Social Media – Effects and their Causes

It is challenging to imagine the modern world without the rapid development of science or access to the Web. Surfing online has become a common hobby and a popular way to communicate. Social media plays a significant role nowadays as people use it on a regular basis for numerous purposes. The use of this innovation, however, has led to several consequences. As people become constant users of social media and spend much time online, the web starts affecting their lifestyle and bringing noticeable changes to society, both beneficial and negative ones.

Introducing social media has affected the overall approach to communication. Nowadays, it is much easier to keep in touch with friends and relatives than ever. With access to the web, people chat online that is quick and easy. It is possible to text someone in another part of the world and receive a reply in seconds. Each of the Internet users has the opportunity to chat with friends and family almost all day long. Because of this accessibility, online communication has become the most popular way of sharing thoughts. However, it results in a lack of live communication: people prefer online conversations to live meetings. While chatting on social media is useful, it also can cause some issues as people become too humble to talk in real life. Texting in social media provides the illusion of communication, so people experience problems with real socializing. It leads to a decrease in social activity, feeling of loneliness, and reduced self-esteem.

Social media influences not only communication but economics as well. For many people, online platforms have become not just a hobby, but also a full-time work. This innovation opened new opportunities for people and an entirely new job segment. Thus, everyone can earn money without leaving home. It is widely popular nowadays to buy different things online, so there are many shops across social media. Bloggers also earn money with their content as they use monetization. Photographers, writers, SMM managers, and people of other professions find a new application for their professional skills in social media as well.

With the development of social media, people are encouraged to construct their worldview by themselves and develop critical thinking skills. In the past, the population had no such access to the information, so that their points of view could be formed by authorities and manipulated easily. Nowadays, even the most accurate political manipulation or the smallest inaccuracy can be investigated through the Internet and international communication. Internet and its social media platforms are the only source of information that includes various points of view so that people are free to research and formulate their own opinions. In this way, social media introduces freedom and non-interference, so that any user can compare his or her thoughts with contrasting and checking them. The variety of ideas and differences between them teaches people to think critically, be aware of the information and use it accurately.

Even though it is advantageous in various ways, social media provokes strong addiction. Although this type of addiction is not defined by medical manuals yet, the problem becomes more essential each day. Pew Research Center informs that 92% of teens use the Internet daily (Lenhart para.2). Checking feed on Facebook, Instagram, and other social media is entertaining, yet it consumes

much time and makes the user crave for new content. The usual user spends two hours a day surfing the social media platforms (Mander para.2). Numerous addicts always take their gadgets with them and check them regularly. Some students cannot even refuse to use social media during the class, while workers procrastinate in their workplace using the web. Such addiction leads to loss of interest in other things, reduced productivity, and time waste.

The overuse of online platforms leads to reduced attention span and overall memory deficit. The average user of any of the social media platforms looks through thousands of posts with various content: those might be videos, photos, texts, and so one. Each post can be skipped in a moment so that the attention changes rapidly. As a result, it has become more difficult to concentrate on one thing for a certain amount of time as people are used to quick switches of attention. Moreover, the amount of the perceived information is so immense that the brain has to remove the unnecessary details. This aspect may be tricky because the necessary information may not be memorized as well. Thus, the use of social media affects memory and attention.

Another effect of social media on the lives of people is stress and anxiety it provides. As the Internet involves millions of people all around the world, communication has become stressful and even dangerous. While in real life any person has an opportunity to control its' circles of communication, the Internet forces to face various users. The web provides unlimited access to accounts of numerous people, their comments, and the content they upload. This approach leads to freedom, as the content is almost not controlled. Anyone is pleased to express any thoughts; however, sometimes it causes bullying, violence, and another negative issues. Reading comments for fun or checking random video may become a stressful experience, while chatting with a stranger may end up with offenses. It is clear that such interactions are not always pleasant. Social media provide human lives with a noticeable amount of negative issues which often affects the mood and results in stress.

Young people may be affected by the web, as they form unrealistic expectations about nearly everything in this life – relationships, beauty, appearance, family, lifestyle, and various other aspects. Instagram feed is full of fit bodies and pretty faces of bloggers, models, and celebrities. Observing selfies daily often leads to wrong expectations about beauty and appearance: as many bloggers look skinny, healthy, and attractive the teenager may assume that long legs and full lips are a must. Moreover, most people seem to share their life with their followers and avoid talking about faults and problems. In social media, people present their life as appealing as they can. As a result, one might feel miserable because everyone else is successful and happy that is not always true. Teenagers also learn about relationships, while their parts presented in the Web are usually far from reality. As people want to share only the positive sides of their life and present themselves from the best perspectives, the whole image of life is misunderstood. Teenagers try to fit in those standards they see online, yet their expectations are mostly wrong.

Moreover, such unrealistic expectations and trends of social media create noticeable pressure, which might be challenging to overcome. One notices the difference between themselves and the perfect image in the social media, and these differences disappoint them. Furthermore, as the Internet has become the most convenient place to share information, most of the trends are

born online. Those trends might vary from haircuts and nail art ideas to subcultures and "fashionable" professions. Trends demand people follow fashion and consume more. Even though the differences between the expectations and reality with current trends may motivate one to progress, they also create a significant pressure, which leads to negative experience, disappointment, and even mental health issues.

Another impact social media produces is lack of sleep. Social media provides users with various content, and it is almost impossible to review it all. Therefore, the constant flow of new information creates the interest that often results not only in addiction but in insufficient sleep as well. The users sleep less and go to bed later because of the web. Furthermore, people gain problems with sleep because of the messages, which interrupt the sleep and distract their attention. It is highly likely between the teenagers to wake up at night to check notifications in their social media accounts. In this way, people gain sleeping issues that influence their mood, productivity during the day, and health in a long-term perspective.

To sum up, the development of new technologies and social media, in particular, has resulted in various changes in the everyday lives of people all around the world. Online platforms change the approach to communication, create new segments in the field of economics, and encourage people to use critical thinking skills. However, there are various disadvantageous effects of this phenomenon that include addiction, changes in mood, lack of sleep, pressure, attention span reduction, and other issues. While social media platforms introduce an entirely new online world for millions of users all around the world, they also can be dangerous. Including plentiful pros and cons, each user should determine if social media are useful or damaging by themselves; however, no one can ignore or object the fact that these technologies have changed the human lives worldwide.

Works Cited

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