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Problems Resulting from the Use of Social Media

Social media has caused problems related to self-confidence, personal privacy issues, and mental health, and there are concerns about how it could affect the world's future. Social media make many people, especially teens, very insecure as it puts them under pressure to do certain things that make them feel "cool" and live up to specific standards. Social media has nurtured cyberbullying, which has become a severe problem that has even surpassed bullying as the most common type of harassment, especially in middle and high school. Cases of depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts have become more common as the use of social media continues to expand. In this paper, problems emerging from the use of social media will be discussed, including issues of mental health to the users, how it affects the user's self-confidence, and how the use of social media has contributed to personal privacy issues.

Even though social media has transformed people's lives positively and redefined human interaction, the problems resulting from the use of social media have increased at an alarming rate. The self-esteem of social media users is one of the areas highly impacted by an increase in social media usage, causing people's self-esteem to decrease. According to (Jan et al. 330), "Social networking sites have been instrumental in helping people to make social comparisons which increase the psychological distress of individuals and as a result lower the overall level of self-esteem." The survey conducted by Jan et al. revealed that individuals who spend less time on Facebook have more self-esteem than people who spend more time on Facebook (Jan et al. 334). One of the major social media platforms is Facebook which is among the biggest and most popular social networking sites globally.

The Facebook social network is widespread among students who are also a group of people with self-esteem issues. Facebook is a tool for many students and is used for school purposes, entertainment, communication, and forging new relationships. In a study conducted in 2019 in the Philippines at Jagobiao National High School involving 100 selected students, the findings revealed a link between self-esteem and Facebook usage (Arnejo et al.). Individuals who spend more time on social media are at a high risk of experiencing negative self-esteem issues. The problem is even worse for people addicted to social media because they tend to spend much of their time thinking about social media and free up more time for social media use. Many social media users, especially the youth, evaluate their self-worth based on their popularity on online platforms, for example, how many friends they have or the number of likes they get on their profile. Consequently, individuals who receive fewer likes and comments and spend a significant amount of time on social media may suffer from depression and even develop other serious mental issues.

Social media provides a good platform for people to create online personas, which are not necessarily accurate, and many young people use social media accounts to mask serious issues by pretending that everything is perfect. People, especially the youth with serious issues, may fail to get help from parents or friends who may fail to see that they need help based on their social media accounts. For students experiencing anxiety or depression due to other pressures, such as relationships, social media gives them a platform to mask their situation by carefully editing feeds and photos, making them appear okay.

For other people struggling with self-doubt, seeing a post from their peer may result in a feeling of lack, resulting in even more severe mental issues. For example, the fact that many social media platforms, Facebook, have features that allow personal profiles of users to remain visible and available for public scrutiny poses a severe problem. Social media allow friends and the public to pass their judgments through feedback and comments, contributing to more anxiety, especially those that use fake profiles. Unmasking their personas may result in depression and mental issues.

Social media has created a dilemma for many users, particularly the youth, because it provides a platform for social connection, which provides comfort and joy, eases stress, anxiety, boosts self-worth, and prevents loneliness. On the flip side, social media usage has created addiction. If individuals are unable to connect with others, they lack and feel a gap of social connections, which has contributed to severe mental and emotional issues. Social media has created an urge for users. Anytime people are not connected to social media, they experience a form of anxiety known as FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) (Curro and Ainsworth). Social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook worsen the user's feelings by distorting his mind to the thing that he or she is missing something by not being online and that others are having more fun or even living a better life. The aspect of social media where people tend to share just the highlights of their lives and rarely do people share their lowest moment has created more problems for the users. Most socials media users, especially the youth, develop feelings of envy and dissatisfaction upon scrolling through their peers' airbrushed feeds and photos of them enjoying life on a tropical beach holiday.

Consequently, many social media users who perceive themselves as failures after looking at the vivid life of their peers develop feelings of self-pity and eventually depression which results in suicidal thoughts. Many social media users fail to know that most people who post their life online do it to boost their self-esteem and feel a sense of belonging in their social circles. Social medial users post content with the hope of receiving positive feedback, and those who fail to receive positive feedback may experience mental disorders, for example, depression. Moreover, social media platforms, such as Twitter and Instagram, can be hotspots for spreading hurtful lies, gossip, and rumors, which in many cases turn abusive and leave lasting emotional scars. One of the hurtful aspects of social media is body shaming which has become a widespread phenomenon that continues to increase with the growth of social media.

Many people, especially women who deal with body shaming, feel distressed and unhappy about their weight, shape, or physical appearances, and many are attempting to later their body (Puluhulawa and Husain 113). As a result of consuming many social media, people are increasingly becoming uncomfortable with their bodies and look. In recent years, plastic surgery and bleaching of skin have become familiar with many people wanting to look like their filtered Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram photos. Social media significantly continue to play a crucial role in shaping people's lives, especially young people who emulate their significant role models on social media. Many incidences have been recorded where social media users receive cruel feedback regarding their bodies, especially if they do not match the unrealistic beauty standards set by today's society. Moreover, the social media platform is becoming toxic for body image and posing personal privacy issues.

The transformation by social media in content sharing has resulted in many issues relating to personal privacy have emerged, and cases of online harassment are now more common. Even with the entire positive attributes of social media, multiple concerns of the users concerning privacy continue to cause debates. Many people who hold social media accounts are getting concerns about their privacy, especially with the spike of incidences that breach individual privacy. Cases of data breaches have alarmed many users, and many are now rethinking their relationships to social media and their data security.

For example, the emergence of exploitation of private data, the dramatic story of Cambridge Analytica, a consulting agency accused of a data breach, continues to scare users ("Facebook: How Facebook Use Big Data to Understand Customers" 70). The breach of data by Cambridge Analytica was linked with the exploitation and breach of private information of over 50 million Facebook users, which was later used to influence the 2016 American presidential election. Data mining has also become more rampant in the era of social media as the user continues to leave a data trail while using the internet (Kennedy 3). Every time a user creates a new social media account, they compromise their personal information by giving out their geographic location, personal interests, name, and even their date of birth. Social media, therefore, has contributed to the increase of cybercrime, with social media users becoming the target for phishing attempts, malware sharing, among other serious cybercrimes.

In summary, social media that is supposed to bring people closer together can have the opposite effect primarily when misused. What is even worse, social media, for example, Facebook, is linked to depression and anxiety, making people feel more isolated and alone. Social media exposes the users to bullying, esteem issues, body shaming, and unrealistic views of other people's lives, which may fuel suicidal thoughts. Finally, increased use of social media exposes the users to firms and individuals who may breach data to commit a crime.

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