

Reflection

I would focus on the second suggestion by Jonathan. He stated that giving users greater control over their feeds is a possible way of improving a recommender system, which I believe is not necessarily true.

A conspicuous drawback of letting users to have dominant control over the contents they are willing to see is the escalation of the problem of echo chamber. In other words, people are involved in an environment where the perspectives of other people are highly restricted. Gradually, people are more and more convinced to believe what they had in mind primarily, and prefer to watch contents that support their opinion while criticizing and slandering others. This forms a vicious cycle that ultimately creates an extremist.

Increasing users' control over their feeds clearly strengthens this cycle. Without such dominance, a user might have a chance of seeing contents that supports other viewpoints, and access a more diverse pool of perspectives. With greater control over the feeds, users can intentionally choose the content that carry similar attitudes (simply because they are delighted to be agreed with!) or block the contents with opposite opinions.

In addition, supplying users with greater control over their feeds could create addictions to the recommendation system. As mentioned above, people are pleased when their ideas are agreed upon or supported by others, and, apparently, people like to be pleased. Apps like Tik Tok provide short videos that release dopamine in human brains instantly, so the more people get thrilled by videos, the more dopamine is released, and the more motivated they are to continue watching. This eventually leads to strong addiction for the recommendation system.

In conclusion, allowing greater control over feeds for the users does not necessarily resolve the ethical issues, and might possibly make some of them worse.