

In the last few years social media has engulfed our lives, making most of us social media experts. However, most people do not know about some of the dangers that social media imposes on us. One of the biggest dangers social media creates, are so called 'echo chambers'. Echo chambers are environments in which people are only presented with information that confirms or tend to their own pre-existing beliefs. In this short argumentative essay I will provide my point of view on this danger and why I agree with this risk that is generated by something that I could not mis in my daily life. I will do this by firstly explaining how these echo chambers are created, secondly by providing some of my own observations, and lastly by emphasizing the importance of education on the topic.

### **The danger of social media algorithms**

Most social media platforms are designed to keep people online on the platform as long as possible, this is mainly done by the algorithms that underly them. When you are interested in a certain type of content, the platform picks up on that. In the future it tries to show you more of the content it knows you like. As an example, if you like a cat video on the popular platform Youtube, in the future you will be presented with more and more cat videos in your video recommendations, which you will probably like again and again, keeping you in an endless loop of amusing cat videos. While this harmless when it comes to innocent cat videos, it becomes a bigger problem when platforms start showing people only certain points of view in broader topics/concepts (e.g. politics, religion, etc.), keeping them limited to the things they have seen in the past, and trapping them in the echo chambers.

### **Personal observations: Pandemic 2020**

The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 saw a big rise of conspiracy theorist: people who center their beliefs around large amounts of misinformation. During the pandemic, people spend on average a lot more time on social media than they did before, exposing them to lots of different digital. This includes content about conspiracy theories. When people start to become interested in this particular kind of content, they start to get surrounded by it on the entire platform (as explained in the previous paragraph), and in addition it starts to effect their personal beliefs. Believing in conspiracy theories is one of the consequences of echo chambers: people only

believing in the mis information they are presented with and not believing in any opposing view. This is directly caused by the extensive use of social media.

### **The importance of education**

When people are at the risk of getting trapped in echo chambers, one of the most critical skills one can obtain, is the skill of critical thinking. Nowadays children, teens, and even (young) adults are taught to think critically about the content they see online. They are learned to not believe everything they read online, and how to distinguish false information from true information. When people are educated on these topics, they tend to not become trapped in echo chambers. Results from a study in 2023 show that young people recognize it faster when they are in an echo chamber than older people (Greene & Zuzky, 2023). So, the dangers of social media apply way less on people who are correctly educated on the subject, thus emphasizing the importance of a good education.

### **Conclusion**

Echo chambers are one of the big risks social media imposes on its users, limiting people to their pre-existing points of view. This is mainly caused by the algorithms that underly the platforms, supply people with endless waves of content they are familiar with. Especially, in times where social media is on average used more, e.g. during the pandemic 2020, we can observe that people become trapped in echo chambers more regularly and extremely. To steer clear of these risks, it is important to greatly educate people on the dangers of social media. The skill of critical thinking is more important than ever in the age of social media.