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GADGET ADDICTION AS A HABIT

Abstract:

The article is devoted to the problem of ‘gadget addiction’ on the basis of the experiment which involved the subject’s survival without electronic devices, e.g., smartphone, iPod, laptop, etc. The study describes the subject’s life changes throughout four stages of the experiment. The aim of the research is to help parents and teachers cope with the problem of gadget addiction in children.

Keywords: *gadget addiction, addiction, habit, TV addiction, diagnostics.*

Introduction

Today the real community disappears, and gadgets fill people's real life replacing it with the virtual ones. Modern teenagers spend a lot of time playing online games, watching YouTube videos of popular bloggers, chatting online in social media, etc.

People are used to checking their phones every five minutes. We can frequently hear a phrase “*I can't live without my phone*”. Therefore, researchers

call it a ‘gadget addiction’. A child may develop this addiction earlier—starting from the age of 11. According to a recent research, attended by 2,200 young people, approximately 65% of children aged between 11 and 17 take their gadgets to bed to be able to browse the Internet before sleep or to play games [1]. Modern generation is called the ‘Generation of the thumb’.

According to Ariba Khaliq, addiction includes the following symptoms:

- lack of concentration, attention or focus;
- memory problems and problems in decision-making;
- headache, eye problems and backache;
- problems in fertility due to over-exposure to the radiation or EMF of the gadget;
- stress, anxiety and communication disorders;
- other hazardous physical and psychological ailments [2].

Ariba Khaliq is not the only scholar who studied the problem of gadget addiction. Andrew Chadwick, a British professor, warns that active SMS users risk catching a new disease TMI (Text Message Injury). People who dial on a mobile keyboard perform hundreds of short, repetitive movements; these movements do not provide blood circulation, the fingers work like a machine in which the oil runs out [3].

If gadget addiction is just a habit like smoking, we can influence it. There are a lot of methods for changing habits, and one of them is ‘21 days’. American cosmetic surgeon Maxwell Maltz found out that people needed three weeks to get used to the new body, and this is not about lifestyle changing alone [4].

Description of the experiment

The task of the experiment is to give up on the phone for 21 days to see a change in attitude towards it. The subject of experiment is a girl at the age of 18.

The experiment includes four stages:

- stage 1. Do this at least once.

The subject takes a test (pre-test) called Lozovaya's technique to diagnose addiction (Table 1). It includes five statements on the scale 'computer addiction' and five statements on the scale 'TV addiction', which required such answers as "strongly disagree", "disagree", "neither agree nor disagree", "agree", "strongly agree" [5].

- stage 2. Do it 2 days in a row. One time at a time isn't hard, but two days require an effort.

The subject begins to form a new habit.

- stage 3. Do it during the week.

Overcoming a social factor means doing it during a week including the weekend.

- stage 4. The 21st day.

A new habit becomes deliberate. The subject takes a final test (post-test), which was used in stage 1. If it fails to diagnose a gadget addiction, it will mean that "gadget addiction" is a habit.

Table 1. Lozovaya's technique

Зависимость от компьютера	Computer addiction
1. Я провожу очень много времени за компьютером.	1. I spend a lot of time on the computer.
2. Компьютер – это реальная возможность жить полной жизнью.	2. Computer is a real opportunity to live a full life.
3. Иногда, сидя у компьютера я забываю поесть или о каких то делах.	3. Sometimes, using a computer I forget to eat or do other things.
4. "Виртуальная реальность" более интересна чем обычная жизнь.	4. "Virtual reality" is more interesting than ordinary life.
5. Если бы я мог то все время занимался бы компьютером.	5. I wish I could be using a computer all the time.
Телевизионная зависимость	TV addiction
1. В свое свободное время я чаще всего смотрю телевизор.	1. I watch TV most of my free time.
2. Я могу долго щелкать пультом в поисках чего-нибудь интересного по телевизору.	2. I can be clicking the remote control for a long time looking for something interesting on TV.
3. Телевизор включен большее время моего пребывания дома.	3. The TV is on most of the time when I am at home.
4. Если сломался телевизор, то я не буду знать чем себя развлечь вечером.	4. If the TV breaks down, I find it hard to enjoy the evening.
5. В наше время почти все можно узнать из	5. Nowadays, almost everything can be learned from

The analysis of the results of the test showed that the subject has moderate addition on the scale ‘computer addiction’, whereas the degree of ‘TV addiction’ is too high. The findings are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. The results of the pre-test

Computer addiction	
Statement	Answer
1. I spend a lot of time on the computer.	Strongly agree
2. Computer is a real opportunity to live a full life.	Disagree
3. Sometimes, using a computer I forget to eat or do other things.	Strongly agree
4. "Virtual reality" is more interesting than ordinary life.	Agree
5. I wish I could be using a computer all the time.	Strongly disagree
TV addiction	
Statement	Answer
1. I watch TV most of my free time.	Agree
2. I can be clicking the remote control for a long time looking for something interesting on TV.	Strongly agree
3. The TV is on most of the time when I am at home.	Strongly agree
4. If the TV breaks down, I find it hard to enjoy the evening.	Strongly disagree
5. Nowadays, almost everything can be learned from TV.	Strongly agree

Stage 1. The subject has difficulty controlling her phone usage. In her diary she compares her state with tobacco addiction, watching the hardships of smokers: *“Today I did not use my phone and computer to kill the time. Quite often, I habitually checked notifications and accidentally logged into Instagram, but then I immediately went out and deleted the application. I also realized that I did not know how to occupy myself when I was bored, because the telephone was a salvation from boredom. It turns out that controlling yourself is very difficult. I would compare a cigarette with a phone”*.

Stage 2. The subject experiences difficulties with self-control: *“Today I deleted all unnecessary applications, although I was anxious about it.”*

Stage 3. The subject has improvements in work and health. She feels the desire to follow a healthy lifestyle: *“So, a week has passed since I gave up the*

phone, computer and the TV. It must have been the most productive week of late. In fact, giving up the phone is not so difficult when a person understands how much time gadgets take. There have been significant changes regarding my daily routine, I started to go to bed earlier, so now I get enough sleep and in the morning I do not spend time checking alerts in social networks and have time to get to the university without any worries about coming on time; such positive changes have led to my refusal to use the phone.” As can be seen from the comments, the subject’s attitude to the phone has changed dramatically.

Stage 4. The final day includes taking the post-test to confirm the hypothesis. The test results showed no TV or computer addiction in the subject (Table3).

Table 3. The results of the post-test

Computer addiction	
Statement	Answer
1. I spend a lot of time on the computer.	Strongly disagree
2. Computer is a real opportunity to live a full life.	Disagree
3. Sometimes, using a computer I forget to eat or do other things.	Strongly disagree
4. "Virtual reality" is more interesting than ordinary life.	Strongly disagree
5. I wish I could be using a computer all the time.	Strongly disagree
TV addiction	
Statement	Answer
1. I watch TV most of my free time.	Strongly disagree
2. I can be clicking the remote control for a long time looking for something interesting on TV.	Agree
3. The TV is on most of the time when I am at home.	Strongly disagree
4. If the TV breaks down, I find it hard to enjoy the evening.	Strongly disagree
5. Nowadays, almost everything can be learned from TV.	Disagree

The experiment showed a positive result. The subject concludes: *“I feel my addiction decreased, my health improved; I get enough sleep, fatigue in the morning is gone, my days have become more intense and productive”*.

Conclusion

The findings of the experiment confirmed the hypothesis, - gadget addiction can be seen as a habit. Instead of cartoons and games on the phone as a children's pastime, parents can offer their children an alternative, e.g., drawing, singing, etc.

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