**III. The psychological of social media (up to 20 points)**

*1. Find at least 10 written stories or videos that are concerned with the alleged negative psychological consequences of social media use can have on our minds. Explain how you chose your sources. (3 points) If you want, you can include these two sources:*

*2. Present as clearly as possible the concerns raised in the stories or videos and the evidence cited. (7 points)*

*3. Discuss the claims made in the stories and videos in the light of relevant research. (10 points*)

Social networking sites (SNS) are now becoming one of the most prominent tools when it comes to social interaction and information exchanges. We have seen an exponential rise in usage of SNS within the past years. A huge part of it is due to more advanced technology and innovation bringing us “the consumer” products like smartphones, tablets, apps etc. all of whom make it easier for consumers to connect themselves on the internet and SNS.

This exponential growth in usage has raised concern and may suggest that there might occur potential mental health problems among some users. Though it is hard to pinpoint the specific reasons why some users become “addicted” by using these SNS an excessive amount. Some studies like the one below, helped us understand better how personal traits and linked to social media use.

An article published by (Kuss, Daria J. and Griffiths, Mark D. “Online Social Networking and Addiction -A review of the Psychological literature”. 29.08.2011. Environmental Research and Public Health.) was made to provide insight into the emerging phenomenon of addiction to SNS. Their finding indicates “that SNSs are predominantly used for social purposes, mostly related to the maintenance of established offline networks. Moreover, extraverts appear to use social networking sites for social enhancement, whereas introverts use it for social compensation, each of which appears to be related to greater usage, as does low conscientiousness and high narcissism. Negative correlates of SNS usage include the decrease in real life social community participation and academic achievement, as well as relationship problems, each of which may be indicative of potential addiction”.

In the video “Facebook is Ripping Apart Society” (<link>), former Facebook president Sean Parker and former Facebook senior executive Chamath Palihapitiya elaborates on how when working for Facebook they worked on designing their social media to be addictive, to further their companies interests.

By having people spend more time on social media, they further develop their brand as well as earn more money from ads etc. What I mean on by develop brand, the more time they spend on one specific social media platform, the less time they are likely to spend on other social media platforms.

We learn from Sean that one of their many tricks to have people be more active and use more time on Facebook, they found a way to manipulate dopamine releases in the brain. They figured out that if someone received positive feedback on a post, such as a like or comment, it would trigger a tiny bit of dopamine to be released in their brain making them feel pleasure and “good” about their post, which resulted in them wanting to make more posts to get more of this “good feeling”.

Zuckerberg in one of his many speeches talked on how dependent Facebook in its early stages were on having their servers up and running 24/7, as a “blackout” could cause them to lose a massive chunk of their active users, as their goal was to let people connect with who they want, wherever on the planet they were. If the servers went down, they would not be able to communicate with who they want and would cause less people to use their platform.

Social media platforms tend to be very primal in the early stages, but as years passes they tend to implement more and more features making it easier and more luring to spend more time on SNS. Not only are these platforms used for communicating with each other, but a lot of people also get read their news from their SNS “feed”.

As we saw in the USA 2016 presidential election, a lot of voters got dissuaded as they were misled by “fake news”, as Facebook and other SNS did little no nothing in regulating unreliable sources pumping out false information. Experts say as we saw on polls and the election that the result were to some degree manipulated by “fake news”, which is a frightening development, which shows the dangerous and powerful effects social media can have on a large demographic of users from all ages.

A story by Byworth, Ella for Metro.co.uk shares how she struggled with her addiction to the SNS known as “Tumblr”. At first she only used the website ever now and then, but as she got more followers and re-blogs she found her investing an increasing amount of time on this platform.

While hanging out with her friends, she found herself wanting to visit Tumblr, and eventually her friends got tired of being with her since every conversation with her eventually led to Tumblr which they did not have an interest in. With friends distancing from her, she interacted more on this platform with fellow users online. The amount of re-blogs given on a photo tended to match how beautiful some are. Therefore Ella found herself spending a lot of time editing, dressing up and posing to become as “attractive” as possible.

Eventually she found herself only feeling like Tumblr become more as a task to keep her followers and profile updated and eventually got tired. She was surprised on how easy it was to fall victim to needing constant assurance from people you do not know, as it is harder to get the same feedback in real life. She then tells how easy she felt like it was to fake someone she was not.

What we as a group took from this personal history is that Ella is that how easy it is to fall victim of addiction. In her case it was the surge of followers which led her to a false sense of popularity. There are thousands of similar stories, as people saw an influx in likes and comments, making them post even more and making them “famous” on social media platforms.

We take what she said about “faking it” with a grain of salt. Our take on the story is that she found herself forming her persona, personality and looks from response given on Tumblr in form of re-blogs. And instead of this being a “fake persona” it affected her to some degree maybe without her knowing it. She did not seem to “keen” on talking how it impacted her personality, however this is our take on the situation.

I find the most valuable in this text to be what she talked about her being insecure and an introvert in real life, but online she had no problem being confident and an extrovert. We can link this to the report from “Environmental Research and Public Health “, who found out “whereas introverts use it for social compensation, each of which appears to be related to greater usage”

**Sources (with a short description why I chose exactly those sources):**

<https://medium.com/thrive-global/how-technology-hijacks-peoples-minds-from-a-magician-and-google-s-design-ethicist-56d62ef5edf3> [27.09.2018] (Description: This source I used to learn more about how they design their social media platform to optimize time spent on their platform as well as how they unconsciously make choices for you, as an example: Netflix’s auto play function).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J54k7WrbfMg> [27.09.2018] (Description: This source really helped me understand the thought process behind companies like Facebook, Twitter etc. to manipulate and deliberate design their social media platform to exploit the many human psychological weaknesses).

<https://www.axios.com/sean-parker-unloads-on-facebook-god-only-knows-what-its-doing-to-our-childrens-brains-1513306792-f855e7b4-4e99-4d60-8d51-2775559c2671.html> [27.09.2018] (Description: Sean Parker article).

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/theworldpost/wp/2018/04/25/social-media-addiction/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.5483d1621dfa> [27.09.2018] (Description: Steps we could take to counteract social media addiction, questions which might help you figure out if you are addicted to social media as well as a message that not only is it the consumer who are responsible for their own use, but major companies should play their part in reducing excessive social media use.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0306460316301095> [27.09.2018] (Description: Norwegian article linking social media addiction with narcissism and self-esteem, basing it off a survey of over 23 000 Norwegians).

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0191886917302891> [27.09.2018]. (Description: More in-depth explanation of FOMO scale (fear of missing out) linking it with social media addiction.

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/dec/4/social-media-addiction-is-not-a-thing/> 01.10.2018] (Talks about how social media addiction is blown out of proportions etc. and how it’s not really a problem, people just use it as a “shitty” excuse of slacking off or not spending enough time with their kids.)

<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/8/9/3528/html> [01.10.2018] (Description: Reliable source with an in depth analysis of SNS addictiveness. Explains personality patterns, goes in depth of SNS usage and it’s addictive traits.

https://metro.co.uk/2017/09/05/how-my-addiction-to-social-media-affected-my-mental-health-and-my-relationships-6901759/ [05.10.2018]. (Description: Shares her story of her tumblr addiction and how it affected her).