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SOCIAL MEDIA: THE PARALYZING AGENT OF HUMAN MENTAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Social media are interactive technologies that allow the creation or sharing/exchange of information, ideas, career interests, and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. While challenges to the definition of social media arise due to the broad variety of stand-alone and built-in social-media services currently available, there are some common features.

1. Social media are interactive Web 2.0 Internet-based applications.
2. User-generated content—such as text posts or comments, digital photos or videos, and data generated through all online interactions—is the lifeblood of social media.
3. Users create service-specific profiles for the website or app that are designed and maintained by the social-media organization.
4. Social media helps the development of online social networks by connecting a user's profile with those of other individuals or groups.

Users usually access social media services via web-based apps on desktops and laptops, or download services that offer social media functionality to their mobile devices (e.g., smartphones and tablets). As users engage with these electronic services, they create highly interactive platforms through which individuals, communities, and organizations can share, co-create, discuss, participate, and modify user-generated content or self-curated content posted online. Additionally, social media are used to document memories; learn about and

explore things; advertise oneself; and form friendships along with the growth of ideas from the creation of blogs, podcasts, videos, and gaming sites. This changing relationship between human and technology is the focus of the emerging field of techno self-studies.

Some of the most popular social media websites, with over 100 million registered users, include Facebook (and its associated Facebook Messenger), TikTok, WeChat, Instagram, QZone, Weibo, Twitter, Tumblr, Baidu Tieba, and LinkedIn. Depending on interpretation, other popular platforms that are sometimes referred to as social media services include: YouTube, QQ, Quora, Telegram, WhatsApp, LINE, Snapchat, Pinterest, Viber, Reddit, Discord, VK, Microsoft Teams, and more. Wikis are examples of collaborative content creation.

Many social media outlets differ from traditional media (e.g., print magazines and newspapers, and TV and radio broadcasting) in a variety of ways, including quality, reach, frequency, usability, immediacy, and permanence. Additionally, social media outlets operate in a dialogic transmission system, i.e., many sources to many receivers, while traditional media outlets operate under a monologic transmission model (i.e., one source to many receivers). For instance, a newspaper is delivered to many subscribers and a radio station broadcasts the same programs to an entire city.

KEYWORDS: Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Addiction, Mental Health.

INTRODUCTION

Since the dramatic expansion of the Internet, digital media or digital rhetoric can be used to represent or identify a culture. Studying how the rhetoric that exists in the digital environment has become a crucial new process for many scholars.

Observers have noted a wide range of positive and negative impacts of social media use. Social media can help to improve an individual's sense of connectedness with real or online communities and can be an effective communication (or marketing) tool for corporations, entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, political parties, and governments. Observers have also seen that there has been a rise in social movements using social media as a tool for communicating and organizing in times of political unrest.

Definition and features: The idea that social media are defined simply by their ability to bring people together has been seen as too broad, as this would suggest that fundamentally

different technologies like the telegraph and telephone are also social media. The terminology is unclear, with some early researchers referring to social media as social networks or social networking services in the mid-2000s.

Figure-1: Social Media Application.

A more recent paper from 2015 reviewed the prominent literature in the area and identified four common features unique to then-current social media services.

1. Social media are Web 2.0 Internet-based applications.
2. User-generated content (UGC) is the lifeblood of the social media organism.
3. Users create service-specific profiles for the site or app that are designed and maintained by the social media organization.
4. Social media facilitate the development of online social networks by connecting a user's profile with those of other individuals or groups.

In 2019, Merriam-Webster defined *social media* as "forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)."

While the variety of evolving stand-alone and built-in social media services makes it challenging to define them, marketing and social media experts broadly agree that social media include the following 13 types of social media.

- blogs,
- collaborative project management,
- enterprise social networking,
- business networks,
- forums,
- microblogs,
- photo sharing,

- products/services review,
- social bookmarking,
- social gaming,
- social networks,
- video sharing, and
- virtual worlds.

Mobile social media: Mobile social media refer to the use of social media on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablet computers. Mobile social media are a useful application of mobile marketing because the creation, exchange, and circulation of user-generated content can assist companies with marketing research, communication, and relationship development. Mobile social media differ from others because they incorporate the current location of the user (location-sensitivity) or the time delay between sending and receiving messages (time-sensitivity).[1]

According to Andreas Kaplan, mobile social media applications can be differentiated among four types.

1.Space-timers (location and time-sensitive): Exchange of messages with relevance mostly for one specific location at one specific point in time (e.g. Facebook Places, WhatsApp, Foursquare).

2.Space-locators (only location sensitive): Exchange of messages with relevance for one specific location, which is tagged to a certain place and read later by others (e.g. Yelp, Qype, Tumblr, Fishbrain).

3.Quick-timers (only time sensitive): Transfer of traditional social media mobile apps to increase immediacy (e.g. posting on Twitter or status updates on Facebook).

4.Slow-timers (neither location nor time sensitive): Transfer of traditional social media applications to mobile devices (e.g. watching a YouTube video or reading/editing a Wikipedia article).

Elements and function

Viral content: Some social media sites have the potential for content posted there to spread *virally* over social networks. The term is an analogy to the concept of viral infections, which can spread rapidly from individual to individual. In a social media context, content or websites that are 'viral' (or which 'go viral') are those with a greater likelihood that users will re-share content posted (by another user) to their social network, leading to further sharing. In

some cases, posts containing popular content or fast-breaking news have been rapidly shared and re-shared by a huge number of users.

Figure 2: Mobile social media.

Businesses have a particular interest in viral marketing tactics because a viral campaign can achieve widespread advertising coverage (particularly if the viral reposting itself makes the news) for a fraction of the cost of a traditional marketing campaign, which typically uses printed materials, like newspapers, magazines, mailings, and billboards, and television and radio commercials. Nonprofit organizations and activists may have similar interests in posting content on social media sites with the aim of it going viral.

Many social media sites provide specific functionality to help users re-share (also known as re-blogging) content, such as Twitter's 'retweet' button, Pinterest's 'pin' function, Facebook's 'share' option, or Tumblr's 're-blog' function. Re-sharing (or, in this case, retweeting) is an especially popular component and feature of Twitter, allowing its users to keep up with important events and stay connected with their peers, as well as contributing in various ways throughout social media. When certain posts become popular, they start to get retweeted over and over again, becoming viral. Hashtags can be used in tweets, and can also be used to take count of how many people have used that hashtag.

Bots: Bots are automated programs that operate on the Internet, which have grown in demand, due to their ability to automate many communication tasks, leading to the creation of a new industry of bot providers.[2]

Chatbots and social bots are programmed to mimic natural human interactions such as liking, commenting, following, and unfollowing on social media platforms. As companies aim for greater market shares and increased audiences, internet bots have also been developed to facilitate social media marketing. With the existence of social bots and chatbots, however, the marketing industry has also met an analytical crisis, as these bots make it difficult to differentiate between human interactions and automated bot interactions. For instance, marketing data has been negatively affected by some bots, causing "digital cannibalism" in social media marketing. Additionally, some bots violate the terms of use on many social media platforms such as Instagram, which can result in profiles being taken down and banned.

'Cyborgs'—either bot-assisted humans or human-assisted bots—are used for a number of different purposes both legitimate and illegitimate, from spreading fake news to creating marketing buzz. A common legitimate use includes using automated programs to post on social media at a specific time. In these cases, often the human writes the post content and the bot schedules the time of posting. In other cases, the cyborgs are more nefarious, e.g., contributing to the spread of fake news and misinformation. Often these accounts blend human and bot activity in a strategic way, so that when an automated account is publicly identified, the human half of the cyborg is able to take over and could protest that the account has been used manually all along. In many cases, these accounts that are being used in a more illegitimate fashion try to pose as real people; in particular, the number of their friends or followers resemble that of a real person. Cyborgs are also related to sock puppet accounts, where one human pretends to be someone else, but can also include one human operating multiple cyborg accounts.

New social media technology: There has been rapid growth in the number of U.S. patent applications that cover new technologies related to social media, and the number of them that are published has been growing rapidly over the past five years. As of 2020, there are over 5000 published patent applications in the US. As many as 7000 applications may be currently on file including those that haven't been published yet; however, only slightly over 100 of these applications have issued as patents, largely due to the multi-year backlog in examination of business method patents, i.e., patents that outline and claim new methods of doing business.

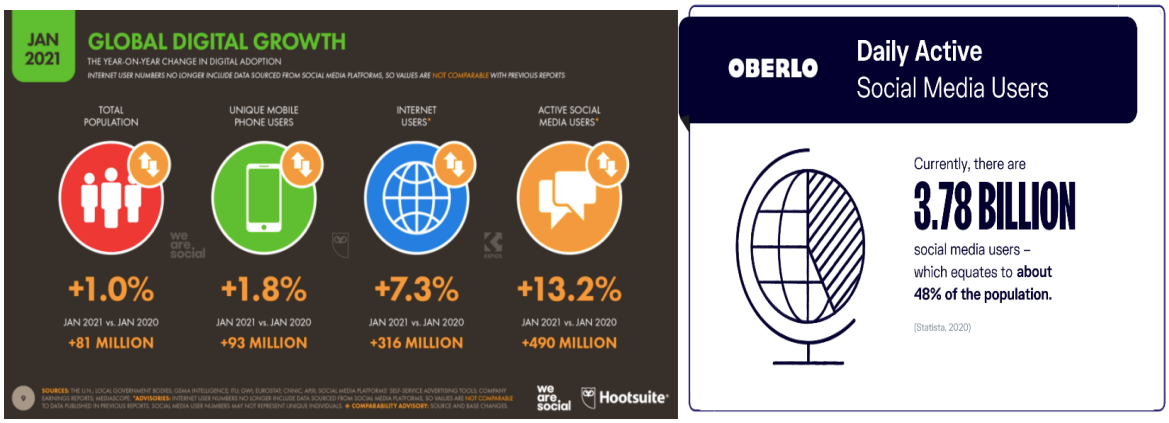

Figure-3: Growing social media users.

Platform convergence: As an instance of technological convergence, various social media platforms of different kinds adapted functionality beyond their original scope, increasingly overlapping with each other over time, albeit usually not implemented as completely as on dedicated platforms.

Examples are the social hub site Facebook launching an integrated video platform in May 2007, and Instagram, whose original scope was low-resolution photo sharing, introducing the ability to share quarter-minute 640×640 pixel videos in 2013 (later extended to a minute with increased resolution), acting like a minimal video platform without video seek bar. Instagram later implemented *stories* (short videos self-destructing after 24 hours), a concept popularized by Snapchat, as well as *IGTV*, for seekable videos of up to ten minutes or one hour depending on account status. *Stories* have been later adapted by the dedicated video platform YouTube in 2018, although access is restricted to the mobile apps, excluding mobile and desktop websites.[3]

Twitter, whose original scope was text-based microblogging, later adapted photo sharing functionality (deprecating third-party services such as *TwitPic*), later video sharing with 140-second time limit and view counter but no manual quality selection or subtitles like on dedicated video platforms, and originally only available to mobile app users but later implemented in their website front ends. Then a *media studio* feature for business users, which resembles YouTube's *Creator Studio*.

The discussion platform Reddit added an integrated image hoster in June 2016 after Reddit users commonly relied on the external standalone image sharing platform Imgur, and an internal video hoster around a year later. In July 2020, the ability to share multiple images in

a single post (*image galleries*), a feature known from Imgur, was implemented. Imgur itself implemented sharing videos of up to 30 seconds in May 2018, later extended to one minute. Starting in 2018, the dedicated video platform YouTube rolled out a *Community* feature accessible through a channel tab (which usurps the previous *Discussion* channel tab), where text-only posts, as well as polls can be shared. To be enabled, channels have to pass a subscriber count threshold which has been lowered over time.

Effects on youth communication: Social media has allowed for mass cultural exchange and intercultural communication. As different cultures have different value systems, cultural themes, grammar, and world views, they also communicate differently. The emergence of social media platforms fused together different cultures and their communication methods, blending together various cultural thinking patterns and expression styles.

Social media has affected the way youth communicate, by introducing new forms of language. Abbreviations have been introduced to cut down on the time it takes to respond online. The commonly known "LOL" has become globally recognized as the abbreviation for "laugh out loud" thanks to social media.

Another trend that influences the way youth communicates is (through) the use of hashtags. With the introduction of social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, the hashtag was created to easily organize and search for information. Hashtags can be used when people want to advocate for a movement, store content or tweets from a movement for future use, and allow other social media users to contribute to a discussion about a certain movement by using existing hashtags. Using hashtags as a way to advocate for something online makes it easier and more accessible for more people to acknowledge it around the world. As hashtags such as #tbt ("throwback Thursday") become a part of online communication, it influenced the way in which youth share and communicate in their daily lives. Because of these changes in linguistics and communication etiquette, researchers of media semiotics have found that this has altered youth's communications habits and more.

Social media has offered a new platform for peer pressure with both positive and negative communication. From Facebook comments to likes on Instagram, how the youth communicate, and what is socially acceptable is now heavily based on social media. Social media does make kids and young adults more susceptible to peer pressure. The American Academy of Pediatrics has also shown that bullying, the making of non-inclusive friend

groups, and sexual experimentation have increased situations related to cyberbullying, issues with privacy, and the act of sending sexual images or messages to someone's mobile device. On the other hand, social media also benefits the youth and how they communicate. Adolescents can learn basic social and technical skills that are essential in society. Through the use of social media, kids and young adults are able to strengthen relationships by keeping in touch with friends and family, make more friends, and participate in community engagement activities and services.[4]

Figure-4: Young generation attacked by social media.

Debate over addiction

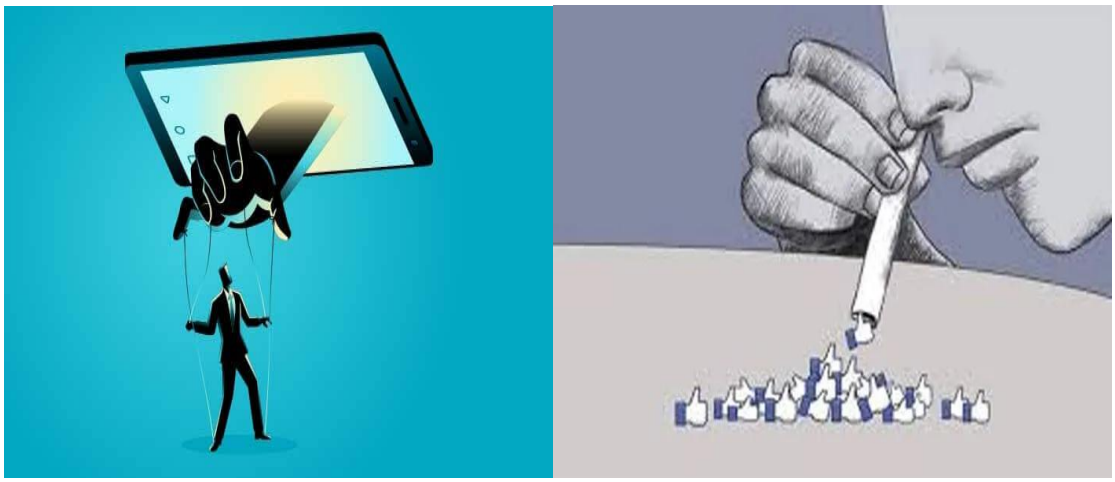

Figure-5: Social media addiction.

While these issues regarding social media addiction are continuous and increasing, there are ways to help reduce and curb one's social media obsessions. Turning off notifications (temporary or long-term) is one solution that is deemed beneficial in attempts to lessen social media addiction by resolving issues of distraction, for those who struggle with the habit of constantly refreshing social media platforms and checking for new notifications.

Debate over use in academic settings: As one of the biggest preoccupations among adolescents is social media usage, researchers have begun using the term "Facebook addiction disorder" (F.A.D.), a form of internet addiction disorder. FAD is characterized by compulsive use of the social networking site Facebook, which generally results in physical or psychological complications. The disorder, although not classified in the latest Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) or by the World Health Organization, has been the subject of several studies focusing on the negative effects on the psyche. One German study, published in 2017, investigated a correlation between extensive use of the social networking site and narcissism; the results were published in the journal PLoS One. According to the findings: "FAD was significantly positively related to the personality trait narcissism and to negative mental health variables (depression, anxiety, and stress symptoms)."

Figure-6: Online class and online exam.

Having social media in the classroom was a controversial topic in the 2010s. Many parents and educators have been fearful of the repercussions of having social media in the classroom. There are concerns that social media tools can be misused for cyberbullying or sharing inappropriate content. As result, cell phones have been banned from some classrooms, and some schools have blocked many popular social media websites. Many schools have realized that they need to loosen restrictions, teach digital citizenship skills, and even incorporate these tools into classrooms. Some schools permit students to use smartphones or tablet computers in class, as long as the students are using these devices for academic purposes, such as doing research. Using Facebook in class allows for the integration of multimodal content such as student-created photographs and video and URLs to other texts, in a platform that many students are already familiar with. Twitter can be used

to enhance communication building and critical thinking and it provides students with an informal "back channel", and extend discussion outside of class time.[5]

Social Media and Mental Health: While many of us enjoy staying connected on social media, excessive use can fuel feelings of anxiety, depression, isolation, and FOMO. Here's how to modify your habits and improve your mood.

The role social media plays in mental health: Human beings are social creatures. We need the companionship of others to thrive in life, and the strength of our connections has a huge impact on our mental health and happiness. Being socially connected to others can ease stress, anxiety, and depression, boost self-worth, provide comfort and joy, prevent loneliness, and even add years to your life. On the flip side, lacking strong social connections can pose a serious risk to your mental and emotional health.

Figure-7: Pressure of Social media status.

In today's world, many of us rely on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, and Instagram to find and connect with each other. While each has its benefits, it's important to remember that social media can never be a replacement for real-world human connection. It requires in-person contact with others to trigger the hormones that alleviate stress and make you feel happier, healthier, and more positive. Ironically for a technology that's designed to bring people closer together, spending too much time engaging with social media can actually make you feel lonelier and more isolated—and exacerbate mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.

If you're spending an excessive amount of time on social media and feelings of sadness, dissatisfaction, frustration, or loneliness are impacting your life, it may be time to re-examine your online habits and find a healthier balance.

The positive aspects of social media: While virtual interaction on social media doesn't have the same psychological benefits as face-to-face contact, there are still many positive ways in which it can help you stay connected and support your wellbeing.

Social media enables you to.
Communicate and stay up to date with family and friends around the world.
Find new friends and communities; network with other people who share similar interests or ambitions.
Join or promote worthwhile causes; raise awareness on important issues.
Seek or offer emotional support during tough times.
Find vital social connection if you live in a remote area, for example, or have limited independence, social anxiety, or are part of a marginalized group.
Find an outlet for your creativity and self-expression.
Discover (with care) sources of valuable information and learning.

The negative aspects of social media: Since it's a relatively new technology, there's little research to establish the long-term consequences, good or bad, of social media use. However, multiple studies have found a strong link between heavy social media and an increased risk for depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm, and even suicidal thoughts.

Social media may promote negative experiences such as.

Inadequacy about your life or appearance: Even if you know that images, you're viewing on social media are manipulated, they can still make you feel insecure about how you look or what's going on in your own life. Similarly, we're all aware that other people tend to share just the highlights of their lives, rarely the low points that everyone experiences. But that doesn't lessen those feelings of envy and dissatisfaction when you're scrolling through a friend's airbrushed photos of their tropical beach holiday or reading about their exciting new promotion at work.

Fear of missing out (FOMO): While FOMO has been around far longer than social media, sites such as Facebook and Instagram seem to exacerbate feelings that others are having more

fun or living better lives than you are. The idea that you're missing out on certain things can impact your self-esteem, trigger anxiety, and fuel even greater social media use. FOMO can compel you to pick up your phone every few minutes to check for updates, or compulsively respond to each and every alert—even if that means taking risks while you're driving, missing out on sleep at night, or prioritizing social media interaction over real world relationships.

Figure-8: FOMO.

Isolation: A study at the University of Pennsylvania found that high usage of Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram *increases* rather decreases feelings of loneliness. Conversely, the study found that reducing social media usage can actually make you feel *less* lonely and isolated and improve your overall wellbeing.[6]

Depression and anxiety: Human beings need face-to-face contact to be mentally healthy. Nothing reduces stress and boosts your mood faster or more effectively than eye-to-eye contact with someone who cares about you. The more you prioritize social media interaction over in-person relationships, the more you're at risk for developing or exacerbating mood disorders such as anxiety and depression.

Cyberbullying: About 10 percent of teens report being bullied on social media and many other users are subjected to offensive comments. Social media platforms such as Twitter can be hotspots for spreading hurtful rumors, lies, and abuse that can leave lasting emotional scars.

Self-absorption: Sharing endless selfies and all your innermost thoughts on social media can create an unhealthy self-centeredness and distance you from real-life connections.

Figure-9: Self-absorption.

What's driving your social media use?

These days, most of us access social media via our smartphones or tablets. While this makes it very convenient to keep in touch, it also means that social media is always accessible. This round-the-clock, hyper connectivity can trigger impulse control problems, the constant alerts and notifications affecting your concentration and focus, disturbing your sleep, and making you a slave to your phone.

Social media platforms are designed to snare your attention, keep you online, and have you repeatedly checking your screen for updates. It's how the companies make money. But, much like a gambling compulsion or an addiction to nicotine, alcohol, or drugs, social media use can create psychological cravings. When you receive a like, a share, or a favorable reaction to a post, it can trigger the release of dopamine in the brain, the same "reward" chemical that follows winning on a slot machine, taking a bite of chocolate, or lighting up a cigarette, for example. The more you're rewarded, the more time you want to spend on social media, even if it becomes detrimental to other aspects of your life.[7]

Other causes of unhealthy social media use

A fear of missing out (FOMO) can keep you returning to social media over and over again. Even though there are very few things that can't wait or need an immediate response, FOMO will have you believing otherwise. Perhaps you're worried that you'll be left out of the conversation at school or work if you miss the latest news or gossip on social media? Or maybe you feel that your relationships will suffer if you don't immediately like, share, or

respond to other people's posts? Or you could be worried you'll miss out on an invitation or that other people are having a better time than you.

Many of us use social media as a "security blanket". Whenever we're in a social situation and feel anxious, awkward, or lonely, we turn to our phones and log on to social media. Of course, interacting with social media only denies you the face-to-face interaction that can help to ease anxiety.

Your heavy social media use could be masking other underlying problems, such as stress, depression, or boredom. If you spend more time on social media when you're feeling down, lonely, or bored, you may be using it as a way to distract yourself from unpleasant feelings or self-soothe your moods. While it can be difficult at first, allowing yourself to feel can open you up to finding healthier ways to manage your moods.

The vicious cycle of unhealthy social media use

1. Excessive social media use can create a negative, self-perpetuating cycle:
2. When you feel lonely, depressed, anxious, or stressed, you use social media more often—as a way to relieve boredom or feel connected to others.
3. Using social media more often, though, increases FOMO and feelings of inadequacy, dissatisfaction, and isolation.
4. In turn, these feelings negatively affect your mood and worsen symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress.
5. These worsening symptoms cause you to use social media even more, and so the downward spiral continues.

Signs that social media is impacting your mental health: Everyone is different and there is no specific amount of time spent on social media, or the frequency you check for updates, or the number of posts you make that indicates your use is becoming unhealthy. Rather, it has to do with the impact time spent on social media has on your mood and other aspects of your life, along with your motivations for using it.

For example, your social media use may be problematic if it causes you to neglect face-to-face relationships, distracts you from work or school, or leaves you feeling envious, angry, or depressed. Similarly, if you're motivated to use social media just because you're bored or

lonely, or want to post something to make others jealous or upset, it may be time to reassess your social media habits.

Indicators that social media may be adversely affecting your mental health include.

Spending more time on social media than with real world friends: Using social media has become a substitute for a lot of your offline social interaction. Even if you're out with friends, you still feel the need to constantly check social media, often driven by feelings that others may be having more fun than you.

Comparing yourself unfavourably with others on social media: You have low self-esteem or negative body image. You may even have patterns of disordered eating.

Experiencing cyberbullying: Or you worry that you have no control over the things people post about you.

Being distracted at school or work: You feel pressure to post regular content about yourself, get comments or likes on your posts, or respond quickly and enthusiastically to friends' posts.

Having no time for self-reflection: Every spare moment is filled by engaging with social media, leaving you little or no time for reflecting on who you are, what you think, or why you act the way that you do—the things that allow you to grow as a person.

Engaging in risky behavior in order to gain likes, shares, or positive reactions on social media. You play dangerous pranks, post embarrassing material, cyberbully others, or access your phone while driving or in other unsafe situations.

Suffering from sleep problems: Do you check social media last thing at night, first thing in the morning, or even when you wake up in the night? The light from phones and other devices can disrupt your sleep, which in turn can have a serious impact on your mental health.

Figure-10: Sleep problems.

Worsening symptoms of anxiety or depression: Rather than helping to alleviate negative feelings and boost your mood, you feel more anxious, depressed, or lonely after using social media.

Modifying social media use to improve mental health

Step 1: Reduce time online

A 2018 University of Pennsylvania study found that reducing social media use to 30 minutes a day resulted in a significant reduction in levels of anxiety, depression, loneliness, sleep problems, and FOMO. But you don't need to cut back on your social media use that drastically to improve your mental health. The same study concluded that just being more mindful of your social media use can have beneficial results on your mood and focus.

While 30 minutes a day may not be a realistic target for many of us, we can still benefit from reducing the amount of time we spend on social media. For most of us, that means reducing how much we use our smartphones. The following tips can help.

1. Use an app to track how much time you spend on social media each day. Then set a goal for how much you want to reduce it by.
2. Turn off your phone at certain times of the day, such as when you're driving, in a meeting, at the gym, having dinner, spending time with offline friends, or playing with your kids. Don't take your phone with you to the bathroom.
3. Don't bring your phone or tablet to bed. Turn devices off and leave them in another room overnight to charge.

4. Disable social media notifications. It's hard to resist the constant buzzing, beeping, and dinging of your phone alerting you to new messages. Turning off notifications can help you regain control of your time and focus.
5. Limit checks. If you compulsively check your phone every few minutes, wean yourself off by limiting your checks to once every 15 minutes. Then once every 30 minutes, then once an hour. There are apps that can automatically limit when you're able to access your phone.
6. Try removing social media apps from your phone so you can only check Facebook, Twitter and the like from your tablet or computer. If this sounds like too drastic a step, try removing one social media app at a time to see how much you really miss it.

For more tips on reducing your overall phone use, read Smartphone Addiction.[8]

Step 2: Change your focus

Many of us access social media purely out of habit or to mindlessly kill moments of downtime. But by focusing on your motivation for logging on, you can not only reduce the time you spend on social media, you can also improve your experience and avoid many of the negative aspects.

If you're accessing social media to find specific information, check on a friend who's been ill, or share new photos of your kids with family, for example, your experience is likely to be very different than if you're logging on simply because you're bored, you want to see how many likes you got from a previous post, or to check if you're missing out on something.

Next time you go to access social media, pause for a moment and clarify your motivation for doing so.

Are you using social media as a substitute for real life? Is there a healthier substitute for your social media use? If you're lonely, for example, invite a friend out for coffee instead. Feeling depressed? Take a walk or go to the gym. Bored? Take up a new hobby. Social media may be quick and convenient, but there are often healthier, more effective ways to satisfy a craving.

Are you an active or a passive user on social media? Passively scrolling through posts or anonymously following the interaction of others on social media doesn't provide any meaningful sense of connection. It may even increase feelings of isolation. Being an active participant, though, will offer you more engagement with others.

Does social media leave you feeling inadequate or disappointed about your life? You can counter symptoms of FOMO by focusing on what you have, rather than what you lack. Make a list of all the positive aspects of your life and read it back when you feel you're missing out on something better. And remember: no one's life is ever as perfect as it seems on social media. We all deal with heartache, self-doubt, and disappointment, even if we choose not to share it online.

Step 3: Spend more time with offline friends

Figure-11: Enjoy with friends.

We all need the face-to-face company of others to be happy and healthy. At its best, social media is a great tool for facilitating real-life connections. But if you've allowed virtual connections to replace real-life friendships in your life, there are plenty of ways to build meaningful connections without relying on social media.

Set aside time each week to interact offline with friends and family. Try to make it a regular get-together where you always keep your phones off.

If you've neglected face-to-face friendships, reach out to an old friend (or an online friend) and arrange to meet up. If you both lead busy lives, offer to run errands or exercise together.

Join a club. Find a hobby, creative endeavour, or fitness activity you enjoy and join a group of like-minded individuals that meet on a regular basis.

Don't let social awkwardness stand in the way. Even if you're shy, there are proven techniques to overcome insecurity and build friendships.

If you don't feel that you have anyone to spend time with, reach out to acquaintances. Lots of other people feel just as uncomfortable about making new friends as you do—so be the one to break the ice. Invite a co-worker out for lunch or ask a neighbor or classmate to join you for coffee.

Interact with strangers. Look up from your screen and connect with people you cross paths with on public transport, at the coffee shop, or in the grocery store. Simply smiling or saying hello will improve how you feel—and you never know where it may lead.

Step 4: Express gratitude

Feeling and expressing gratitude about the important things in your life can be a welcome relief to the resentment, animosity, and discontent sometimes generated by social media.

Take time for reflection: Try keeping a gratitude journal or using a gratitude app. Keep track of all the great memories and positives in your life—as well as those things and people you'd miss if they were suddenly absent from your life. If you're more prone to venting or negative posts, you can even express your gratitude on social media—although you may benefit more from private reflection that isn't subject to the scrutiny of others.

Practice mindfulness: Experiencing FOMO and comparing yourself unfavorably to others keeps you dwelling on life's disappointments and frustrations. Instead of being fully engaged in the present, you're focused on the "what ifs" and the "if only" that prevent you from having a life that matches those you see on social media. By practicing mindfulness, you can learn to live more in the present moment, lessen the impact of FOMO, and improve your overall mental wellbeing.

Volunteer: Just as human beings are hard-wired to seek social connection, we're also hard-wired to give to others. Helping other people or animals not only enriches your community and benefits a cause that's important to you, but it also makes you feel happier and more grateful.

Helping a child or teen with unhealthy social media use: Childhood and the teenage years can be filled with developmental challenges and social pressures. For some kids, social media has a way of exacerbating those problems and fueling anxiety, bullying, depression, and issues with self-esteem. If you're worried about your child's social media use, it can be tempting to simply confiscate their phone or other device. But that can create further

problems, separating your child from their friends and the positive aspects of social media. Instead, there are other ways to help your child use Facebook, Instagram, and other platforms in a more responsible way.

Monitor and limit your child's social media use: The more you know about how your child is interacting on social media, the better you'll be able to address any problems. Parental control apps can help limit your child's data usage or restrict their phone use to certain times of the day. You can also adjust privacy settings on the different platforms to limit their potential exposure to bullies or predators.[9]

Talk to your child about underlying issues: Problems with social media use can often mask deeper issues. Is your child having problems fitting in at school? Are they suffering from shyness or social anxiety? Are problems at home causing them stress?

Enforce "social media" breaks: For example, you could ban social media until your child has completed their homework in the evening, not allow phones at the dinner table or in their bedroom, and plan family activities that preclude the use of phones or other devices. To prevent sleep problems, always insist phones are turned off at least one hour before bed.

Teach your child how social media is not an accurate reflection of people's lives: They shouldn't compare themselves or their lives negatively to others on social media. People only post what they want others to see. Images are manipulated or carefully posed and selected. And having fewer friends on social media doesn't make your child less popular or less worthy.

Encourage exercise and offline interests: Get your child away from social media by encouraging them to pursue physical activities and hobbies that involve real-world interaction. Exercise is great for relieving anxiety and stress, boosting self-esteem, and improving mood—and is something you can do as a family. The more engaged your child is offline, the less their mood and sense of self-worth will be dependent on how many friends, likes, or shares they have on social media.[10]

Figure-12: Give your child a story book not a mobile.

CONCLUSION

Social media content is generated through social media interactions done by users through the site. There has always been a huge debate on the ownership of the content on social media platforms because it is generated by the users and hosted by the company. Added to this is the danger to the security of information, which can be leaked to third parties with economic interests in the platform, or parasites who comb the data for their own databases. Privacy rights advocates warn users on social media about the collection of their personal data. Some information is captured without the user's knowledge or consent through electronic tracking and third-party applications. Data may also be collected for law enforcement and governmental purposes, by social media intelligence using data mining techniques. Data and information may also be collected for third party use. When information is shared on social media, that information is no longer private. There have been many cases in which young persons especially, share personal information, which can attract predators. It is very important to monitor what you share and to be aware of who you could potentially be sharing that information with. Teens especially share significantly more information on the internet now than they have in the past. Teens are much more likely to share their personal information, such as email address, phone number, and school names. Studies suggest that teens are not aware of what they are posting and how much of that information can be accessed by third parties.

There are arguments that "privacy is dead" and that with social media growing more and more, some heavy social media users appear to have become quite unconcerned with privacy. Others argue, however, that people are still very concerned about their privacy, but are being ignored by the companies running these social networks, who can sometimes make a profit

off of sharing someone's personal information. There is also a disconnect between social media user's words and their actions. Studies suggest that surveys show that people want to keep their lives private, but their actions on social media suggest otherwise. Everyone leaves a trail when they use social media. Every time someone creates a new social media account, they provide personal information that can include their name, birthdate, geographic location, and personal interests. In addition, companies collect data on user behaviors. All of this data is stored and leveraged by companies to better target advertising to their users.

Another factor is ignorance of how accessible social media posts are. Some social media users who have been criticized for inappropriate comments stated that they did not realize that anyone outside their circle of friends would read their posts; in fact, on some social media sites, unless a user selects higher privacy settings, their content is shared with a wide audience.

According to a 2016 article diving into the topic of sharing privately and the effect social media has on expectations of privacy, "1.18 billion people will log into their Facebook accounts, 500 million tweets will be sent, and there will be 95 million photos and videos posted on Instagram" in a day. Much of the privacy concerns individuals face stem from their own posts on a form of a social network. Users have the choice to share voluntarily and have been ingrained into society as routine and normative. Social media are a snapshot of our lives; a community we have created on the behaviors of sharing, posting, liking, and communicating. Sharing has become a phenomenon which social media and networks have uprooted and introduced to the world. The idea of privacy is redundant; once something is posted, its accessibility remains constant even if we select who is potentially able to view it. People desire privacy in some shape or form, yet also contribute to social media, which makes it difficult to maintain privacy. Mills offers options for reform which include copyright and the application of the law of confidence; more radically, a change to the concept of privacy itself.

A 2014 Pew Research Center survey found that 91% of Americans "agree" or "strongly agree" that people have lost control over how personal information is collected and used by all kinds of entities. Some 80% of social media users said they were concerned about advertisers and businesses accessing the data they share on social media platforms, and 64% said the government should do more to regulate advertisers.

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