



Digital

IMPACT

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From The Editor

The Modern Day Puppeteers:
An in-depth analysis of your
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Is our digital assistant a
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From The Editor

Should we impose restrictions on technological devices, which are rapidly developing and becoming a basic necessity in today's world? The inability to limit the use of technological devices, to get up from in front of the television or computer, defines technology addiction. This addiction causes physical and mental disorders and social communication problems.

- Physical disorders include vision problems, spinal disorders, and excessive weight gain due to inactivity.
- Mental disorders include aggression, irritability, and sudden mood swings.
- Social communication problems include withdrawal from society and social isolation.

This can manifest itself in these ways.

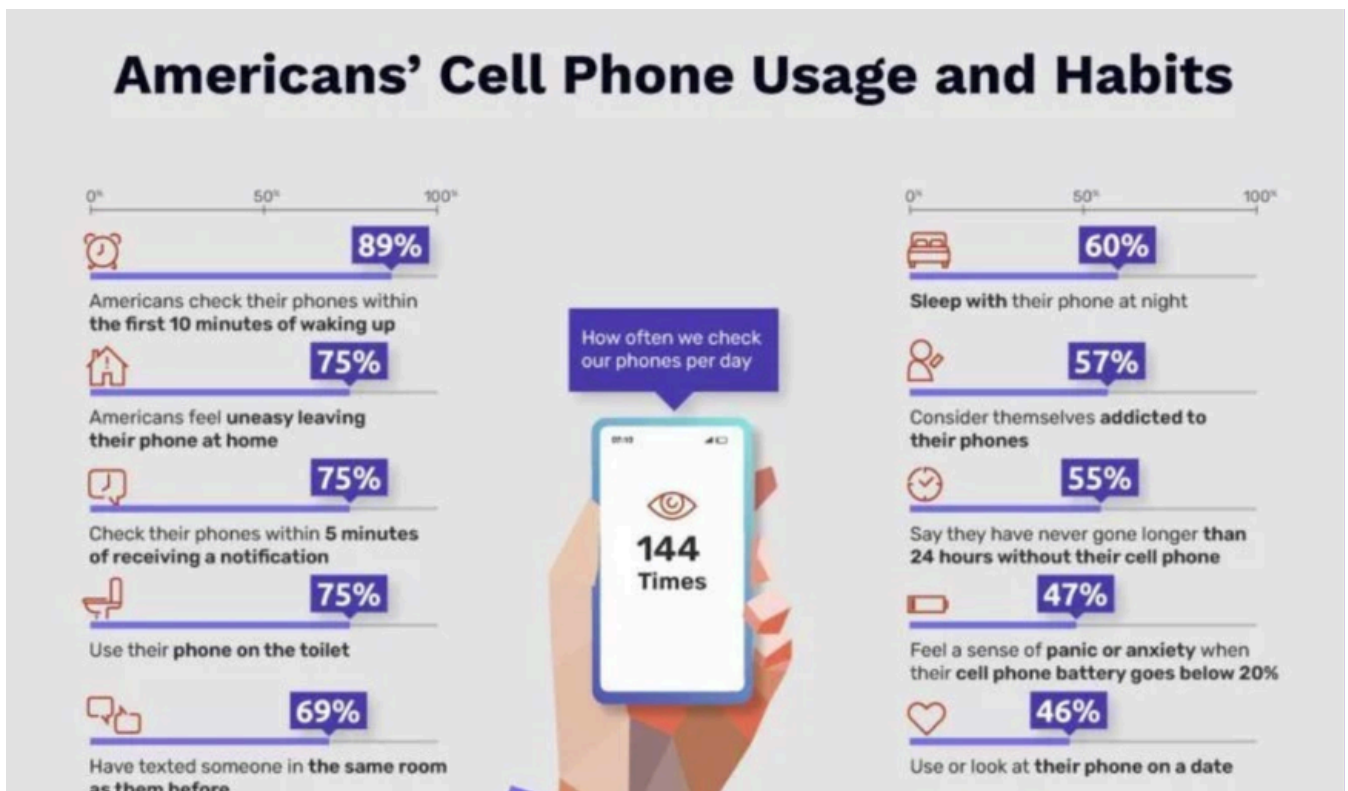
Excessive and unlimited sharing can also lead to the violation of digital security by malicious individuals.

Healthy technology use is possible by knowing and applying scientific and legal methods.

The Modern Day Puppeteers: An in-depth analysis of your screen time

In today's society, the average person checks their smartphone about every 10 minutes.^[1] That is 144 times a day! It became a distraction rather than a tool. We often find ourselves falling into this rabbit hole, which is a source of regret for many, oftentimes. However, this kind of weak willpower is generated and engineered meticulously to get the most valuable currency on earth: Your attention.

The giant pool of attention market is dominated by various platforms like social media apps, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube etc. The power of utilizing these sophisticated swiping traps triggers a unique psychological conundrum that puts you in infinite loopholes to ensure you never quite feel done with the dopamine machines.



[1] Smith, Easton. "Americans Check Their Phones an Alarming Number of Times Per Day." PCMag, 30 Dec. 2024, www.pcmag.com/news/americans-check-their-phones-an-alarming-number-of-times-per-day?test_uid=041pBmWGZleS010J3epyMrC&test_variant=B.

Social Media: The Dopamine Machine:

Social media might be the biggest and undisputed reason to push many people's attention spans to be less every single day. This has couple of reasons:

- **Brain's Reward System:** Much like slot machines or brain's reward systems, social media's primary weapon is the "for you page" that is fueled by an enormous amount of personalized trained algorithms to understand your subconscious better than you do.
- **The Infinite Scroll:** This happens due to the removal of natural stopping points like page numbers or any indication of a peek relating to any conceivable end-point to create a frictionless environment.

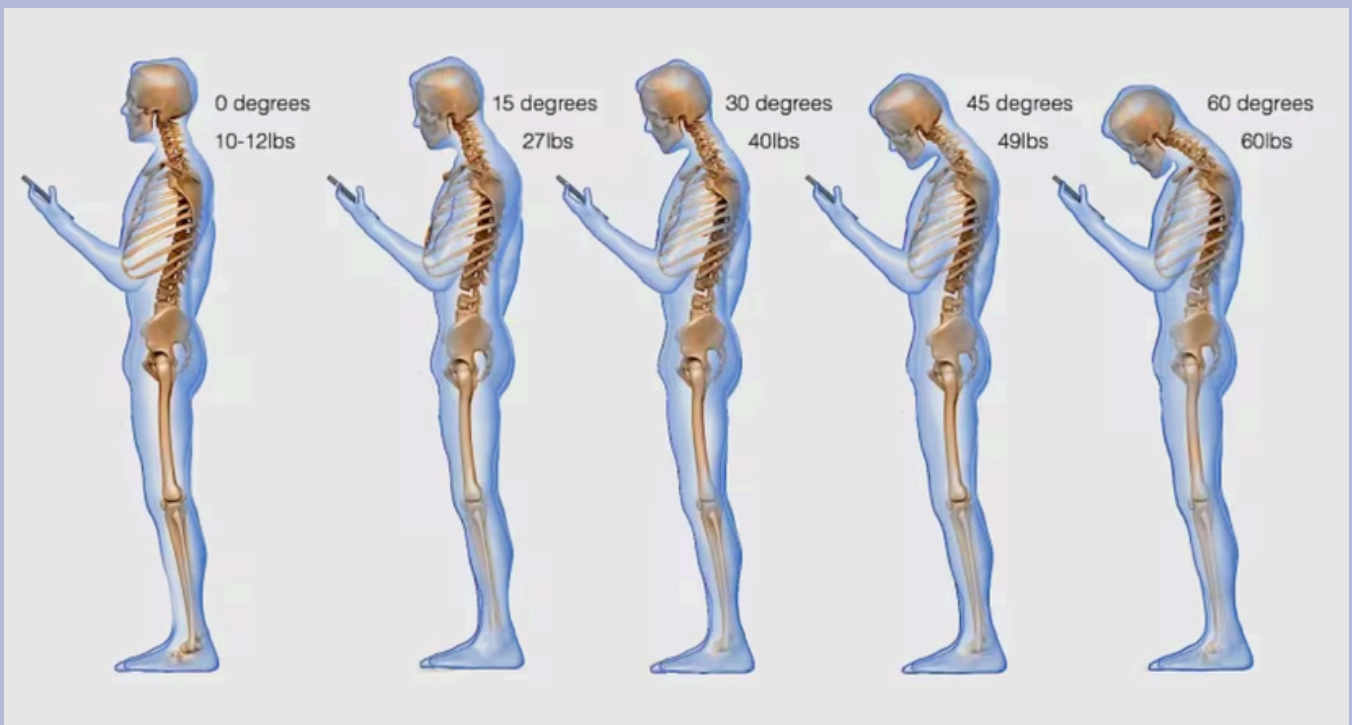


The Tech-Neck Epidemic

When you stare at your phone you aren't just staring at your smartphone you are also carrying a massive weight on your spine which corresponds with your angle that you positioned yourself.

The human head weighs about 5 kg in a straight neutral position. However when the degree angle increases up to 60 degrees the effective weight on your neck increases to a staggering 27 kg!^[2]

- 0 Degrees (~5 kg)
- 15 Degrees (~12 kg)
- 30 Degrees (~18 kg)
- 45 Degrees (~22 kg)
- 60 Degrees (~27 kg)



Real-Life Comparison: A 60 degree tilt is like carrying an 8 year old child around your neck.

The Aftermath: Tech-Neck could result in chronic cervical strain, disc compression and a permanent change in posture that could trickle into the vulture pose.

Barış Yılmaz

Digital Citizenship Ambassador Leader Assistant

The Stranger in My Pocket: Is our digital assistant a friend or foe to our brain?

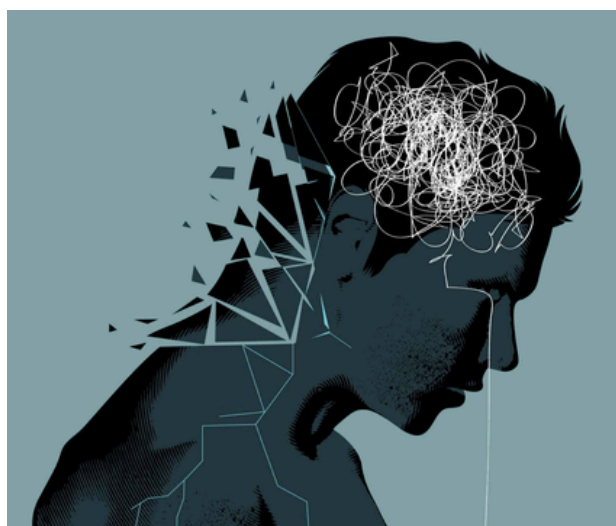
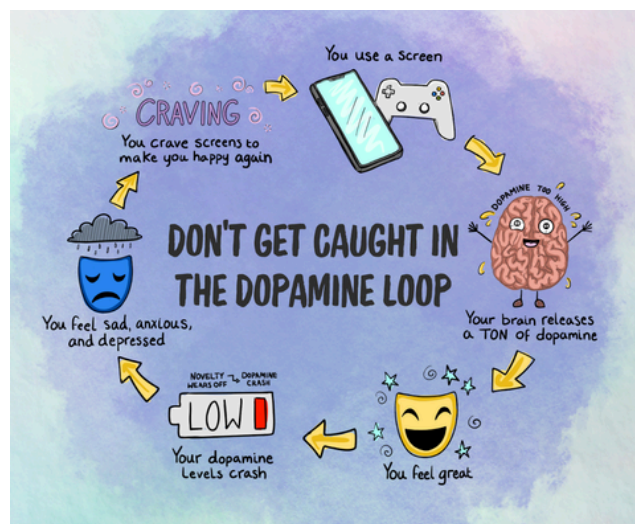
Smartphones are technological assistants that everyone carries in their pockets in the 21st century, and according to research^[3], people spend an average of 8 hours a day ($\frac{1}{3}$ of a day) using them. These technological assistants were created to greatly simplify people's daily tasks and lives, allowing them to access information with a single touch. Smartphones have now gone beyond being just a tool and have become cognitive aids. So why are smartphones so closely related to the brain?

The human brain is a dynamic structure that is constantly being shaped and regulated by environmental stimuli. In this context, smartphones are closely related to the brain because, apart from sleep, smartphones are the biggest stimuli we receive for half the day. This environmental factor created by smartphones directly affects the brain's functions related to focus, memory, and learning. Let's look at the positive and negative effects of smartphones on the brain.

Is our digital assistant our foe?:

Uncontrolled smartphone use has been proven to damage many brain functions and has multiple harmful effects.

Dopamine cycle: Distractions like constant notifications, algorithmically selected content, and social feedback damage the brain's dopaminergic reward system. This damage causes the brain to constantly seek rewards, leading to screen addiction. [4]



Effect on Laziness: Excessive smartphone usage exhausts the brain mentally. The brain's biological mechanism for relieving stress and fatigue cannot be used while using a phone. This causes you to feel unmotivated and lazy to do your own things.

Psychological Effects: Uncontrolled use can harm social relationships and emotional well-being. Specifically, seeing perfect lives that don't exist can lead to personal comparisons, damaging self-esteem. These can lead to psychological problems and even depression.

All these findings indicate that smartphone use should be approached with caution, as they can negatively impact the brain's attention, reward, and emotional systems.

Is our digital assistant our friend?:

Smartphones have had a significant impact on making human life easier. These impacts include brain functions. Therefore, it would be wrong to limit the discussion of this device solely in terms of risks.

Decrease in cognitive decline: According to research, smartphones reduce the slowing of brain activity by 58%. Because it enhances brain activity in older adults by reinforcing learning and exploration.^[5]



Access to information: Smartphones are a quick way to access all kinds of information. Accessing new information efficiently can increase the brain's learning capacity and support development.

When used consciously and purposefully, smartphones can be not only a distraction but also a cognitive aid. Through quick access to information, ease of planning, and learning applications, they can help organize mental processes.

Smartphones are powerful stimuli that can affect the brain's attention, development, emotions, and reward system. While smartphones can negatively impact the brain in various ways if used uncontrollably for extended periods, when used in a controlled and balanced manner, they can have positive effects on the brain and overall life. Therefore, the issue is not the technology itself, but the nature of our relationship with it. Given the brain's capacity for adaptation, digital assistants can become either a source of distraction or a tool for cognitive efficiency — the choice largely rests with the user.

Ömer Yıldırım Akalın

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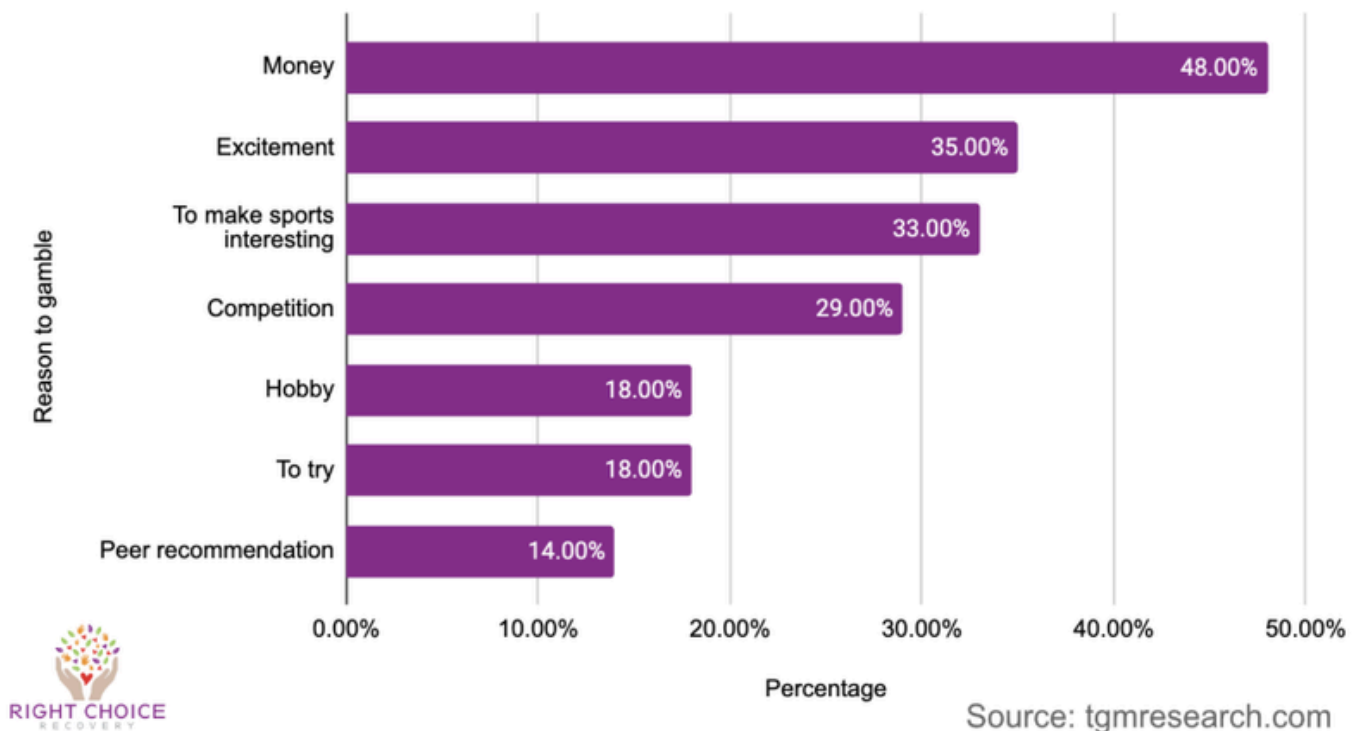


Increased Screen Time in the Context of Online Betting Addiction

One of the both side effects and root causes of phone addiction is online betting. Today, 90% of bets are placed on phones, which makes it more accessible and harder to regulate, as you don't need to drive anywhere, get cash from an ATM, or even get out of bed. More than half of these are live bets. In almost any betting app, regardless of their legal statutes, you'll be able to find hundreds of options per game, which will not be limited to wins and losses but even things impossible to guess like fouls, starting team, or substitutions. This opportunity for fast dopamine and the combination with the already existing phone addiction both worsen the situation. Continuous exposure to gambling apps through smartphones overstimulates the brain's reward circuitry, increasing the risk of behavioral addiction, anxiety disorders, and impaired impulse control.

The consequences extend beyond lost money, even leading to addiction correlated with increased rates of anxiety and depression, and young men who engage in it are more likely to slide into a full-blown gambling addiction. Young people who frequently gamble will start to miss more classes, perform worse in school, drink more alcohol, and participate in other risky behaviors at higher rates, often to cope with gambling-related stress. These antisocial patterns compound, with gambling sucking up time and mental energy that might otherwise go toward relationships, hobbies, and personal growth.

Reasons People Gamble



Bar Graph Showing Reasons Why People Gamble

As some people who have gone through explain, “I first realized I might have a problem when I started checking the odds first thing in the morning,” and “but it started affecting me a lot ... when my bets hit I felt on top of the world, but when they lost I felt like an idiot, and couldn’t concentrate on school or even on hanging out with my friends.” As it can be seen that even though short term wins or feelings make it look good, in long term the addiction could have many bad consequences in both mental health and social life.

Mete Alp Ünsal
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