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Abstract

Social media, a growing technology used by millions to interact with one another via platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, etc., has sparked attention regarding the effects of its overuse. The overstimulation of social media has expanded to affect many, specifically college students causing an array of mental health problems in the long run affecting their academic performance and everyday lives. The increased use of technology, although seen as an improvement in human development, has had its negative impacts on us due to abuse of its function. Problems like decreased academic performance, overstimulation of the brain, sleep deprivation, and anxiety have led many researchers to look into why excessive use of social media has affected millions. The purpose of this study is to understand how the evolution of technology and social media has affected individuals and what could potentially be done to assess the problem.

Introduction

Social media, first introduced around the 1990s has evolved to have more abilities including interacting with others around the world and influencing the lives of millions. Seen as a growth in human development of technology, it has caused many of us to adapt to new ways of living; using platforms like Facebook and Instagram to share stories and thoughts. Now about 30 years since the introduction of social media, millions of individuals are beginning to see impacts in their lives from it. Although many may think this has positive impacts as social media is seen as a “digital world for connection with others”, there has been new studies showing a negative impact from social media causing many to abuse the operation of social media itself. New studies of mental health problems have risen, causing many to wonder...is social media good for us? After several studies, we dive into looking at what kind of problems the abuse of social media is linked to including anxiety, overstimulation of the brain, sleep problems, feeling of exclusion, etc.

Problem Statement

According to Vogels and Gelles-Watnick, about 32% of teens entering their college lives see social media as a gateway to negative effect on their mental health with about 45% saying it's neither a positive or negative effect on them. With this finding, we are unsure of how social media really affects college students, but looking further into it, we have found that it has been a major topic for students that have had poor academic performance and an increase in mental health problems. Majority of individuals also added that it has its negative impact of overstimulation from drama or not feeling supported. This brings us to the question, is social

Is the media more bad than good? As the years pass and social media continues to expand across the world, new studies find that it is more than just mental health, but a more serious problem involving your health.

Background

Around 2004, the introduction of Facebook caused an increase in the use of social media. It drastically changed the way humans communicate and move in our everyday lives. With the introduction of smartphones in the 2000s as well, this enabled and excited millions to be involved in the digital world from their phones. This allowed millions to express their ideas and thoughts to others around the world that are on the platform. With the introduction of Facebook came the birth of hundreds of other platforms like YouTube, Pinterest, Twitter(now known as X), and Gmail, very popular platforms that have grown tremendously in the 10-20 years of their existence. At the birth of social media and the use of technology, many did not worry about the negative impacts of this new addition to their everyday lives, but saw it as an excellent way of communicating, sharing ideas, and meeting hundreds of millions of individuals from just a tap on their smartphone. As the years passed and some individuals found themselves overusing technology and social media as a whole, they were found to feel lonely and to some a distraction from their life in the real world. They saw a change in their lifestyle, constantly checking their smartphones for new updates and guiding them away from priorities in their lives. This is where the growth in mental health cases grew in age groups, specifically college students. A decline in academic performance, anxiety cases, the feeling of sleep deprivation, and hundreds of other problems began to arise and made professionals question if it was social media. After further research, it was found to have a connection with these arising mental health problems people began to feel.

Purpose Statement

Social media being a major platform for people to connect around the world, we learn that it can be used to influence and motivate one another. As it continues to grow, we investigate it more and realize our mental health can be affected as well.

Central Research

Following the problems and new data found, it brings me to ask three main questions:

1. Has the increase of social media use really affected a vast amount of college students?
2. How critical has social media affected the lives and the goals of students in college?
3. Will the increase of technology and social media platforms affect humans more in the future?

Social Media's Connection to Depression

With the continuation of rising cases regarding social media and its drastic effects on college students, we expand on research found from several authors who speak on the dark side that platforms like Facebook and other widely known social media platforms bring to humans. Braghieri, Levi, and other publishers of the Social Media Economic Review(2022) found that Facebook's expansion has caused a decline in students' mental health and their overall academic performance caused thousands to drop out of their courses and find a separate route from their studies. They found that the overuse and overstimulation of the brain when engaging with social media has found an increase in problems such as fatigue, the feeling of guilt, and sleeping problems when looking at the growth of Social Media and technology(Braghieri). This gets us thinking, are there other potential findings besides minor mental health challenges we might go through when abusing the use of social media in our everyday lives? They came to conclude that

after conducting a survey with hundreds of college students in the 2000s, it was proven for many to feel a sense of negative effects coming from social media itself. Although many see it as a “digital utopian world” where you can express ideas and thoughts, it also makes people think about living similar lives as those on social media and potentially feeling left out when something is trending. They have grown to be used for not only good, but bad as well affecting people on a deeper level; sleep problems, anxiety, and overstimulation of the brain.

Telegram’s Affect on College Students

Looking deeper into the growth of technology, we think about the drastic effects it has caused to students. From the launch of the social media platform Telegram, Jangi Sangani and Razavi explain the correlation of social media, education decline, and student mental health has changed from the birth of Telegram in the year 2013. Conducting several studies pertaining surveys between college students around the world, it was proven for social media to have students feeling fatigued and less energized for school. Finding demographic statistics, Jangi and his team were able to find that when conducting research in age groups between 15-17 in different areas around the world like Iran, they found that the increase use of technology and social media platforms like telegram have affected people to now feel fatigue and go through an educational decline in their late teens. This leaves many to question what more damage social media can do in the long run. With the continuation and growth of social media and technology as the world continues to advance, new measures of caution are to be thought about especially when introducing technology to younger generations. Researchers and Jangi Sangani’s team worked together to piece two different topics of information together to get to the final finding that social media is not only for pure dopamine or a “reward center”, but causes depression in

millions when overstimulated from it. The significant relationship found between Telegram and the effect it has caused people to have a decline in education has let them know social media is the reason for many problems in college including dropping their academic performance or ending their college journey completely. With Jangani's study, we conclude that monitoring technology in young groups is critical to avoid problems from technology to their academic performance.

Awareness of Arising Problems with Social Media

In 2022, Emerald Lozoda expanded on the awareness and new illnesses that social media has caused with the growing use of it in specifically college students and the working class. Emerald spoke on surveys previously done and found that 12% of student participants had been impacted by the use of social media negatively. This includes themselves and knowing about others around them. With the emerging adults and new college students, we come to the idea of thinking about social media being a huge implication of a growth in mental health problems and how they are most likely to continue to increase as the years come. It is also mentioned that . "Researchers found that students felt some alleviation of their stress when self-disclosing on social media and when receiving parental support. This study showed a positive relationship between stress levels when disclosing oneself to a small group and perceived stress."(Lozoda, 2022). With a growth of attention over the years of how social media has affected positively or negatively, we have seen a positive outcome from it in 2020, the spark of Covid-19, but caused new habits and ways of thinking for individuals that were immersed in the digital world every day. Covid-19 changed the lives of millions around the world, having them stay home 24/7 and going out strictly for necessities during the pandemic. This left millions stuck at home finding

new hobbies, plans, and things to occupy themselves with. With the access to social media platforms on almost every piece of technology available to them, they were able to not only reach people from around the world, but also find happiness in seeing what was happening outside their home.

Pros and Cons of The Use of Social Media

Although there is a huge negative aspect of the growth of technology and social media, we also have to acknowledge what healthy use of it brings to humans and their development. Nelson expands further on how although it may be a distracting factor in our everyday lives, we are able to use it for creativity. Taking accountability to the knowledge of bad habits and potential health issues that could come from the abuse of social media use, Nelson makes it known this is also a form of engagement for the growing population and new generations as they come. With helping students express their self creativity and allowing you to network with companies for potential careers, some individuals use it for the positive effects of finding new information, sharing ideas/thoughts, and looking out for news. Nelson finds that although there are a lot of positive key ideas that come from social media, it is having an effect on college students guiding them away from what is important. Social media has grown to be more than just professional and information, but a getaway for many to use to escape the real world and find a sense of stress-relief. Nelson states that after research, there has been a constant growth of mental health cases correlated to the use of social media. Although he finds correlations and the positive and negative side of social media, we think about what we could potentially change in today's education system or technology that could "limit" or have less of a negative impact on late teens entering college.

Social Media Addiction

With the overuse of social media platforms, we don't always think about what happens when someone is "addicted" to using platforms. Using it as a sense of dopamine in several age groups, more specifically late teens and early 20s, Steiner conducts a study on its impact for college students' mental health. Steiner highlights the basic personal care that is widely affected in college students corresponding to the overuse and addiction of social media. From St. Mary's University of Minnesota, Steiner speaks on how Kyle Palmberg expands on this topic for his major in Psychology. He focused "around the mental health impact of poor sleep quality" (Steiner 2024). Targeting mainly college students, he sensed an overuse of social media being a major factor of having poor sleep quality, later affecting their studies and their academic performance at a collegiate level. He recruits about 80-90 students to gather more information via an anonymous survey to speak on their social media habits in their everyday lives. He found a pattern of college students mentioning social media being used any time they get between classes and sometimes in class and how they have correlated social media to stress for college students. They were able to find that although it is an escape route from the real world, too much time is spent on it and their day is eventually thrown away causing it to be a waste of time and a negative factor and distraction from priorities like school. It is found that their addiction behaviors like the "inability to shut down apps or put a phone away for an extended period of time"(Steiner 2024) has caused a negative result in most cases.

Qualitative Methodology

With the unknown potential of how technology and the use of social media can harm humans in the years to come, we eventually find the need to address ways of venturing off from the ability to be addicted to the small screen. Studies found from publishers like Nelson and Emerald

Lozoda, we learn that there's more to a sense of dopamine with social media in college students. We see an increase in dropped academic performance in young adults and this is affecting their futures tremendously. We learn and understand that individuals of different backgrounds have access to social media and have used it for many different reasons, one being to relieve potential stress. Selecting individuals between the age groups of 17-24, we can collect new data that will be effective in finding out an impact it has in just a fraction of the world. Additionally, following the same process of doing surveys, being able to do it with individuals of different demographics and cultures may help us look into what patterns are relevant to helping people from different areas in the world to help them stay away from the dark side of social media.

Potential Impact

As social media being a huge part of our everyday lives allows us to be connected with news, ideas, thoughts, and content from around the world, it is important to expose true information that has been found from the use of it. Findings from research regarding social media and its effect on college students can potentially help new families and growing adults rethink their decisions on how much time should be realistically spent on technology on a day to day basis. Looking at statistics in the growth in mental and physical health problems is a way of introducing real-world data to people around the world. After collecting crucial data and finding the growing effects of social media, learning it is affecting a huge percent of the world's college students, we can find new actions and plans to take for students to stay away from the negative impact it has. Engaging college students and teaching them about the overuse of social media can help thousands in understanding the dangers of social media. Proper use is important not only in college students, but in growing generations as well. Introduction of social media to young

generations has the ability of affecting them early on in their life and could be a reason for their change in plans in their career paths.

Conclusion

With statistical data of about 32% of students seeing social media as a negative impact in their lives, we have to consider and really think about how a habit like use of social media can really affect our lives in the long run. From mental health problems to college drop-outs, it is important for it to be known the issues that can arise in the young generations when being exposed to social media. Teaching young individuals and college students about the dangers of it and exposing them to new habits helps them build character and finds a positive effect in their career journeys. Beginning at age groups of 15-17 being exposed to social media like Telegram and other platforms around the world, it was found that social media has been seen as a “distraction” to an extent and has changed the views of many when it comes to their future decisions. With effects like sleep deprivation, anxiety, the sense of loneliness, overstimulation of the brain, and most importantly a decrease in academic performance, change must be made to avoid the overuse of social media in our young generations.

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