

DIGITAL ISOLATION: TECHNOLOGICAL AUTISM AS A MODERN CHALLENGE

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Abstract

In recent decades, digitalization has permeated all spheres of life—from work to personal relationships. However, the rapid development of technology has also introduced new challenges, notably digital isolation. This condition refers to a state in which an individual loses the ability for full social interaction with others and society, becoming dependent on digital technologies. The term "technological autism" is often used in this context to describe disruptions in social behavior resulting from the persistent use of digital devices. Digital isolation is characterized by a progressive detachment from the real world, with increased immersion in digital devices and online interactions. This phenomenon is associated with frequent use of smartphones, social networks, and other digital tools, leading to decreased activity in offline environments. Individuals in this state often report feelings of emotional emptiness and alienation despite maintaining virtual contacts.

Introduction

Digital isolation can be viewed as a form of social withdrawal, where attention is focused predominantly on virtual reality, while real interpersonal relationships are deprioritized. Online environments tend to offer a sense of comfort that surpasses real-world interactions, potentially leading to significant psychosocial problems.

Technological autism is a condition characterized by difficulties in interpersonal communication, often accompanied by an inability to express emotions and needs in real-life situations, despite active engagement with digital technologies. It can be conceptualized as an invisible barrier that develops between the individual and the real world.

Manifestations and Symptoms. **Impairments in Emotional Perception:** Individuals may experience a diminished capacity for empathy, with superficial interactions with others. They often fail to understand or resonate with others' emotional states, resulting in shallow and artificial social relationships. **Reduced Quality of Real-life Communication:** Virtual communication—via messages, comments, or video calls—cannot fully substitute face-to-face interactions, which have a deeper emotional and social impact. **Dependence on Technology:** A hallmark feature is reliance on digital devices and social media. People may feel anxious or insecure when disconnected from the internet or their devices, leading to deterioration in psycho-emotional health and decreased social activity. **Factors Contributing to Technological Autism.** Excessive engagement with virtual environments such as online gaming, social media, video platforms, and various applications, which provide constant stimulation and serve as a means to avoid real-world problems and conflicts. Low digital literacy and an inability to effectively balance virtual and real-life activities, resulting in





overdependence on technological environments and neglect of real-world relationships and responsibilities.

Consequences of Digital Isolation and Technological Autism. Psychological and Emotional Disorders: These may include depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and other mental health issues stemming from social deprivation. Deterioration of Social Bonds: Reduced quality and frequency of face-to-face interactions with family, friends, and colleagues can lead to social withdrawal, loneliness, and social isolation. Impaired Social Adaptation: Individuals may struggle to establish and maintain healthy social relationships, avoid social events, and lose essential communication skills. Strategies for Prevention and Intervention Promoting Digital Literacy: Educating individuals on responsible and balanced use of digital technologies to prevent dependency. Encouraging Face-to-Face Communication: Emphasizing the importance of in-person interactions and emotional connectivity in education and mass media. Supporting Psycho-emotional Well-being: Providing mental health support for those experiencing stress, depression, or anxiety related to digital overuse. Maintaining a Balance: Assisting individuals in managing time spent in digital environments and encouraging real-world social engagement to preserve social bonds and mental health.

Conclusion

Digital isolation and technological autism are contemporary challenges necessitating societal and professional attention. While digital technologies offer significant benefits, excessive reliance can adversely impact personal development and social functioning. Developing effective strategies to manage digital consumption and fostering healthy social interactions are essential to mitigate these risks.

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