

# WAYS TO REDUCE TECHNOSTRESS GENERATED BY ACCESS / LACK OF ACCESS TO DIGITAL MEDIA

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## **Abstract**

*Certainly, social media offers many benefits. However, access to digital media can also be a huge source of stress. Of people around the age of 20, those using their intense phones and computers are more likely to struggle with depression and have trouble sleeping, especially for those who see this technology as stressful from the start. Or on the contrary. Sometimes it can be so convenient to get past and touch the phone screen that having no access to digital technology can be another source of anxiety. Technological dependence is a growing problem, and some people have come to need adequate therapy. The purpose of this paper is to present the stressors associated with modern technology and to identify ways to reduce the technnostress.*

**Key words:** NICT, stress, stressors, technostress, digital media.

**JEL classification:** M15, O15.

## **Introduction**

Technological progress in the field of IT and communications has improved the balance between work and private life by reducing transport time and increased autonomy in organizing working time. At the same time, it has led to longer working hours and a greater ambiguity between paid work and personal time available to the employer, which requires constant availability of people - all of which are associated with higher levels of stress. Looking ahead, as these new forms of work will intensify during the digitization era, working time regulations will need to reflect these new realities in an effort to harness the opportunities and benefits of IT, and to address any potential disadvantages and risks to well-being.

It is clear that digitization radically transforms the industry, bringing new products, services and business models to the forefront. This transformation takes time, pushing businesses to adopt and embrace new technologies to develop a sustainable business strategy. Technological evolution has brought about major changes in customer behavior and expectations. As more and more people are using the new technologies, business models also change radically. The use of smart phones for services is examples of technologies designed to make services more accessible to the general public.

Technology does not automatically make us more stressful, it's just about how we relate to it. Email, computer writing should not stress us, but it should be tools to help us connect with people when and how we want.

More than half of gadgets around the world suffered from anxiety and stress when they were forced to give up, according to a survey by FrontRange software firm. When people experience an unpleasant sense of withdrawal because they are not online, we know that the relationship with technology is not properly managed.

Unfortunately, unhealthy relationships with technology, such as phones, computers and games, can have destructive consequences, both physically and psychologically. People's lives can be affected by the prolonged and irregular time that they spend online in front of their computer or playing games.

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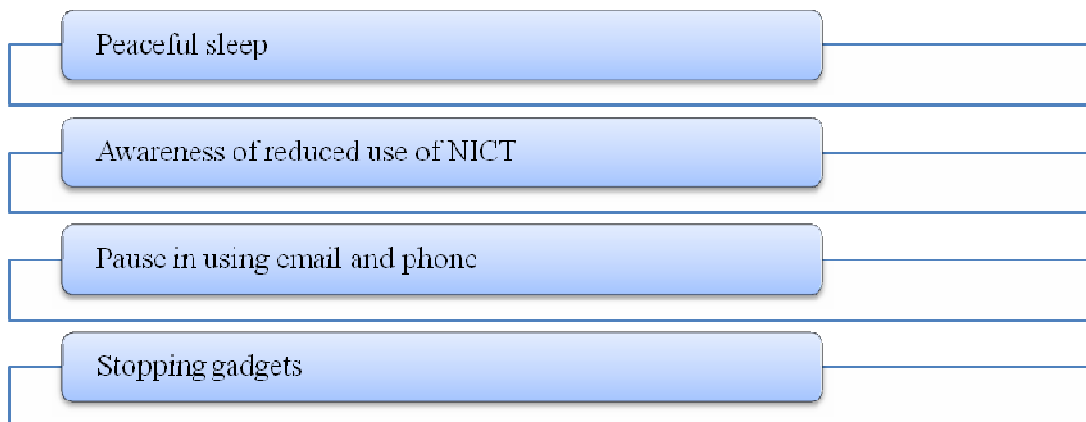
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## 1. Methods of reducing stress caused by technology

Certainly, social media offers many benefits: on Facebook we can keep in touch with friends, on Twitter we can see the latest news about known people. However, access to digital media can also be a huge source of stress. Young people using intensive phones and computers are more likely to experience depression and insomnia, especially for those who feel NTIC as a stressful factor from the start. Sometimes, this technology can become so convenient that we get to touch the screen of the permanent phone, that having no access to digital technology can be another factor of anxiety. Moreover, technology addiction is a growing problem, and unions have come to need adequate therapy. Symptoms of technology addiction include loss of time or annoyance if your online time is interrupted by real-life activities, returning to online activities to cope with lack of affection, or if friends tell you that they see you more virtual than life real.

Those suspected of having such a problem should resort to specialized therapies. There are examples at the opposite pole. In a British study, nearly half of the respondents said they would be more stressed if they could not surf the Internet unless they were interrupted by their television or basic utilities. The worst part is that stress does not necessarily disappear in the minute we put our iPhone back in the pocket. People who feel overwhelmed by technology tend to be more dissatisfied with their lives in general. Thus, a plan for reducing technology in people's lives should be developed (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Plan to reduce NICT use**

*Source: developed by the author*

Stop using your phone and computer a few hours before bedtime - light from digital devices may interfere with our sleeping capacity and sleep. When it finally comes to sleep, keep these gadgets somewhere where it will not be at your fingertips. To relax, better choose a book or magazine on paper.

Once you have designed those time periods without gadgets, you can be more daring than that - turn the phone off completely. If you do not expect an important phone or email, you probably just waste the battery by keeping it running all the time.

To reduce email time, apply filters based on address or topic. You can filter all except for relatively urgent messages, such as email from your boss, or make separate accounts for your work and for friends and family. Studies have suggested that you take an email vacation or spend a few days without looking at your inbox, may actually reduce your stress and increase your productivity. You can do this on a long weekend and make sure you tell people around. So while you're out with your friends, put the phones in the middle of the table, one over the other, and the first person to the phone has to pay the whole note.

However, despite the many tips here to ignore it, modern technology can be an important tool to help us stay calm and focused. For example, there are many stress management applications that can make our relaxation quite simple. Those who feel that their habit of entering social media channels, for example, Facebook, makes them unproductive, perhaps they will feel frustrated at any time and check them out. Rather, try to think about social media as an extraordinary way to connect with people. Psychologist Paul Zak has discovered that 15 minutes of social networking can increase the level of oxytocin, the so-called hormone of love. When it's almost impossible to refrain from checking your social media channels like Facebook, try downloading a productivity tool like an application that blocks certain sites while working. There are ways in Facebook where you can set whose statuses and posts you want to see. So, you can choose not to see all the Emo songs and how some of your Facebook friends are crying out, without them knowing that you have checked this option.

Frequent use of cell phones and tablets can have unpredictable effects on the user's physical appearance, with different studies showing that keeping the head bent for consultation with these devices favors neck and chin wrinkles even in young people.

## **2. Technostress**

Modern man feels the need to connect with the rest of the world more and more through new technologies, sometimes becoming dependent on them. Even the so-called "techno-stress" is reached.

"Technostress" is a term that defines what happens when technology starts to interfere with our health and happiness. A professor who studies the subject says that being "always" connected to the internet can lead to anxiety, depression and precarious physical health. Some experts say employers have the responsibility to limit the use of e-mail after work hours, but it is also , our duty. to reduce e-mail time.

Sir Cary Cooper, an organizational psychologist at Manchester Business School, claims that this permanent e-mail culture kills people. This culture leads to worry, anxiety, depression, and poor physical health. There is a whole field now called technostress, and the evidence is that unrestricted emails, where there are no instructions from employers, harm people's health.

Ron Friedman, a psychologist and author of the Best Workplace volume, says permanent checking of emails can affect both productivity and overall quality of life.

One study shows that employees are exhausted by the mere prospect of receiving a service email after program hours. Like Cooper, Friedman has indicated to employers that the solution to this problem may be growing.

I think managers would do well to put this research [on the benefits of limiting e-mail time] to the heart, "he said." They can start by asking employees to close their emails when they need to focus on work and to shape this behavior so that team members accept."

Some employers have already done so. For example, Porsche has decided that any mail sent to employees between 19:00 and 6:00. should be "returned to the sender". And French workers now have a "right to disconnect" from technology, which means negotiating with employers to decide when and how to disconnect.

Heidi Hanna, executive director of the US Stress Institute, recommends avoiding multitasking whenever possible.

## **3. Education, food and sport**

Experts say the fight with stress actually goes without medication, miracle or anxiolytic remedies that can lead to addiction and other illnesses. "Weapons" against stress are as simple and accessible as possible. Moreover, it is, in fact, a normal conduct in life.

Education is the main factor. "Education is the key to fighting stress. Knowing the environment we live in, the world in general, helps us to understand everything better and not to let us down so easily. We do not have to react to the first impulse, analyze the causes of that stress, and, rationally, see what we can take. In the case of psychic distress, it is important to relax and try to find ways to eliminate stress. Walking, reading and music are most handy. We generally do activities that we know we like and relax.

Meditation can also help us, "says Cornel Saradan. Doctors say a balanced diet helps us make it much easier for stress. So is the sport. "By sport, mental stress is eliminated very well," adds the doctor. Equally important is rest. "Rest helps us deal with stress effectively. Nothing can replace the rest. That is, eight hours of sleep per night and it is advisable to fall asleep before 24 o'clock," says Cornel Saradan.

Compared to the EU average, the daily computer use rate is much lower (38 vs. 63 percent among the general population), the lowest rate registered for one of the EU Member States ( Chart 1). However, the gap is much lower among the young population aged 16-29 (69% in Romania vs. 79% in the European Union), disappearing when the indicator is calculated for the age group 16-19 years old, corresponding to the population in high school education.

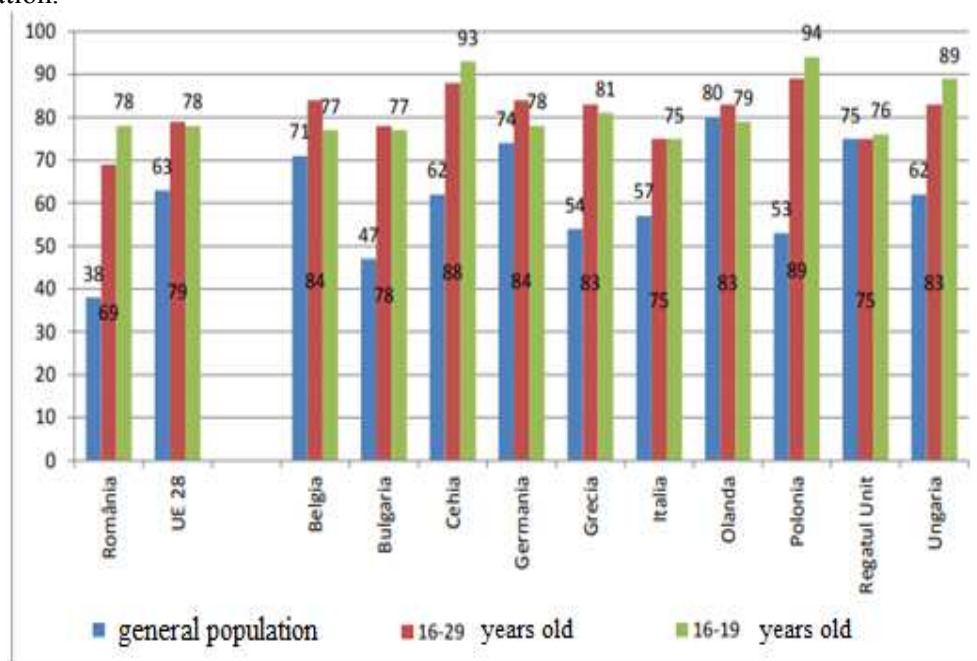
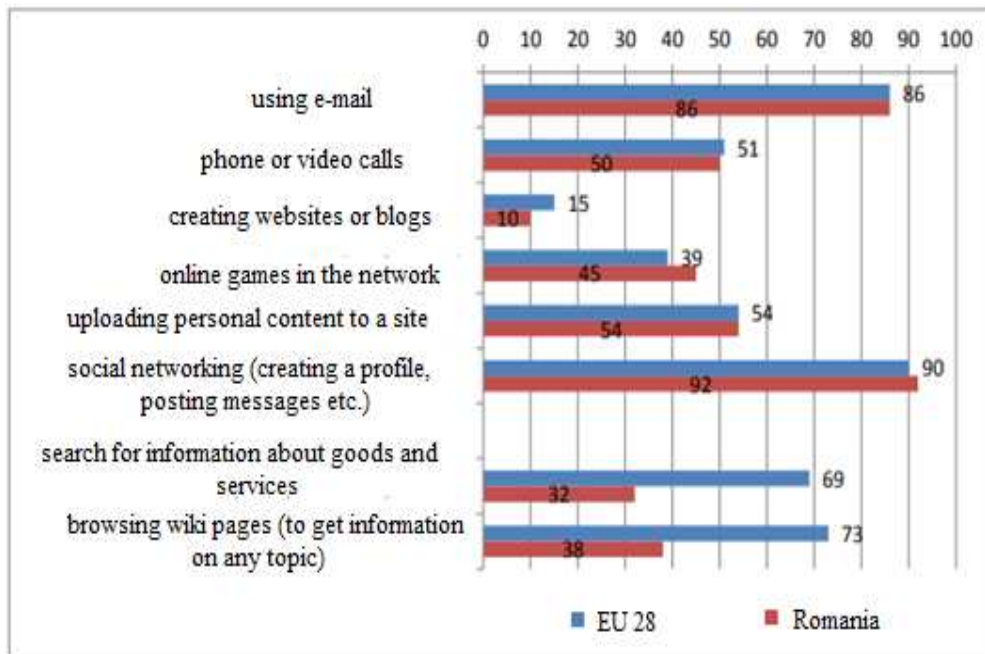


Chart 1. **Percentage of the population who daily use the computer in countries of the European Union**

Source: Eurostat, [http://www.ise.ro/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Internetul-si-mediile-de-socializare-virtuale-in-viata-liceenilor\\_Raport-final.pdf](http://www.ise.ro/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Internetul-si-mediile-de-socializare-virtuale-in-viata-liceenilor_Raport-final.pdf), accessed on 10.11.2018, 14.00.

The data show that the daily use of the computer by Romanian teenagers has a tendency to increase, increasing successively from a rate of 57 percent to the 78 percent recorded for the 16-19 age group.



**Chart 2. Internet activities by young people aged between 16 and 19, percentage of all Internet users in the last 3 months, 2015**

Source: Eurostat, [http://www.ise.ro/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Internetul-si-mediile-de-socializare-virtuale-in-viata-liceenilor\\_Raport-final.pdf](http://www.ise.ro/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Internetul-si-mediile-de-socializare-virtuale-in-viata-liceenilor_Raport-final.pdf), accessed on 10.11.2018, 14.00.

A research done by the Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy indicates the nature of the information that young Romanians are interested in on the Internet. Of respondents aged 15-25, one-third (33%) say they are most interested in entertainment information, and another third (32%) have the greatest interest in sports information. More specialized information such as utilities or related to politics, health or art and culture draws the attention of a smaller number of young people.

#### 4. Virtual hazards

According to the researchers involved in the EU Kids Online study, how young people and children choose to manage online stress situations can be grouped into three types of strategies: fatalistic, communicative and proactive approach. The first approach is characterized by passivity, the young man letting the situation solve by himself, interrupting Internet consumption for a while, the second approach refers to trying to solve the problem by calling for social help - generally friends / colleagues, then parents and rarer teachers or specialists - and the expectation of external intervention, and the third approach is to manage the situation independently and effectively solve the problem by the means provided by the interfaces used or by specific mechanisms - confidentiality settings, blocking other users, installation of software, etc. The latter type of reaction is considered to be the most effective way to adapt to negative online experiences, through which young people develop their level of flexibility and resilience in the use of virtual environments. The first type of behavior is specific to younger children, those with less self-confidence, or psychological problems coming from disadvantaged social backgrounds or with low online experience. The communicative approach is often used by young people, especially those who do not use the Internet very often or engage in a limited number of online activities, especially among younger or younger people, or from lower social backgrounds. Young people with difficulties in self-confidence or other psychological issues do not talk about the negative situations

encountered. Proactive attitude characterizes young people who have confidence in themselves and those who are involved in diverse and frequent Internet activities or those who have felt very negative experiences in the virtual environment and feel motivated to solve them. The EU Kids Online study found that the most important factors influencing the strategy used by young people to manage risks are the individual, social and cultural differences in the countries included in the analysis.

### **5. Managing problematic online situations**

The strategies for managing the unpleasant situations encountered on the Internet mentioned by the respondents were among the following:

a) Self-support versus outside support: the difference between situations where young people face the problems of one's own and the situations in which they decide to seek help in their social network (parent, colleagues, brothers, etc.) or in the institutional sphere schools, online help lines, counselors, etc.)

b) Proactive technical measures: young people often resort to tactics such as blocking online contacts, changing privacy settings, or deleting content and messages. These measures are often taken after an unpleasant situation and the intention is to avoid repeating it in the future. A typical example is changing the password after having a broken account.

c) Confronting the aggressor: engaging in personal confrontations, face to face, or online. In the prevention phase, these confrontations are generally non-violent in order to avoid escalating misunderstandings. In the reactive stage, both violent and non-violent confrontations occur.

d) Combined strategies: often a single strategy is not enough to solve the problem or prevent it from occurring; when a certain strategy turns out to be inefficient, young people are putting forward a more complex approach, based on a combination of strategies.

e) Disengagement: in some cases, young people have decided not to take any preventive or reactive action. Minimizing, mistrust, accepting or banalizing the situation were reasons for non-commitment.

Preventive measures are closely related to the awareness of online issues. This awareness of potentially problematic online situations motivates young people to think about ways to avoid negative experiences and makes it easier to make informed decisions about precautionary and preventive measures to adopt. Finally, given that awareness of online issues alerts them to the choices and practices they adopt to prevent such situations, the way young people understand the different specific risks has relevant policy implications: it is important that in the process to create a framework that pursues both the development of their digital skills and their awareness of the risks and consequences, to know and start from how they deal with online situations, and one of the main objectives to develop their ability to develop, and take effective preventive action.

### **Conclusions**

Considering the current technological evolution as a significant event, from a sociological perspective, we can appreciate that digital age people reflect relatively similar values and practices regarding the use of the Internet and social networks, different from those of previous generations. Young people of today's generation can be characterized by the speed of information processing, interactivity, connectivity, and social networking. Regarding the influence of Internet and social networking on interpersonal relationships, it has led to two distinct perspectives: the normative critical perspective of adults (teachers and parents), who consider virtual communication a way to insinuation and isolation from social life and integrative-positive perspective of young people who see in virtual communication, rather a way of being permanently connected with others, of sharing experiences in a much easier and

more efficient way than through face-to-face interaction. These young people resonate with new online learning methods, the development of various educational products, including online platforms, being attractive to young people of the digital age. They perceive the digital world as a social space for communication, information and fun, a space in which they can express themselves as they feel, enjoying the attention of people and not a stress factor that leads to anxiety.

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