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Negative Effects of Social Media on Friendship

Within the last decade, technology and social media has become the center of our society. With younger generations getting accustomed to social media at a very early age, we are finding multiple negative effects. Fewer face-to-face conversations are being held as well as less meaningful interactions; this creates problems in friendships and other relationships. Though social media has some positive aspects, it has resulted in a net negative effect on friendships. First, I will introduce a key source. Next, I will create my argument and lastly, I will state the opposing view.

Black mirror is a television series on Netflix that depicts futuristic societal issues and outcomes. “Nosedive,” is an episode about a society that is fully engulfed in the social media world. In this society, everything a person does, or posts is rated on a five-point scale, giving the person an overall rating. This rating allows them to have benefits such as better housing, cutting the lines, and special access clubs. Throughout this episode, we see the negative effects of this type of society. Lacie, the main character is invited to be the maid of honor for an old friend’s wedding, which does not go as planned.

As displayed in the episode “Nosedive,” social media causes face-to-face interactions to be less sincere and meaningful. Lacie is so completely focused on increasing her social status rating that every time she is with another person, her interactions are somewhat staged. In this society, no one can say what they truly mean or feel without receiving negative consequences. These interactions are all required to be a certain way in order to receive a good rating from the other person. The same thing occurs with what they post on social media, every post must be pleasing to others in order to receive good ratings. This is similar to today’s society in that many people are so focused on how many likes they are getting on their posts or who is interacting with their post as a way of seeking approval from society. This constant need for approval creates many negative mental health effects such as depression, anxiety, and eating disorders. During some conversations displayed in the episode “Nosedive,” the characters were scrolling through social media while having a conversation with each other. This is a common phenomenon today and has been found to decrease the overall satisfaction that one received from that interaction (Gordon 2). Disagreements with friends often go public with subtweets and posts about the specific fight. A similar scenario was shown in “Nosedive,” when Lacie’s rating was too low and Naomi refused to have her speak at her wedding. In this scenario, Naomi only wanted Lacie to speak at her wedding for the numbers and the rating she would receive for allowing a lower ranked person who seemed genuine to be the maid of honor. Once Lacie dropped too low, Naomi could not have her speak at her wedding because that would decrease Naomi’s ratings.

Social media has made cyber bullying possible. Cyber bullying allows individuals to say hateful things online behind a username and not be discovered for who they truly are. Other pressures come with social media such as what is acceptable to post, giving positive feedback on friends’ posts, and not liking the posts of people that a friend does not like. There are many norms and guidelines when it comes to social media that can be stressful and agitating to follow. Although the main goal of social media is to connect, it can often cause social isolation. When certain pictures are posted or shared that one friend was not included in, this can cause the feeling of isolation.

The portrayal of society in “Nosedive,” is an accurate depiction of where our society is headed. A similar system has recently been put into place in China called the “social credit system.” In this system, citizens are rated on every action they perform and are given a positive or negative social credit depending on their actions. Actions that receive negative ratings include jaywalking, smoking in a non-smoking area, making reservations at restaurants and not showing up, and even buying too many video games. The consequences of having a bad social credit are not getting the best jobs, being banned from travel, and being excluded from school admission. On the other hand, having a good credit score can earn you special rewards including things like discounts on your bills, more matches on dating websites, and less waiting times in hospitals. If we continue along our social media path, it is likely that the US will adopt a similar social credit system. This is likely if one considers the dependency that US citizens already have on technology and the advancements being made daily. Although it is not formalized within our government yet, in many ways the system is already here in an informal way with our youth.

Other viewpoints of technology and social media highlight how social media is beneficial and helps create more friendships. Social media is a very large social network that connects people in a matter of seconds. However, many of these friendships can be superficial and the individuals never meet in person. Social media platforms also help keep friends connected over time and distance. Social media can also actually increase communication and self-confidence. When someone receives positive feedback on a certain post, their self-confidence increases. It also allows people to share from their personal life and share activities or beliefs that are important to them. By sharing these activities and beliefs, they can connect with people of similar interests that they might not otherwise connect with or meet. Although an individual may be receiving positive feedback, there is also much room for negative feedback and the negative feedback is often what resonates with that individual. For people who struggle with face-to-face communication and making friends, online groups make forming friendships easier for those individuals. However, taking away face-to-face interactions prevents individuals from gaining skills for physical interactions. Without those skills, individuals lack the ability to effectively deal with confrontation or succeed in public speaking.

Throughout this paper, I discussed how social media negatively impacts friendships and other relationships. I used the episode “Nosedive,” as well as some other sites to support my claims. I also discussed the contradicting viewpoint that social media is a positive aspect in society. Social media and the impact on society is one of the most critical issues today – it will be important to our future to find a balance between the positive and negative impacts to ensure a healthy society in the future.

Works Cited

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