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The impact of technologies on work

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In the collective book of the professors Cristina Palma and Marta González called *The technological risk: social impacts* (Original title in Spanish: *El riesgo tecnológico: impactos sociales*) published in the editorial Catarata, we have elaborated a chapter in which we analyse the impact of technologies as a new psychosocial risk at work.

The concept of technology developed in this chapter is based on the idea of Davies (1997), who considers that this concept must be used in two senses. First, there is a broader sense that refers to both cultural and organisational aspects. The second sense is more specific and 'technical', which implies knowledge, skills, techniques, machines, products, and so on.

Many of the recent innovations of information and communication technologies (ICT) have consequences on the workers' health and well-being. On the one hand, these improve certain working conditions but, on the other hand, new psychosocial risks arise.

Perhaps one of the most noticeable risks is the pollution of the work environment in the personal environment. Technology has turned time and distance into immaterial aspects. The constant connectivity has widened the regular working schedule. Employees work overtime (without pay) using different messaging apps and wireless devices, staying connected and contacted at any time or place. This continuous exposure produces in the individuals a feeling of not being free from technology and that their time and space have been invaded.

On the other hand, the quick technologic obsolescence and the fact of finding out that the acquired skills are prone to frequent depreciation, lead to high rates of anxiety and stress. All of this has resulted in the development of greater job insecurity due to the fear of a technological subqualification. This job insecurity would be reflected as a perception of threat of job loss or impossibility of social and professional progress.

Therefore, the handling of information and communication technologies has brought the emergence of a new psychosocial risk: techno-stress, from an imbalance between the demands and resources related to the use of the ICTs, which leads to a high level of unpleasant psycho-physiological activation as well as the development of negative attitudes towards ICTs.

Another consequence associated with the intensive use of technology, which is addressed in this chapter, is the 'overload syndrome' or 'information fatigue syndrome'. This occurs when the worker has to manage a large volume of information against the clock. The 'new' communication tools (laptops, smartphones...), the collaborative platforms, or the use of sophisticated browsers have led to an information fatigue or data smog, increasing feelings of overwhelm, stress, or psychological discomfort.

Hence, technology should not be seen as a neutral collection of tools that leads to simple notions. Technology has its own impetus and promotes a business and society model

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which will require an analysis of its consequences and responsibilities on workers, companies, and society.

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