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ENGL 110C

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November 20, 2022

<div align="center">What are you looking at now?</div>

Today's world involves one common practice that no matter where you go, what you look at, and how hard you try to resist the temptation-it finds you one way or another. Digital technology runs the way we live in ways that were thought of as dreams a decade ago. We see them becoming watches, school work engines, and they literally bend the previous expectations the world had for them. However, in this paper, I look to talk about the negative mental health effects within the adolescent community caused by our expedient pursuit of becoming a technologically advanced society. Through that, I would like to push for my solution which is to reduce screen usage in schools that do not necessarily need digital technology to operate.

The first supporting source for my argument is a study done by Andrew Przybylski and Netta Weinstein. In their study, they gathered participants in England, who were all fifteen years of age, and had them take questionnaires to help draw conclusions on how their daily screen time usage affected their psychological well being. Through their study they found that "moderate use of digital technology is not harmful (Przybylski and Weinstein)", however, "high levels of engagement may have a measurable, albeit small, negative influence (Przybylski and Weinstein)." From this one can gather that, with moderation, technology and screen usage can be safe, however, when used in classrooms, it can become excessive as our society becomes increasingly dependent upon their ease of use. This would mean a backwards shift in time for many educational facilities, but it could lead to a better future as the distractions that all our

electronic devices possess would be less prominent. An example of this would be the ability to be able to text and connect with others on a laptop that an in- class assignment must be done on. Also, one can not forget about the infinite possibilities that are present on the Internet which can provide for an endless supply of content to distract in a time of instruction. I believe that with a limit to how many classes require the constant distraction of technology to be a necessary means for instruction, there could be opportunities for more class engagement and retention of lectures from class.

My second source is by Jean Twenge and W. Keith Campbell and it sets out to look at the links between screen time and decreased mental health state among children and adolescents. In 2016, they found thousands of participants between the ages of two and seventeen which all had a survey completed by their caregivers based on their screen time. After analyzing their data, they found that high users of screens were the most likely to exhibit the highest levels of poor emotional regulation as they were described as "harder to care for and as lower in self-control (Twenge and Campbell)." This differed when Twenge and Campbell examined the low users as they found there was almost no difference between that group and the group that did not use technology at all. One finding that stood out more, however, was that "Associations between screen time and lower psychological well-being were larger among adolescents than young children (Twenge and Campbell)." This was further supported when the point of adolescents being "more likely to have their own smartphone…which allows the use of technology in more situations (Twenge and Campbell)." With keeping these points in mind, the ease of access that adolescents already have when it comes to technology combined with the almost required nature to use it in school, there is never a break from the time they awaken to when they decide to rest their bloodshot eyes which causes more harm than good.

Both of the previously mentioned sources have given insight into why my solution could work if the amount of time spent using technology was reduced in a school setting, however, a study that gives an opposing take on my argument is one by Candice Odgers and Michaeline Jensen. They created a review that looked at previously conducted studies and interviews with the intention of finding the relationship between digital technology use and mental health in adolescents. After analyzing over 170 studies, Odgers and Jensen found that "most research to date has been correlational, focused on adult versus adolescents, and has generated a mix of often conflicting small positive, negative and null associations." It is then stated that most of the research done on adolescents' use of technology and psychological well being "has been focused on negative effects and has been based on weak correlational data (Odgers and Jensen)." Odgers and Jensen's conclusion was that there is a common assumption that electronic device usage is bad for mental health and it leads it into becoming a common fact for most people who are against the use of technology. Their solution was, "what is needed most is a focus on how to reach young people when they are in crisis and when support is needed most (Odgers and Jensen)."

While I can get behind the point Odgers and Jensen made of technology used practically being stereotyped as bad, I do not believe that their solution is valid in the situation that arises when an adolescent is technologically dependent. In most cases, when an individual attempts to help a potentially socially awkward adolescent who has high electronic device usage and dependency, it can cause a shutdown and reaction that increases the reliance on the device even more than before. It can then be even worse as found by Twenge and Campbell when they stated that "relationships with caregivers" were also negatively affected in adolescents who had high levels of screen time usage. With that being said, I believe that involving support in such a way

could be an unnecessary means and it could be prevented if there is a stronger moderation on technology usage to begin with. By then using information from Przybylski and Weinstein, there is an expansion to my point since they say "adolescents are less engaged in…activities that support intrapersonal and social development." This further demonstrates that having an invasive role on their technology usage, once addicted, could become their reason for relying harder on their electronic device as a way to flee from the situation which would be counterproductive.

Living in a digital age is becoming an increasingly losing battle for adolescents as it becomes the staple of their life and as it continues to expand beyond school and into the workforce. This issue is one that is hard to address without significantly hurting the economy and several school systems, but I believe that if implemented correctly, there could truly be a change that saves our generation from the clutches of technology. It is unnecessary to have a laptop become a textbook and for a two question assignment to have to be uploaded onto a server when it could be turned into a class discussion to promote social interaction. There is an infinite list of benefits for giving up the screen in front of you now whether or not you are an adolescent. However, with them being the future of the world and the after effects of a life altering pandemic, we need help. Save us from this digitally native society and give us a fighting chance to become the leaders the world needs us to be.

Works Cited

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