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Technology Addiction: A Call for New Conceptualization

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Technology addiction is one of the emerging topics in the Information Systems (IS) research tradition. It focuses on problematic technology usage behavior, and it is defined as a dysfunctional physio-psychological state of technology use that generates negative outcomes (Turel et al. 2011). Drawing from drug and behavioral addiction research, IS researchers conceptualize technology addiction as a manifestation of six behavior symptoms, such as conflict, salience, mood modification, relapse, reinstatement, and withdrawal. This conceptualization of technology addiction has two limitations. First, it primarily focuses on biological aspects of human behavior. For example, mood modification, relapse, reinstatement, etc., focus on dopamine transmission and fluctuation of chemicals in the brain's reward system. Second, the conceptualization underplays the role of technology features and functionalities that may drive addictive-like behaviors. This dyadic interplay between technology and human behavior indicates that technology can foster behavioral response, and behavior can foster technology response, leading to a "stickiness" between human and technology interaction.

Given those two limitations, we argue that we need a reconceptualization of technology addiction. One way to reconceptualize is to ground this concept by building on the existing IS use literature. For example, Barki et al. (2007) conceptualize IS use behavior in three ways: technology interaction, task-technology adaptation, and individual adaptation. We propose that technology interaction and adaptation (task-technology and individual) be incorporated in the existing conceptualization of technology addiction to reflect the stickiness between human and technology interaction.

References

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