

How Does Technology (Re)Shape Our Everyday Life?

Jingyi He

Institute of Social and Social Policy, University of Leeds, Park Ln, Leeds, United Kingdom

hejingyi411@outlook.com

Abstract. This essay delves into the dual facets of technology's influence on human lifestyles, focusing on communication methods and psychological ramifications. It explores how instant messaging tools, exemplified by WeChat, have revolutionized information dissemination and connected individuals with public institutions. However, it also scrutinizes the negative repercussions, such as dependence, misinformation dissemination, and blurring work-life boundaries. Moreover, it delves into the psychological impact of social media and cosmetic surgery, elucidating how social media platforms can trigger envy and body image issues, while cosmetic surgery may provide temporary confidence boosts but entail long-term risks and potential addiction. The analysis underscores the necessity of appraising technological advancements with nuance, recognizing both their benefits and drawbacks. It advocates for a dialectical approach to technological assessment to foster societal progress while mitigating adverse consequences.

Keywords: technology, social media, instant messaging, wechat, cosmetic surgery

1. Introduction

Technology is present in almost every aspect of our lives, from the simplest alarm clock to large-scale facilities such as high-speed trains and aeroplanes. Technology affects people in many ways, and the development of technology is closely related to people's lives. Still, there are two sides to everything, and the development of technology can lead to problems as well. In this essay, I would like to discuss two aspects of the impact of technology on lifestyles. These are communication methods, which are very important for people to communicate with each other, the relationship between psychological problems, which have emerged more and more in recent years, and the development of technology.

2. How Communication Affects People's Lives

From the perspective of the development of the means of communication, human communication, from the absence of writing when the message is transmitted according to the signal to the birth of writing through the horse and other animals as a means of transport transmission, and then appeared later in the post office such as the institutions engaged in delivery services, the technological development of the present, with the rise of mobile phones, relying on electronic devices, instant messaging tools began to appear. Compared with the previous delivery of information that required a person to ride a horse to deliver a letter, the current means of information delivery is undoubtedly very convenient and fast.

2.1. What is Instant Messaging

Instant messaging is the exchange of near-real-time messages through a standalone application. Unlike sending and receiving email, instant messaging software does not require re-establishing a connection before starting a dialogue and is less commonly used for transmitting certain formal documents (e.g., company contracts, etc.). Unlike email, which has heavier work attributes and relatively more complete information preservation, instant messaging is based on establishing chat rooms in communication software. As long as two people develop a connection in specific software, this chat room has always existed between these two people; sending and receiving messages is more like face-to-face speech in reality, and the content does not need to be added to a fixed structure, it is more casual, but also more focused on the timeliness and privacy.

2.2. What Instant-Messaging Tools Bring to Daily Life (Take Wechat as an Example)

Firstly, with the emergence of instant messaging, the transmission of information is no longer limited by space and time, and there is no longer a need for complicated processes to transmit. It even has several functions that the original communication software does not have. With the gradual improvement of technology, instant messaging tool features are becoming more and more diverse. Take WeChat, for example. WeChat was launched in 2011; it is a bundle of a variety of social functions of the message and call applications, but also, at the same time, it has an electronic payment function. At its release, its unique features included group chats, a public account platform and a circle of friends [1]. In addition to the essential communication and photo and text sharing interactive functions, the software also has a platform called WeChat mini program that can be directly linked to the site, a variety of shopping, food takeaway, courier services, office documents, booking flights and hotels, miniature games, etc. In short, WeChat can simultaneously meet the travel, food, shopping, social, office and other software roles. WeChat brings requirements together in one system, occupies less storage space, opens faster, requires less network signal, and is more straightforward than individual software [2].

2.2.1. *Instant-Messaging Tools Link Public Institutions and Individuals (Take Wechat as an Example)*

It is due to the convenience of instant messaging software that it is linking people and society more closely together. Firstly, WeChat connects public institutions or organisations and individuals, broadening the channels through which ordinary people can access information and deepening the connection between ordinary people and public institutions and public events. WeChat's 'WeChat official account' transfers long articles and videos that used to be posted on a dedicated social networking site to WeChat, making it possible to link to other organisations using a single WeChat account, which would otherwise require the registration of multiple accounts. Because WeChat accounts are often private as a tool for people to connect with others, articles published by public organisations on the 'WeChat official account' platform can make ordinary people feel the news is closer to their daily lives, making it easier for them to connect with the public platform and give feedback—for example, the official account of the international environmental organisation Greenpeace. After the Tianjin explosions in 2015, it published a series of investigations and comments on the incident so that ordinary users who are concerned about environmental information can learn about the specific incident through this platform and make comments because the WeChat account is a real-name system, the information published by users is also regulated.

2.2.2. *Negative Effects of Instant-Messaging Tools*

Instant messaging software, no matter which one it is at home or abroad gradually deepens people's dependence on it as it penetrates their lives. The more functions it has, the more time people waste on it. Instant messaging software with only a chat function may only be opened by most people when needed. Still, when it has many more functions such as shopping, ordering takeaway food, playing games, socialising, etc., it will penetrate various corners of people's lives and enhance their sense of existence, resulting in more people spending more time on WeChat.

In addition, with the increasing ease of information transfer, the spread of misinformation is causing increasingly severe impacts. For example, during COVID-19, due to strict controls on social distancing, people had to turn to the internet to pass the time, including sharing updates and recent news of COVID-19 with friends. While connecting with friends and family through the internet can be relaxing to a certain extent, the study suggests a very high amount of misinformation about COVID-19 on social networks in the spring of 2020[3]. When it comes to why this problem is occurring, the first thing is that information transfer has become too easy in this age. People who see information about COVID-19 on the internet will naturally share it with their friends and family members. Still, in the process, they do not confirm the authenticity of the information. Due to the nature of instant messaging software, when people share it with their loved ones, they usually do not verify the authenticity of the information out of trust. They will continue the same behaviour to pass the information to their relatives. Then, a ring set a ring continues to relay down until the receiver finds that the information is not accurate. Still, after such a long process, the information has long been one after another instant messaging software passed to one after another. In this process, the convenient attributes of instant messaging software itself are converted into a tool for the rapid spread of rumours, and even though the internet has now implemented a real-name system, it is still challenging to find the source of information dissemination. When the perspective is changed to us as the receiver of information, it is also difficult to distinguish whether the information on the internet is accurate. One of the reasons is that we are in an era of information explosion, the massive influx of information and the rapid transmission of the hostage of all contact with instant messaging software. Adults sometimes may not be able to distinguish the authenticity of the information, not to mention children, when they receive friends through instant messaging software to send information to their friends, usually cannot distinguish between the correctness of the information and the first contact with some regions of the information obtained will often leave a deep impression and shapes their values without them even realising it, especially considering that for children, "independent thinking" can sometimes be proof of "not fitting in"(when in an environment where there is no one to confirm the truth), which can plant the idea of "going with the flow" that can be accepted in their minds. It greatly challenges children's development and their parents' parenting.

In addition to this, I would like to bring up an aspect of instant messaging software that has had a profound impact on people's lives but which I have seen very few scholars researching when I looked for information, namely, the fact that instant messaging

software (especially WeChat) is increasingly tying people's work and life together. In China, when using WeChat, people do not deliberately separate their work accounts from their life accounts. When they were first introduced to WeChat, they were so impressed by its convenience and speed that they didn't realise it would have a negative impact later on. However, in recent years, more and more problems have begun to appear because work and life information are stored together in one account. One of them is that at work, it is tough to receive messages from superiors during off-duty hours without receiving or replying to them, mainly when almost all of your contacts rely on a WeChat account to maintain them; the person who sends the message will default to the fact that you must have seen the message, and thinking about this layer many workers have no choice but to receive tasks outside of working hours. This can create some very awkward situations, although off work, still telecommuting from home, or even opening the computer in the restaurant to deal with work problems, but can not get overtime pay. Secondly, because WeChat has an internal social function that allows you to post videos, photos and text in WeChat and be seen by your WeChat friends., it is common to receive likes and comments from colleagues at work when posting content related to their personal lives. This content may become a topic of discussion among colleagues. Another issue that is up for debate is when you leave your job. Since contact with all people at work can be done using WeChat, when leaving a job, you may be faced with the problem of the company wanting to take your account or requesting that all your work colleagues be deleted, as some people in the company may think that your colleagues and some crucial clients are company resources. Although these situations are now being resolved through issues such as using corporate WeChat accounts (this account is created and authenticated by the company, usually consumer-facing product information, and can be taken over by the next employee), company-provided accounts for work (this kind of account without company accreditation or company information, often registered with private information and used to contact clients), and so on, the intrusion of work into the realm of life still cannot be completely ruled out. At this point, on the contrary, mail, such as non-instant messaging tools, can better meet the needs of the working people. Unfortunately, in the current fast-paced life, instant messaging tools for capitalists can create more value, although, for the workers, they are very unfriendly. This situation has been opened up, and it may be difficult to change in a short period.

3. How Psychological Problems Affect People's Lives

3.1. How Psychological Problems Emerge

Today, social media has become a platform that almost everyone with a smartphone can't ignore. Many people share their lives and work on social media, whether for showing off or simply recording their lives. It's undeniable that social media has allowed people in the United States to browse China's landscape, civilisation, and food without leaving their homes. At the same time, the internet has also allowed us to get to know people from different regions, races, and looks. When the lives of the poor and the rich are spread out on social media platforms, more and more people can see the lives of people from different classes and see what their lives look like. When a girl who looks ordinary and unnoticeable in the crowd sees the star-studded life of a bright girl, she inevitably becomes envious. When she sees more and more such people, she begins to think, "There are so many beautiful people in the world, why can't there be one more for me?" so she develops a desire to look good and over time, as she reads more and more content with the title "How to look good", she becomes more and more desirous. Then Big Data pushes adverts for cosmetic surgery to her. Even though she knew there were risks associated with cosmetic surgery, her need to constantly fight the desire to look good made her anxious. In this case, the psychological problem is already there without the girl even realising it. On Facebook, adolescent girls also show a trend of increased attention to topics related to appearance, such as weight. In surveys, it has also been found that social media can lead to socially relevant negative emotions such as jealousy, envy, and other emotions arising from feeling that someone else's life is better or from the contrast between admiration of another person's body image and devaluing of one's own [4].

3.2. Can Cosmetic Surgery Help with Psychological Problems?

While the earliest documented use of cosmetic surgery may have been in the late eighteenth century [5], a study in the early twenty-first century suggested that the main reasons for some participants wanting to undergo surgery were 'age-appropriateness', 'bodily integrity' and 'wanting to look normal' [6]. For these individuals, cosmetic surgery did help to rebuild their self-confidence and had a positive impact on their mental health. However, another study of young people suggests that the reasons for undergoing cosmetic surgery are broadly characterised by the perceived importance of appearance in enhancing self-worth, investment in appearance to enhance social status and attractiveness and influence from the media and celebrities. In other words, young people often choose cosmetic surgery because external factors influence them and aspire to boost their confidence by surgically altering their outward appearance [7]. For these individuals, cosmetic surgery can only be used as a short-term or efficient way to enhance themselves and thus change their psychological state. Still, at the same time, the desire to increase confidence by changing their appearance also means that it is more difficult for this group of individuals to accept the consequences of a failed surgery. If it fails, it will have a much more severe impact on their psychological well-being.

3.3. Negative Effects of Cosmetic Surgery

Cosmetic surgery has been adopted by people worldwide as a means of being able to change the body's appearance. Still, human aesthetics are changing and varied and may have different desires for appearance at other times. Secondly, as we grow, the face changes due to exposure, expression, and the effects of gravity [8]. Firstly, those who understand cosmetic surgery may realise that some items are irreversible and almost all need to be repaired repeatedly to maintain perfection. Still, each procedure brings a certain amount of risk. People who have not had cosmetic surgery have accepted the natural changes in their appearance over a long period of living with their changes. Still, for people who want to rely on cosmetic surgery to maintain their perfect appearance over time, this may not be acceptable. Even though they want to keep their ideal appearance, they must bear a vast psychological burden before each restoration.

Some people develop symptoms of addiction to cosmetic surgery in the process. Suissa mentions a real case in his article: there was a young girl [9], Hope Donahue, who underwent corrective nose surgery at the age of 22, and by the time she was 27 years old, she had undergone seven surgeries [10]. To pay for her cosmetic surgery, she not only overdrew her credit cards but also stole money from her parents and friends. However, she was born into a wealthy family, educated at the best private schools, and had what others would consider a perfect home. She gradually realised that her quest for physical perfection was a way to escape her family and boost her self-esteem. In response to the issue of cosmetic surgery addiction, some scholars have suggested that the concept of addiction as applied to plastic surgery mainly refers to the search for something outside of oneself that is intrinsically lacking [11].

While cosmetic surgery also sends positive signals about the need for beauty, the genuine concern and long-lasting solution to look anxiety is not the continuous change of looks but rather the identification of one's inner needs to find out what one aspires to and is looking for. Enriching one's inner self can also help one to recognise the messages on the internet and avoid being easily provoked by exaggerated advertisements or false information.

4. Conclusion

The above analyses lead to the conclusion that there are two sides to the coin, both in terms of the impact of technology on the field of communication and the effect of technology on the human psyche. On the one hand, technology can make communication more convenient. Still, on the other hand, it also makes instant messaging technology passively become a tool for spreading rumours, and to a certain extent, it leads to blurring the boundaries between life and work. On the psychological side, the development of cosmetic surgery technology has a good effect on repairing some of the psychological disturbances caused by appearance problems due to disease problems (e.g., cleft lip and palate). It also enables many people affected by their appearance and not confident about their image to regain their self-confidence and reduces their psychological disturbances through the development of technology.

Similarly, excessive acceptance of cosmetic surgery can cause psychological problems such as addiction to cosmetic surgery. In addition, technological development has many other impacts on our lives. We should not use such extreme terms as "good" or "bad" to evaluate technological development in general. We should think about its pros and cons dialectically to help society make progress and balance the negative impacts caused by technology.

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