Social Media and Its Stark Influence on Society

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This research paper discusses the full impact of social media on society, and whether these impacts are positive or negative, or even both. The research paper goes through several different aspects of the impact of social media, from interpersonal relationships and communication to familial relationships and youth behavior. I think if I had more time to develop the paper, I could have added more research about social media, like, for instance, their influence on an international, global level. Or perhaps I could have even discussed about social media in education, and its benefits.

Every morning, almost every individual's first instinct is to reach for their phone and check through their notifications and social media accounts. They wake up scrolling through them, liking pictures, commenting, sharing, tweeting, etcetera. There is never a moment where an individual is not connected through a social media platform somehow. Social media has become big part of our lives, and most of us cannot live without it. We spend every waking second engaging with it, learning and receiving new information, ideas, and concepts through it. This has shaped our culture, our society, and, perhaps, even our general view of life. And in the moments where we are not attached to it, we react in ways that are similar to the symptoms of withdrawal. People hardly consider or ponder about why we feel that way, and how heavily social media impacts us as a society.

When social media comes to mind, many think of their instagram accounts, or how many likes they got from a tweet they blasted out this morning. So caught up in this whirlwind of staggering likes, shares, and tweets, not many notice how social media has been shaping our society, how addictive it is, and how it has been influencing our thoughts, actions, security, and confidence. In fact, a journal article titled, "The Impact of Social Media on Children, Adolescents, and Families," written by Gwenn Schurgin O'Keeffe and Kathleen Clarke-Pearson, published by the *American Academy of Pediatrics*, states that "22% of teenagers log on to their favorite social media site more than 10 times a day, and more than half of adolescents log on to a social media site more than once a day," and about "seventy-five percent of teenagers now own cell phones, and 25% use them for social media, 54% use them for texting, and 24% use them for
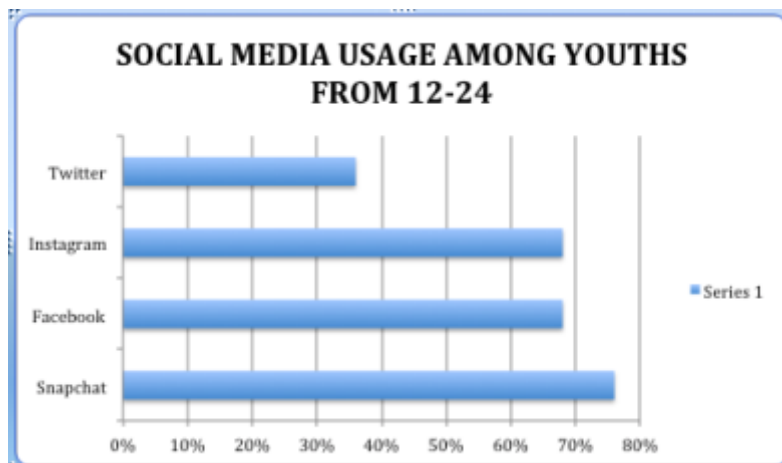

Figure 1: Social Media Usage Among Youths from 12-24

instant messaging" (800). In fact, Figure 1 (above) shows how much youths depend on social media usage. This shows that a large part of the millennial generation's social and emotional growth is being helmed by their use of the Internet and and social media. Not only does social media shape those aspects of an individual's life, but it also shapes our creativity, removes communication barriers, and builds up and fosters new, interesting relationships.

While social media has brought us many positive traits, it has also robbed us of some. It has robbed people's ability to find trust and comfort in one another, replacing our need for warm, supportive interaction and fellowship with a virtual, hollow connection. It has robbed most youths from the ability to flourish in a physical, social interaction. In fact, according to the journal article titled, "The Impact of Social Media on Society," written by Jacob Amedie, and published by Santa Clara University, it claims, "each step forward in social media has made it easier, just a little, to avoid the emotional work of being present, to convey information rather than humanity." The journal goes on to state that while social media has many positive influences, it also "robs us from self-control and from the ability to think independently and instead makes us gullible to join any group that posts perverse messages that tickle our ear and amuse our senses without evaluating the consequences" (Amedie 5). The journal also claims that, "ironically, social media is in effect turning us into one of the most antisocial generations, yet" (Amedie 4). The article by O'Keeffe and Pearson also had mentioned something similar, stating that social media robs "self-regulation" and makes most susceptible "to peer pressure." It is clear that Amedie and O'Keeffe and Pearson all agree with the fact that social media plays a big part in this generation, and many depend on them. This sometimes may end up bringing positive and negative outcomes. Now, many might claim that they are aware of this, and many may believe that they know their position about the topic of social media on society; However, there are many aspects of this topic that have not been carefully observed in the ways that it influences societies, and essentially, people. Therefore, knowing this information would likely change one's opinion or understanding, at least in some way, about this topic.

While researching further into social media and its' influence on society, I had discovered that there were many topics to consider. Although social media's influence is a very broad topic, I have decided to focus on three key elements of social media instead, which includes the impact of social media on youths and families, the impact of social media on interpersonal communication, and social media and its' influence on employment.

Impact of Social Media on Youth and Family

It is important to address the positives and negatives that social media has on youths and families. While many things have both a positive and negative effect, many still do not see the true impact behind social media, and how it deeply influences a young person's behavior. In fact, an article titled "Social Media and Young People's Mental Health," written by Brayan Herrera and published by the Mental Health Foundation, discusses these impacts. Herrera states that "social media is a powerful tool for young people; it provides a platform for our voices to be heard and enables us to become active citizens and to voice our opinions on the matters that affect or interest us," and that social media also "has helped young people to explore new ideas as well as to build resilience as they learn to recognise and manage risks." While these are great benefits, Herrera also poses the question, how does this impact us negatively?

Herrera informs that heavy usage or reliance on social media tend to bring "low self-esteem, body dysmorphia, and feeling of disconnection among peers and family," thus confirming that while social media brings a multitude of benefits, if not properly regulated, it will become very consuming and unhealthy. Another article titled "Media's Positive and Negative Influence on Teenagers," written by Nadia Haris and published by Livestrong, agrees with this, stating that while social media can help teens "expand their creativity and ideas by sharing artistic content online," it can also affect their "body image, behavior, mental health, and privacy negatively." Clearly, Herrera and Haris both agree that social media can have both a positive and negative effect among teens. However, while we understand the impact they have on youths, how do they affect others in a bigger sense? Say, for example, the interpersonal relationships between people, young and old?

Impact of Social Media on Interpersonal Communication and Relationships

While it is important to address and understand the full impact of social media on young people, it is also important to consider the aspects of how it affects interpersonal communication and relationships. Of how it truly plays a part in forming relationships and maintaining relationships. In order to understand these intricate impacts, we need to consider all the positive and negatives, so that we may truly understand everything behind the effect social media brings. So, how does social media impact interpersonal communication? Well, the article written by Susan Tardanico and published by *Forbes*, titled "Is Social Media Sabotaging Real Communication?", explains the effects. According to Tardanico, about "7% of communication is based on the written or verbal word. A whopping 93% is based on nonverbal body language," and because of social media, it gets a little more "dicey." Tardanico continues explaining that while "social technologies have broken the barriers of space and time, enabling us to interact 24/7 with more people than ever before," they bring a "set of new barriers and threats." The author backs this up by stating that in the workplace In the workplace, the use of "electronic communication has overtaken face-to-face and voice-to-voice communication by a wide margin," and because most business related communcation is done via "e-mails, texts, instant messaging, intranets, blogs, websites and other technology-enabled media—sans body language—the potential for misinterpretation is growing" (Tardanico). Tardanico also explains that because of this reliance conflicts tend to occur a lot, causing miscommunication and affecting people's interpersonal relationship with one another. This is dangerous as "conclusions are drawn on frighteningly little information" (Tardanico). This certainly negatively affects interpersonal communication and relationships.

The impact of social media is also explained further in a journal article, titled "The Effect of Technology on Face-to-Face Communication," written by Emily Drago, and published by Elon University. Drago explains her findings by stating that an "overwhelming 92% of respondents believed technology negatively affects face-to-face communication, and only 1% did not. Only 7% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed," and that almost "73% of students in the dining hall used their phones rather than speaking to one another" (4). The author further claims that most believe that "technology and social media is diminishing society's ability to communicate face to face," and that most students utilize social media to stimulate conversation—like showing a funny video, or documenting our time together via Snapchat or photos" (Drago 4). The author leads readers to understand the full extent of social media addiction. Clearly, both Drago and Tardanico, who had written the article mentioned prior, are in

agreement that social media, when used excessively, negatively affects interpersonal communication.

While it seems that social media seems to have a negative effect on interpersonal communication, it brings forth many positive impacts, as well. According to a journal article titled, "Social Networking Sites Impacts On Interpersonal Communication Skills And Relationships", written by Pritta Chasombat and published by the International College of NIDA, social media sites like, Facebook, for example, bring plenty of positive effects. Chasombat claims that "facebook have changed the way we communicate to each other, it is convenient and very fast. Facebook is the new technology and it changed us" (32). Chasombat also states that:

> Facebook provides platform for where the participant can express
> feelings and thoughts to his friends and to the world which also
> allows him to see the others' as well. It is where he can social
> without actually socializing. The relationships that already have
> been established offline would be stabilized on Facebook.
> (Chasombat 39)

Clearly, this shows the readers that social media brings both a positive and negative to the table.

Impact of Social Media and Employment

Now that the impacts of social media in youths and in interpersonal communication and relationships has been examined, it brings forth the question…how does social media affect an individual's ability to land a job? According to an article titled, "The 7 Social Media Mistakes Most Likely to Cost You a Job," written by Jacob Davidson, and published by *Time* Magazine, about "93% of hiring managers will review a candidate's social profile before making a hiring decision," and about "55% have reconsidered a candidate based on what they find, with most (61%) of those double-takes being negative." The article explains that this is due to the fact that most employers, when considering a candidate, base an individual's chance of employment on their social media (Davidson). This is to ensure that they are the best candidate for the job (Davidson). Davidson also informs that a candidate should keep their social medias almost squeaky clean, as posts about drugs, alcohol, violence, profanity, and sex, are viewed as concerning to an employer, and it may affect their chance at being hired. However, Davidson further states that if an individual knows how to utilize social media, it can become a very powerful tool in procuring a job. He claims that using social media sites like, LinkedIn, for example, will almost guarantee you a job, as "79% of respondents say they have hired through the network, vs. 26% through Facebook and 14% through Twitter" (Davidson).

In another article titled, "How Social Media Can Help (Or Hurt) You In Your Job Search," written by Jacquelyn Smith, and published by Forbes, shows to be in agreement with the article mentioned above, as it explains why employers now hire an individual based on a social media site. Smith states, "37% of employers use social networks to screen potential job candidates. That means about two in five companies browse your social media profiles to evaluate your character and personality--and some even base their hiring decision on what they find." Smith says that this, in turn, plays a big part in procuring a candidate a secure job. This is due to the fact that "65% of employers said they do it to see if the job seeker presents himself or herself professionally," and about "half (51%) want to know if the candidate is a good fit for the company culture, and another 45% want to learn more about his or her qualifications" (Smith).

While many earn a great job, many end up not qualifying, as "a third (34%) of employers who scan social media profiles said they have found content that has caused them not to hire the candidate" (Smith). Smith states that this is because of "provocative or inappropriate photos and information posted on his or her profile; while 45% said they chose not to hire someone because of evidence of drinking and/or drug use on his or her social profiles." Due to this unfortunate factor, she warns us by informing readers to utilize social media "to your advantage" (Smith). Clearly, both Smith and Davidson, who wrote the article mentioned prior, affirm that social media plays a big impact on employment, and if an individual wishes to secure a job, they should be careful what they share on their social media sites. This also exhibits the importance of utilizing social media to your own advantage, not disadvantage.

Post-Research Discussion

Initially, before conducting further researching on the topic of social media, I was sure I understood every aspect of it, from how and why it was so addictive, to how it affects us as a society. I understood how it can affect us mentally, and interpersonally, but not to the fullest extent. But upon reading up more on the topic, I realized it was not all that it seems. I realized that there was more to the topic than I originally thought. As I read up more about the effects of social media, I noticed that while I had mostly always focused on the negative aspects of social media, I forgot how much of a blessing it can truly be. I forgot how social media has helped connect us to thousands of people, or how it has assisted many in sharing and cultivating their ideas. I realized that, yes, while social media can be harmful to those who do not self-regulate, it is something most of us take for granted. I think that we take this for granted because we are so accustomed to it, because from the moment we rise to the moment we rest, we are constantly using social media and technology that we do not take a moment to realize how amazing it is, and damaging it can be as well.

After reading up more on the social media and gaining a clearer understanding of the topic, I feel like I've truly learned so much more. I've learned how social media effects interpersonal communication and relationships more deeply now. I learned that while it has helped many connect with others all over the world, it also terminates the closeness you have with those around you. I also understand how alienating it can get, and while I knew this before researching, reading up helped me realize how big of a problem it truly is. Upon realizing this, I have decided to be more aware and less addicted to social media. Don't get me wrong, social media is a powerful tool…when used right. We need to be in control of it, rather than let it control us. That is exactly what I'm going to do. I will use it to my advantage, for job searches, and for everyday life. At the end of the day, I'm going to focus on the people around me and in my life, and not rely so much on social media to provide me with entertainment, self-worth, and confidence.

Conclusion

Once people have a better understanding and grasp on the pros and cons of social media, and how to utilize it to their advantage, I'm certain that people will be able to be a little less addicted to it. However, that may not always be the case, but I certainly hope that as a society,

we will control social media, rather than let it control us. We are in charge of the narrative, not the other way around.

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