

Sharing Professional Viewpoint

The Impact of Smartphones on Face-to-face Communication Skills and Social Interactions

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1. Opening Point

In today's world, smartphones have become an indispensable part of our daily routines. More and more people are using them for various purposes, including staying connected with others, entertainment, and work-related activities. However, this growing reliance on smartphones has resulted in a decline in face-to-face communication skills, which in turn, is harming our social interactions. Research shows that using smartphones excessively can lead to a reduction in empathy, social skills, and the ability to read nonverbal cues, all of which are crucial components of effective communication (Lim et al., 2016; Common Sense Media, 2019). This essay argues that the overuse of smartphones is contributing to the deterioration of face-to-face communication skills and hurting our social lives.

2. Discussion

The use of smartphones can impact our social development. As known, smartphones have become a crucial component of our everyday lives in the current era of technology with their convenience and ease of access, and the excessive use of smartphones has harmed our face-to-face communication skills extensively. A significant drawback of relying on smartphones is the loss of nonverbal cues, such as eye contact and body language, which are vital for effective communication. Numerous studies indicate that overusing screens can cause a decrease in the capacity to recognize facial expressions and interpret body language, making it difficult to convey and understand messages accurately (Lim et al., 2016).

Smartphones have also contributed to a decrease in opportunities for face-to-face communication. People often use their phones as a means of communication, even when they are in the same physical space as others. This phenomenon has been referred to as "phubbing," which is the act of ignoring others in favor of one's phone. As a result, face-to-face conversations have become less frequent, leading to a decline in social skills. Smartphones have become increasingly prevalent in our lives and have had a significant impact on the way we communicate with each other. As per a survey by Common Sense Media in 2019, American teenagers are spending an average of 7 hours and 22 minutes each day on screens, including smartphones. Shockingly, just 33% of teens reported having daily face-to-face conversations with their peers. These numbers demonstrate the extent to which smartphone use has substituted face-to-face communication. The excessive use of smartphones has led to a deterioration in face-to-face communication skills, resulting in a decrease in nonverbal cues and opportunities for personal interactions. This, in turn, has had a negative impact on social interactions (Common Sense Media, 2019).

The decline in face-to-face communication skills, as a result of smartphone use, has hurt social interactions. Face-to-face communication allows individuals to connect on a deeper level, leading to meaningful relationships. However, the decrease in face-to-face communication has led to a lack of social interactions, which can result in feelings of loneliness and depression. Studies have shown that the lack of social interactions due to a decline in face-to-face communication can lead to negative mental health outcomes. Research conducted by the American Psychological Association found that social isolation and loneliness can have detrimental effects on an individual's mental health, leading to depression, anxiety, and other related disorders (Lim et al., 2016). In addition, social media have become a substitute for face-to-face communication, but it doesn't offer the same level of depth and richness as in-person interactions. While social media platforms allow communication, they are often superficial and lack the nuances and personal connections of face-to-face interactions. Social media interactions are usually brief, impersonal, and often lack emotional depth. As an illustration, a study published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine in 2017 discovered that young adults who spend more time on social media platforms feel more socially isolated than those who spend less time on them. This research highlights the negative impact of social media on social interactions and its association with feelings of loneliness and isolation (Boulton, 2018).

As a society, we must recognize the importance of face-to-face communication and make a conscious effort to prioritize it in our daily lives. By limiting screen time and promoting in-person conversations, we can improve our communication skills and strengthen our relationships. The reduced ability to engage in face-to-face communication due to the use of smartphones also has a notable effect on professional environments. Effective communication skills are crucial for success in the workplace, and the lack of face-to-face communication can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Research has shown that communication skills are essential for career success. According to a survey conducted by LinkedIn in 2018, soft skills, including communication, were the most in-demand skills for employers. Effective communication is vital in the workplace, as it enables individuals to convey ideas, build relationships, and collaborate effectively with their colleagues (Petroni, 2018).

Furthermore, the lack of face-to-face communication can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations, which can negatively impact productivity and lead to workplace conflicts. The nuances of nonverbal communication, such as tone of voice and body language, can be lost in digital communication, leading to misunderstandings and miscommunications. For example, a misinterpreted email or text message can lead to an argument or conflict that could have been avoided through a face-to-face conversation. In a professional setting, such conflicts can lead to missed opportunities, damaged relationships, and reduced productivity. As such, it is essential to recognize the importance of face-to-face communication in professional settings and to make a conscious effort to prioritize it. By promoting in-person conversations and reducing reliance on digital communication, individuals can improve their communication skills and foster better relationships with their colleagues, leading to increased success and productivity in the workplace.

3. Counterpoints

While excessive use of smartphones may have negative impacts on face-to-face communication skills and social interactions, smartphones also offer various benefits, such as accessibility, convenience, and the ability to connect with people who are physically distant. In today's globalized world, smartphones have enabled people to maintain relationships with friends and family who are geographically distant. Moreover, smartphones have also facilitated online education, virtual meetings, and remote work, which have become increasingly important during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the advantages of smartphones and use them responsibly, rather than demonizing them. It is therefore important for people to be aware of the excessive use of smartphones as affecting face-to-face communication skills and social interactions. The decline in nonverbal cues and opportunities for face-to-face communication could lead to negative impacts on both personal and professional relationships.

4. Closing Point

While smartphones offer various benefits, they should be used responsibly, and individuals must make a conscious effort to prioritize face-to-face communication. By limiting screen time and promoting in-person conversations, individuals can improve their communication skills, foster better relationships, and increase their success and productivity in both personal and professional settings. Ultimately, it is essential to strike a balance between the benefits and drawbacks of smartphones and to use them in a manner that enhances our lives rather than detracts from them.

5. The Author

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