From Connection to Division: The Impact of Social Media on Relationships

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**Introduction**

In “Why Social Media is Ruining Your Relationships” by Katherine Ormerod, published on May 29th, 2019, Ormerod’s argues that social media creates more superficial relationships and increased feelings of loneliness and isolation. Ormerod claims that social media platforms make us feel like we are connected with one another, but the nature of social media interactions lacks depth. Ormerod’s article does well to speak on the negative affects social media has on relationships, but to fully encapsulate the negative impact, it is important to consult the data from various studies.

Ormerod’s article highlights the differences between actively engaging with others online and observing without interacting. She explains that social media can be used in a way that is not harmful, but ultimately Ormerod believes that most people succumb to using social media in a way that negatively impacts the user. Dunbar’s number theory is used to give reason to why people feel isolated despite the constant online connection that is available.

**Critical Response**

Ormerod’s argument is well-thought-out and logical. Relevant research is used, such as Dunbar’s theory on the number of relationships a person can manage. Dunbar’s theory backs up her point that social media leads to more surface-level connections. The theory suggests that humans can maintain around 150 meaningful relationships. Social media providing interaction with hundreds or thousands of people contrasts this theory. The argument is also grounded in real-world examples, specifically on how social media shapes our behaviour. With this combination of real-world examples and research, Ormerod’s negative viewpoint on digital interactions is strengthened. For example, it is a common experience for people to feel more fulfilled by real conversations over scrolling through online content. The reasoning is sound as well. Ormerod acknowledges the natural need for people to have social connections and why social media is so appealing. She highlights the differences of potential interactions, passive and active, which highlights both the positive and negative of social media in different instances.

**Skepticism**

Ormerod’s argument is strong, but not without flaws. It is possible that the issue is not intrinsic to social media, but solely with the way that people choose to use social media. While uncommon in the latest generations, people can use social media to maintain distant and/ or personal relationships without succumbing to common, shallow-in-nature actions. Family members who are across the world from one another is an example of how social media can make maintaining close relationships easier rather than harder. Family members will be able to see each other grow, what they have accomplished, what type of people they are becoming, and messaging in real time to stay up to date with the emotional side of any relationship. Time is also a factor that should be taken into consideration. People do not have time to see every person they know each day, especially with the number of responsibilities the average person has. Social media allows people to keep connections when they otherwise would not be able to. Effectively, this gives people a better chance to maintain a meaningful relationship with more people throughout their lives. Lastly, Ormerod focuses on loneliness caused by social media with might overlook the other social or economic challenges there are in the world. People have the power to change how they use social media applications but changing social or economic conditions is not as easy.