**Tutorial 3**

Social media was designed to keep us connected and provide an opportunity to be social with one another. Nowadays the meaning behind social media has changed, it is more than just a platform for people to be social and make new connections. Income can be earned on social media, and for one to be able to do so they must be an influencer and post aesthetically pleasing content. This has led to a false reality on what life really is like for these influencers outside of social media. As a result, social media users might feel the need to live up to the expectations that these influencers portray to be living.

Lately (Nov 2022), there has been a great increase in the amount of people, disconnecting from social media. This is noticeable amongst most social media users as most influencers (for example, Rikkisandhuu, Stefana Avara and more). are raising awareness on the fakeness of social media and how not everything that is posted is real. The usage of filters on social media has led to an increase in insecurities (for example the new TikTok beautify filter that makes your skin clear and removes all acne), This has led to an increased rate of people that are deactivating their accounts or trying to focus more on their real life. People are realising that you cannot lead a healthy life while living in the facade that social media has created whereby you may start to feel like everyone on social media is living a more fulfilled life than you do or look better than you.

Hence why I agree that the ‘age of social media’ is ending’, as most people are taking some time off the media due to an increased rate of awareness on how fake social media is. ‘Comparison is the thief of joy’, most social media users compare their lives to others. This has also led to an increase in mental health and insecurity issues as one might feel like they are not doing enough compared to their age mates or followers. I, myself used to struggle with eating disorders due to feeling like my body is not good enough compared to most people on social media, I then had to take less time on social media which has helped me immensely in my recovering journey. A lot of people, including me, are realizing that not everything you see on the internet is real and are either deciding to use social media less to prevent unnecessary peer pressure or deleting social media completely.

This is a good thing for society because although social media plays an important role in our day-to-day lives, benefiting us in different ways such as allowing us to get news about personal safety or friends during crises elsewhere in the world such as during the Covid-19 lockdown period where we all relied on social media to be aware of what was going on in the world and to know the wellbeing of our family and friends. Social media is, however, exclusively detrimental to our mental health, it discourages uniqueness, as there are a lot of trends that go viral on different social media platforms (TikTok, Instagram, etc) and users of social media are peer pressured to conform to most, if not all of them. Trends now extend to what we desire and if we do not fit into a particular trend, we might feel like we do not belong or if we are not able to afford whatever the trending object might be such as how iPhones are trending nowadays, the peer pressure that comes with having one is intense and failure to afford one might lead us to feeling depressed and unhappy.

In addition, looking at the way women are classified on social media, there are a lot of stereotypes on what the desired women should look like and recently there has been trends like “clean girl aesthetic”, “that girl aesthetic", "skinny girl aesthetic". These classifications define more than just lifestyle, they define food consumption, how you dress, your appearance, the hairstyle you decide on having and if one has all the characteristics then they are the type of women that is desired by the society. A good example is Marriane Jensen, a popular TikTok user, who is currently going through depression and eating disorders since 2014, due to not feeling like she is thin enough like most models. This just shows how seriously social media can ruin someone’s life. It discourages our individual growth as these stereotypes are enforced on us and we feel like we must abide by them, or else society will not accept us as we are. Although social media provides ‘enlightenment' to other people's lives, providing a platform for people that are lonely on the outside to be more vocal on social media, these benefits are dominated by the different stereotypes that social media promotes, resulting in people attempting to take their own lives due to feeling like they do not fit in. Therefore, in my opinion social media is detrimental to our mental health due its subtle promotion of stereotypes that us as users feel we need to follow, or society will not accept us as we are, and the less social media we use the more we can focus on the reality that is in front of us.