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Social media

Most people engage with various social media platforms in our current world. Various arguments have been raised about the importance of social media in our lives and the various impacts that social media has on our lives. In a speech delivered by Cal Newport for the Ted talks network, he gives his views on the use of social media in this age and why we should not be involved in the use of any social media platforms. In this paper, I hope to shed light on some of the issues raised in this talk and to help bring to an understanding the various impacts of social media in the lives of the people using social media.

According to BBC, approximately 3 billion people, which equates to around 40 percent of the world’s population use social media platforms for different purposes, and the time spent by each individual on these social media platforms is about two hours each day (Brown). This is a significant amount of time spent writing messages, tweeting and liking, and sending photos through various media platforms.

 Social media has been defined by many as a technology that is fundamental for all people to have. According to Newport, it is not essential to be on any social media platform as it is not of the essence. Describing social media as fundamental, many people associate it with the entertainment that it brings and the information that comes along with it. With social media, many people claim to be informed of whatever is happening and at the same time entertained. However, Newport disagrees with this popular opinion saying that it is not only social media that can be a source of entertainment or even the source of being informed on whatever is happening in the world. There are many forms of getting information, be it newspapers or even magazines. These form a good basis for being informed without the hustle of being involved in any social media platforms. In addition to that, social media is a source of entertainment but the type of entertainment that we get from social media can be a bit unsavory (Newport).

In another statement, many people are associating their business success with how well-curated their social media platforms are and their amount of following that will ensure they get enough sales. In the era of using smartphones, many people have turned to duplicating whatever they see and selling it as an authentic piece of their own (Newport). As Cal Newport elaborates, he says that it is not necessarily the use of social media that will ensure the sales of the product that the person is bringing to the market. The main thing that is going to ensure the sale of the product that someone is bringing to the market is the authenticity of the product. Even without the use of social media, one can be able to sell their goods and comfortably as long as they have the originality, as that is what is valuable and rare and what many people will gravitate towards buying (Newport). Originality is vital to the good performance of any product with the use of social media or not.

Social media comes other multiple and significant harms and confronting this is important in embracing the use of technology or the decision for one to quit the use of social media (Newport). In research conducted by the Pew research center on the impacts of social media, about 64 percent of the American population said that social media mostly has negative impacts. In discussing the issues that social media poses to our lives, one of the negative impacts that top the list of many is addiction. Social media tools are designed to be addictive and this can lead to various significant harms. Once addicted, one cannot control the urge to check on social media and see what is happening there. This can ultimately lead to fragmentation of the attention of a person in the hours that they are awake and when they are to be productive and this leads to reduced concentration and thus a reduction in the productivity of a person in their work (Newport). Addiction and projection bias cause most users to continue using these platforms and this is detrimental to one’s personal life (Allcott et al.)

The use of social media especially by the younger generation which is the most saturated with technology can have significant negative impacts on the economy (Newport). When one concentrates on the use of technology for a long time, they lose the ability to sustain concentration in other fields might lead to the loss of relevance in the economy. In addition to this, there is a lot of misinformation that goes around in social media. In responses given in the research conducted by Pew, the rate at which false information is spread through social media is quite high. This impacts different sectors differently and since this is mostly negative, it can even lead to the failure of the economy to thrive.

Mental health has been badly affected as there has been a reported increase in the number of persons presenting with anxiety, depression, and stress. Psychological harm due to social media pressure is on the rise, and it is showing as a problematic issue for people of various age groups to deal with (Newport). The more someone uses social media, the more they are likely to feel lonely and isolated and this can lead to various psychological harm that someone may not be aware of. The spending of a lot of time on social media has led to the displacement of many face-to-face interactions and this has made people feel excluded.

In education, social media has provided an easy way of communication between the students and the teachers, which has aided in effective teaching and learning (Akram, and Kumar). Assignments, class activities, and school events can be conducted via social media; thus, students become good digital citizens and learn the proper and productive use of the internet. However, the education sector has also been affected negatively in ways like loss of privacy through breaching and exposure of student’s confidential information, inappropriate information on online websites, for instances, mature content, and in some cases, wrong information on websites posted by either writers or bloggers which in turn mislead students and teachers (Akram, and Kumar).

Being exposed to the well-curated lives of friends and other people on social media can lead to an increase in the rates of depression. There is a spread of hate, harassment, and conflicts as recorded by the Pew research center. This has many bad impacts on the mental health of a person and it can lead to many extreme consequences. Analyzing data collected on depression by several researchers, the number of people that were being depressed and depended on the type of content that the people were exposed to (Brown). Those exposed to negative content showed higher levels of depression symptoms and a decline in the general mood of the person (Allcott et al.).

Stress is among the many problems that can be brought about by social media in the life of a person. The levels of stress increased with exposure to social media (Brown). Many people use social media to relieve their stress and this becomes like a coping mechanism for them. When this happens, the people who get to engage with the negative content are more likely to be stressed (Akram, and Kumar). In a survey conducted by the Pew research center, they indicated that a significant number of people were being stressed by the type of content they were engaging with, with women being stressed more than men. The more exposure to social media, the more the people showed signs of stress, and the less the exposure, the levels of stress were recorded to have reduced.

There is a fundamental and utterly huge mismatch in the way our brains are wired and the constant exposure to stimuli with intermittent rewards through long hours can fundamentally lead to the short-circuiting of brains and this will eventually bring about actual cognitive consequences. Anxiety is one of the consequences that most people are suffering from due to the use of social media (Allcott et al.). Anxiety and anxiety-related disorders are on the rise, especially among campus students and this can be related to the extensive use of social media technology (Newport). In a review published by BBC Future, it stated that people using seven or more social media platforms showed a high risk of high levels of general anxiety symptoms as compared to those who were not using social media and those who were using not more than two social media platforms (Brown).

There are various things that the use of social media exposes someone to, either with them knowing or even without their knowledge. From examining the impacts of social media on our daily lives, it is evident that it has many detriments. Ranging from affecting our mental health, social lives, changing the way of living, and even education, social media can affect us badly if not used in moderation. The majority of the weight lies on the adverse impact of social media and the unknowns of social media in our day-to-day activities, ranging from social, psychological, and economic aspects.

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