

Social Media and Changing attitudes of Youth in Modern Society: A Study

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“Social media is a living resume which showcases your character”- Chad Dorman

“You’re in control of your feed. Recognize what’s unhealthy and hit that unfollow button”- Lisa Honold

“Think twice before posting on social media”- Chane Steiner

Abstract: With the digital age, social media has become an important tool not only for communication and marketing but also in the field of education. People always want to connect themselves with society in some or another way. In earlier days, the modes of communication were limited. People socialized with others in their tracks. Earlier, socializing was narrowed to visiting each other’s places, having big gatherings, meetings in clubs, parks, and other public areas. With the arrival of technology, social networking websites and applications have heralded a revolution in the world. It has indeed brought people from all over the globe closer by creating, sharing, or exchanging information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. These social networking sites are based on web-based technologies and create highly interactive platforms. It has gained momentum globally because of its better features, access, frequency, immediacy, usability, and permanence. It has been recognized so widely, and its usage has increased so incredibly today that it has moved from desktop computers to laptops to mobile phones. The platform is undoubtedly easily obtainable and accessible. Despite huge benefits, social media have some unfavorable consequences. Youth is getting hooked to it inappropriately. People are falling into prey fraudulent and illegal activities. Too much unnecessary indulgence in social media is hampering the productivity of people. This study explores the benefits and negative impact of social media on the lives of youth in modern society.

Keywords: Youth, Social Media, Technology, Society, Problems, Activities, Isolation.

Introduction: Today, every person is addicted to social media and that too at a glaring speed. Some important social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, etc., have provided us with the prospect to connect with people and foster better relationships with friends and acquaintances with whom we cannot meet personally and share the happenings of our lives. Some tools like YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat etc., have provided the platform to share pictures and videos with friends and

relatives living in distant places. “The term “social media” was first used in 1994 on a Tokyo online media environment, called Matisse. It was in these early days of the commercial Internet that the first social media platforms were developed and launched. Over time, both the number of social media platforms and the number of active social media users have increased significantly, making it one of the most important applications of the Internet.”¹ Children and teenagers use social media to have fun, make and maintain friendships, share interests, explore identities and develop relationships with family. It’s an extension of their offline and face-to-face interactions. For older teenagers especially, it’s often a key part of how they connect with friends. Social media can connect children and teenagers to online global communities based on shared interests. Social media allows teens to create online identities, communicate with others and build social networks. These networks can provide teens with valuable support, especially helping those who experience exclusion or have disabilities or chronic illnesses. Teens also use social media for entertainment and self-expression. And the platforms can expose teens to current events, allow them to interact across geographic barriers and teach them about a variety of subjects, including healthy behaviors. Social media that’s humorous or distracting or provides a meaningful connection to peers and a wide social network might even help teens avoid depression. A child can get many other benefits from using social media:

- **Digital Media Literacy:** Exploring and experimenting on social media can help your child build knowledge and skills to enjoy online activities and avoid online risks.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Your child can use social media to share educational content, either informally or in formal school settings.
- **Creativity:** Your child can be creative with profile pages, photos and videos, and modifications for games.
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing:** Connecting with extended family and friends and taking part in local and global online communities can give your child a sense of connection and belonging.

However, social media use can also negatively affect teens, distracting them, disrupting their sleep, and exposing them to bullying, rumor spreading, unrealistic views of other people’s lives and peer pressure. The risks might be related to how much social media teens use. “A 2019 study of more than 6,500 12- to 15-year-olds in the U.S. found that those who spent more than three hours a day using social media might be at heightened risk for mental health problems. Another 2019 study of more than 12,000 13- to 16-year-olds in England found that using social media more than three times a day predicted poor mental health and well-being in teens. Other studies also have observed links between high levels of social media use and depression or anxiety symptoms. A 2016 study of more than 450 teens found that greater social media use, nighttime social media use and emotional investment in social media — such as feeling upset when prevented from logging on — were each linked with worse sleep quality and higher levels of anxiety and depression.”²

Social media can also pose risks for our youth, these risks include:

- Being exposed to inappropriate or upsetting content, like mean, aggressive, violent or sexual comments or images.
- Uploading inappropriate content, like embarrassing or provocative photos or videos of themselves or others.
- Sharing personal information with strangers – for example, phone numbers, date of birth or location.
- Cyber bullying.
- Exposure to too much targeted advertising and marketing
- Data breaches, like having their data sold on to other organizations.³

“According to a report released in 2021 by Common Sense Media on social media’s effects on teens, about half of the 1,500 young people surveyed said social media is very important for them in order to get support and advice, feel less alone, and express themselves creatively, as well as for staying in touch friends and family while social distancing. And 43 percent said that using social media makes them feel better when they are depressed, stressed, or anxious. Among LGBTQ youth, 52 percent said social media helps them feel better when they are experiencing these difficult emotions. On the other hand, the report, titled “*Coping with COVID-19: How Young People Used Digital Media to Manage Their Mental Health*,” also showed a strong association between social media and teen depression. Youth with moderate to severe depressive symptoms were nearly twice as likely to say they used social media almost constantly: One-third of teens with depression reported constant social media use, as compared to 18 percent of teens who did not have depressive symptoms. Furthermore, the more severe their symptoms were the more anxious, lonely and depressed they felt after using social media. Clearly, social media does not help teens who are already feeling depressed, and seems to contribute to their negative outlook.”⁴

There are millions of users of social media, especially Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. According to Statista, social media is being used by 3.6 billion users, and there will be approximately 4.41 billion users by 2025. If we look at social media statistics, “one user is spending an average of 2 hours and 22 minutes per day on social networks and messaging.”⁵

Objectives of the Study

Following objectives were aimed to get acquaintance of the present study:

1. To discuss the impact of social media on youth;
2. To discuss the major roles played by social media in our lives;
3. To discuss the key issues of social media.

Research Methodology

In this research study, observational method, theoretical and secondary analysis has been used to collect the data that is qualitative in nature. The available literature has been reviewed for the acquaintance of knowledge on subject matter to verify the nature, significance, characteristics, and roles played by the social media, apart from the key challenges imposed by this form of media.

Limitations of the Study

The present study does not have access to a larger range of literature. There is the lack of information about non-users of social media in this study. This study is mostly based on secondary data.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In today's world, technology, including social media, has strongly influenced a person's life. What if there were no gadgets and no social media? Undoubtedly technology has multiple uses, but, at the same time, if used excessively, it strongly affects a person's life. Anything, whether it might be technology or social media, if used for a longer period of time continuously it may lead to mental stress, anxiety, inability to think, and so on. Technology, whether it comes to laptops, gadgets, or social media each and everything has its advantages and disadvantages. Everything depends on how we utilize it. Either we are using it positively or not. It is we who have to decide about how much time we have to spend on social media so that our work doesn't hamper. We have to set a specific time limit for the proper usage of social media because technology cannot replace anyone in our lives. Our relationship with social media is hardly comparable. Our daily life is consumed by status updates, likes, direct messages, chats, tweets, retweets — and everything in between. It's hard to imagine a world without social media. Consumers are spending up to 3 hours on social media platforms per day, and even longer looking at their mobile screens. Social media has completely revolutionized how we interact with others and express ourselves. It created borderless, instant communication, with powerful and long-lasting effects. If students learn to use social media responsibly and in a safe way, it can have some big benefits by helping them connect, share, and learn. A lot of responsibility comes with using the internet. Parents and educators should take a proactive approach and help kids find positive ways to use social media before they get their first digital device or social media account. Establishing digital boundaries and open communication from the start could help prevent them from posting something that could cost them a dream opportunity in the future.

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