. It is necessary to understand how technology has affected and changed not only friendships, but also other interpersonal relationships, as well as life as a whole.

In modern culture, it is evident that people are more interconnected with their technologies and media than ever before. But presently, our identities, interpersonal relationships, and senses of self are tied into our phones, Apps, internet dating, and social media, all which has shown a very interesting cognitive change (Anderson, 2012). These increase in technological usage plays a significant role in reducing physical interaction, care, and attention that is deserved of every person and that technology in general is increasingly threatening our society of such. In agreement, Emmanuel Ukata (2020) observes that, in Africa, "A person's worth is determined by the number of persons he has as relatives". Thereby places high regards on collective survival, on collective dignity and generosity".

In view of the above statement, this paper concludes in the thought of Nye's (1990) teachings that, we should not reject technology because it is so ingrained in our lives, we should continue to engage with it. But, we should become aware of *how* we use technology, in order to become less susceptible to its controlling nature. Therefore, our duty is to put our phones down with little use of social media and check on our family and friends. Doing this, will help in forming a more thoughtful interpersonal relationships with others and the world through science, technology, and society. Moreso, by acknowledging both the benefits and drawbacks of modern media technology, we can work to mitigate its negative effects and cultivate healthier, more meaningful interpersonal relationships.

Recommendations

In other to resolve this threat posed by modern media technology, the following recommendation should be adopted so as to mitigate the negative impact of modern media technology to man's interpersonal relationships.

1. Set Boundaries: Establish limits on the use of modern media technology in order to maintain a healthy balance between digital and physical interactions.

2. Practice Empathy and Active Listening: Effort should be made to understand others' perspectives and engage in meaningful conversations.

3. Engage in Physical Interactions: Priorities should be placed on in-person interactions and activities to ensure deeper connections and relationships.

4. Monitor and Manage Online Behavior: Be mindful of online behavior and take steps to prevent cyberbullying and online harassment.

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