The Relationship between Technology Usage and Loneliness

Brianna Burns
Hanover College

Abstract

This study was designed to examine the effects of technology on social interaction. This was measured by the frequency of the technology usage and social interaction/life satisfaction. To see if there were any negative correlations between the two variables, participants (N=21) ranging from ages 19-44, completed a fifty item questionnaire that consisted of questions regarding their usage of technology, comparing their different uses of communication over time, instant messaging, and a loneliness scale. Through this survey the results hypothesized were that the participants who used non-text based communication more would have negative social interaction scores, thus concluding that too much technology usage can cause negative effects on a person’s social well-being. Through the results of this study there was a slight positive correlation between Technology Usage and Loneliness, but not a statistically significant one.

Method

Participants

The participants were undergraduate students at Hanover College and members of The Quarry youth group. Twenty two subjects participated in the study ranging in age from 19-44. Eleven of the participants were women and ten were men.

Materials

The survey was a fifty item questionnaire. The survey was comprised of two types of questions; questions concerning the participants’ communication and technology usage, and questions that asked about the participant’s social satisfaction/feeling of loneliness. Some of the questions were taken from the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, &affer’s), an 80 study that often do you feel in tune with people around? How often do you feel alone? How often do you feel a part of a group? (also used questions from the Extraversion Intromission from the Myers Briggs Foundation) are seen as “ outgoing” or a “people person” I sometimes jump too quickly into an activity and don’t allow enough time to think it over; I am comfortable being alone and like things I can do on my own, as well as questions made up by me such as questions asking the participants technology usage/history (When did you receive your first cell phone? In middle school/high school? etc.).

Procedure

The survey was administered online. Participants were informed that they would be answering questions to compare the relationship between technology use and social interaction. In order to see the incorrect consent form, the participants were told to click the arrow below and proceed to the next page to do the survey. Then the participants were given questions asking them about their past and current technology use, along with social interaction questions. The study should not take more than any thirty minutes and their results were seen a Google Drive document anonymously.

Results

The survey was to see if participants who used technology more or were exposed to different forms of social media more had trouble socially interacting with others around in non-text based forms of communication. In order to obtain my data I had to code my questionnaire based on a 1-7 Likert scale. Questions were not on a rating scale I had to code to match up with those that were, and then averaged their numbers. After I coded my data, I compared the different means to create the variables Technology Usage and Loneliness. For the Technology Usage a 1 being the lowest amount of usage and 7 being the highest. For Loneliness the higher the number, the more the participant reported loneliness/social dissatisfaction.

The participant’s scores were ran through a reliability test that had a Cronbach’s Alpha of .96. To see if there was a relationship between Technology Usage and Loneliness a Correlation Test was ran that averaged together responses to the item on technology usage to create a Technology Usage score, and averaged together the loneliness items to create a loneliness scale. My prediction was that there would be a positive correlation between Technology Usage and Loneliness. There was not a significant correlation between Technology Usage and Loneliness (r(56) = .12, p=.11).

Discussion

My findings found that there was somewhat of a positive correlation between Technology Usage and Loneliness. The more that the participant used technology the more their loneliness score went up, however, the correlation between Technology Usage and Loneliness was not significant. The results on my graph are scattered out so I would not say there is a definite strong correlation between the two variables.

One possible reason for this could be that my demographics were not very diverse. Many of my participants were female. Another could be that I did not have very many people take my study so it is not very representative of the population. I think this made more people my study would have the same findings as other studies. Also having my study available online could have limited possible participants if they did not have an internet resource.

In Kang and Munoz’s (2014) study, the researchers explored if individuals who preferred online communication would be perceived less socially skilled in a social situation than people who prefer face-to-face interactions. In their study they found that those who preferred online communication were rated less socially skilled. Nonverbal social behaviors were displayed to help explore the differences between the two groups within the first and last minute of the study and were observed and rated by judges on overall social skills. The individuals who preferred online communication displayed nonverbal social behavior better than the people who preferred face to face interaction. Compared to the internet group, the face to face group seemed to be more ready to engage in social situations.

References

