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Social Media Sucks

With the ever-increasing prevalence of social media in everyone's lives, there comes the question of how it will affect people, both positively and negatively. For my paper I delved into the idea of social media and the negative effects it can have on its users.

As social media has spread throughout the world, so too have concerns of the negative effects it can have on users, specifically in teenagers. While social media can have positive effects such as allowing teens belonging to a marginalized group to find others of the same group, giving teens a platform to express themselves and allowing friends to maintain contact over long distances, the negative effects are numerous and concerning.

Social media can distract from homework and social life, disrupt sleep, lead to incorrect or biased information, lead teens to warped perceptions of their bodies, expose teens to online predators or pornographic material and cyberbullying, which can greatly increase the risk of developing depression and/or anxiety.

The risks of social media use are linked to several factors. One of these factors is the amount of time teens spend on social media each day. According to a study conducted in 2014 which focused on teenagers using social media, teens who spend more than three hours a day on social media are at a greater risk of developing mental health concerns.

Another factor is how often social media is used. Teens who use social media more than three times a day are more likely to develop mental health issues than those who use it once or twice a day. While the overuse of social media is a leading cause of mental health concerns, researchers have also linked these concerns to what teenagers are being exposed to on social

media platforms. Specific content such as illegal acts, self-harm, harm to others and encouragement of negative habits may raise some teens' risk of developing mental health complications.

Children are being exposed to social media at younger ages as it becomes more integrated in our everyday lives. This early introduction of social media greatly increases their risk of developing mental health complications. Social media has been engineered to hold the user's attention for as long as possible in order to maximize usage of the platform. The companies behind these platforms profit off the extended social media use of teenagers and therefore will do nothing to stop it, regardless of the mental health risks.

These companies are the main beneficiaries of the social media "epidemic" we see developing today. As aforementioned, they strive to maximize how long an individual spends on their platform and how often they use it. Because of how accepted social media has become, I don't think there is much that can be done to help. It is now the responsibility of the user to decide whether or not they will continue to use social media. More coverage of the negative effects of social media in mainstream media could also help to make a change.

I think society's reliance on social media is a foreboding sign of what's to come. It is my belief that people will only become more reliant on social media as it becomes more addicting and widespread.

Sources:

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