

Fall 2023

Social Media and It's Influence in Today's World

Cinque Hampton
champton18@murraystate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/bis437>

Recommended Citation

Hampton, Cinque, "Social Media and It's Influence in Today's World" (2023). *Integrated Studies*. 504.
<https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/bis437/504>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Works at Murray State's Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Integrated Studies by an authorized administrator of Murray State's Digital Commons. For more information, please contact msu.digitalcommons@murraystate.edu.

Social Media and It's Influence in Today's World

By
Cinque Hampton

Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Bachelor of Integrated Studies Degree

Murray State University
November 8, 2023

Abstract

Let's be honest, the pervasive influence of social media is irrefutable. This paper is going to dive into the involvement and impact that social media platforms have on modern society. From your everyday casual platforms like Facebook to videos games children play like Roblox. There are 100 plus social media sites that people have access to. This paper will analyze how social media has shaped trends, beliefs, cultural expression, and even identify formation. Social media has also made an impact on mental health, the way people view themselves and their thought process. This paper will also look at the addiction that comes with social media, the good & the bad, the bullying, the comparison, and negative self-belief. This research explores the complications of social media and how influencers use this platform to market, promote their brand, and to generate revenue. People can and do benefit from social media so while acknowledging that, this research also will address the challenges and exposure associated with unmonitored social media usage.

Keywords: Social Media, Influence, Culture, Mental Health, Challenges, Complications, Exposure

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my mom and my fiancé. Their support, encouragement, and belief in my ambitions have been the driving force behind this education process. Without them, I would've given up on school a long time ago. I am also immensely thankful to God for the blessings that have sustained me throughout this journey. Last, I want to say thank you to my teachers and advisors for their guidance and patience. Their dedication to my growth has played a significant role. I am deeply grateful for the contributions of all these wonderful individuals in my life

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Introduction.....	1
X.....	3
Facebook.....	4
Instagram.....	7
Roblox.....	10
Media’s pandemic impact.....	13
WhatsApp.....	15
Low self-esteem.....	16
Bullying.....	18
Social Skills.....	22
Academic Performance.....	25
Mental Health.....	27
Thinking Skills.....	28
Wanting to be Accepted.....	30
Effective Networking Skills.....	33
Leveraging Social Media.....	36
Nurturing A Critical Mindset.....	39
Availability of Educational Resources.....	41
Conclusion.....	44
References.....	48

Introduction

X, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and Facebook are all social media platforms and forms of technology. Social Media skyrocketed in the mid/late 2000's and hasn't slowed down since. The platforms mentioned are just the few that everyone across the world knows about, but there are many more. In the context of online communication and digital culture, 'social media' is commonly defined as 'forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)' (Merriam-Webster 2023, p. 1)." Gaming consoles are also considered to be social media.

In recent years, the social media landscape has witnessed a remarkable surge in user engagement. As of 2023, Instagram has over two billion monthly active users (Statista, 2023, p. 1). X's user base has reached over 540 million users (Aljazeera, 2023, p. 1). Snapchat reports 397 million users (Statista, 2023, p.1). Facebook remains the leading social network with over 3.03 billion users, this means that 61.8% of all social media users also access Facebook (Shewale, 2023, para. 1). These staggering numbers underscore the widespread adoption of these social media platforms in a relatively short span of time. However, social media isn't always positive. The negative effects of social media on their users cannot be ignored. Social media can have a harmful effect on mental health, academic performance, self-esteem, social skills, bullying and more.

Social media can have a long-lasting effect on our minds. Huff states, "Overwhelmed by the news, the effects of reading or watching a lot of negative news coverage can harm both mind and body" (Huff, 2022, p. 20). The impact of social media varies from person to person because we all take things differently. Older adults don't take it as rough as middle-aged adults, middle

aged adults don't take it as rough as younger adults and so forth. Children, teenagers, and even young adults are the people who it affects the most. Children have young minds and so much of social media can lessen their attention span, their communication skills become minimal, and then they lack motivation to do anything because they're so hooked on social media. Kids see these influencers that don't go to school or who graduated from high school to become a social media star but don't understand that most of them are living paycheck to paycheck. Certain platforms can expose children to inappropriate context such as violence, drugs/ alcohol abuse, sexual content, and lesser view of reality. It also can/will promote unhealthy lifestyle habits like eating disorders to cause weight gain or weight loss.

The excessive use of social media usage can result in dissatisfaction, sadness, and frustration, among all of us no matter the age. "If you're spending an excessive amount of time on social media and feelings of sadness, dissatisfaction, frustration, or loneliness are impacting your life, it may be time to re-examine your online habits and find a healthier balance" (Robinson & Smith, 2023, para. 3). This can result from a tendency to feel excluded or inadequate when comparing themselves to others online, impacting not just their mental well-being but also their self-esteem and confidence levels. Social media can serve as a distraction for children, hindering their academics. Too much time spent scrolling on social feeds or engaging in communication could lead to reduced concentration and shortened attention span.

In addition, social media has the potential to slow down the development of interpersonal skills in kids. Kids will start to prefer digital communication over face-to-face interactions, which can inhibit their ability to effectively engage with others in real world settings.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "kids ages 8 to 10 spend about 6 hours a day in front of a screen using entertainment media, and kid ages 15-18 spend

nearly 7 ½ hours a day in front of screen using entertainment media” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2018, p. 1). With the amount of time kids spend in front of a screen, it is hard for kids to get an adequate amount of sleep to refresh their minds if school aged children are in school from 7-2:30 (7 hours) and then go home, do homework and once they’re finished, they’re allowed to be on some form of technology for the rest of the afternoon which could be 6-9 hours.

As the prevalence of social media among school aged children continues to take off, it becomes highly vital to be watchful. Being watchful is essential to prevent the negative effects on mental health, academic performance, social skills, self-esteem, and to prevent the issues of cyberbullying. There’s also a lot of positive effects about social media and these include honing networking and communication abilities, finding a sense of belonging, enhancing critical thinking skills, and making use of these platforms for activism and advocacy.

X

X is one of the many social media platforms that is extremely popular. X was created March 21, 2006, by several founders, Biz Stone, Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, and Noah Glass. When they first created X, it was referred to as Twitter. They only had roughly around 140 users and as of 2023 X has 528.3 million active users. This number continues to grow each year. What is X exactly? “X is a service for friends, family, and coworkers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent messages. People post posts, which may contain photos, videos, links, and text. These messages are posted to your profile, sent to your followers, and are searchable on X search” (X Help Center, 2023, para. 1).

X has also become a source for breaking news and real-time updates. Journalists, News Reporters, and Individuals use twitter to share breaking stories. X is an app that could allow

users to be cyberbullied which can lead to anxiety and depression. This platform can expose people to hateful comments and personal attacks that can alter self-esteem and confidence.

Excessive amount of time present on X, just like other forms of social media, can lead to lack of productivity and poor academic performance. Children may come across content such as sexual content, usage of drugs, violence, and they can accidentally or intentionally seek them out since they're exposed to that.

X is often criticized for its negative impact on children, but it has several positive impacts as well. This platform specifically provides a good opportunity for children to express themselves and to share their thoughts and ideas out loud with a broader audience. This can help them to develop their communication skills and improve their confidence. X can be used for educational purposes. Some teachers use X to share information about projects, events and assignments. This in return can help students to stay informed and engaged in their studies.

X has the potential to enhance critical thinking skills in school aged children by exposing them to different perspectives and opinions. It can help them learn to evaluate critically and enable them to form their own opinions based on evidence and sharpen their discernment abilities. There are certainly many risks involved with social media use among school aged children, the pros of X cannot go unnoticed. With the right guidance from parents and educators, X can be an important tool for learning and personal development.

Facebook

Facebook is another platform that is skyrocketing in today's society. The platform was founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Disting Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes (Hall, 2023, para. 1). As Facebook's users continue to expand significantly, a lot of concerns have been raised regarding the impact on school aged children. The use of Facebook can lead to

addiction and distract children from doing well in school. There's no doubt that Facebook has witnessed a ton of cyberbullying incidents, with people falling victim to being harassed online. Most of these experiences can lead to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.

This platform can introduce children to inappropriate content such as drug abuse, sexual content, and violence. In today's digital age, social media has become an essential part of our lives, profoundly altering the way we connect and communicate. "The impact of Facebook on society is undeniable. It has changed the way interact with each other and has even become a crucial tool for networking and job searching. However, Facebook has also been criticized for its privacy policies, and has been blamed for spreading fake news and spreading hate speech. Despite these criticisms, Facebook remains one of the most popular social media platforms in the world, and it continues to shape the way we interact with each other" (Vargas Vega, 2023, para. 4).

Facebook can bring a constant comparison, where kids will always compare themselves against others. These types of experiences can employ harmful effects on moral values and behavior of children. It could get to the point where you're relying on the likes and comments that you will receive or don't receive on your post, and people will use that as a measure of self-worth. So, if you get a ton of likes you're thinking more highly of yourself and if you don't get a lot, you think very low of yourself. This type of behavior not only affects people's self-esteem but will & can influence their moods and actions, as they continue to strive to meet social norms and ideas presented within their online networks.

Facebook has a made a profound impact in the realm of technology and connectivity. From associating geographical boundaries to reshaping the business landscape, it has left a huge mark on the way we communicate and interact in today's digital age. "Facebook has

revolutionized the way we communicate and share information. It has brought people closer together by allowing us to connect with friends and family from all over the world. It has also changed the way businesses operate, by allowing companies to reach millions of people with just one click. Facebook has also become an important platform for social activism and political discussions, as well as a tool for news and information dissemination” (Vargas Vega, 2023, para. 3).

Facebook has positives impacts as well. Facebook has brought the ability to connect with your friends, build relationships and network. Using Facebook, you’re able to find other people who share similar interests as you and form meaningful connections. This platform has not only made it easy to connect with friends and family but has also empowered institutions to use it for classroom management. Shaw (2015) explains that “Facebook pages are often used by institutions to communicate campus events and activities to students and to try to promote campus engagement, but they can also be used in individual classes as a classroom management tool” (para. 30).

Allowing students to use Facebook will help them collaborate with each other on projects and share information and ideas with one another. It’s also a big help when it comes to helping children develop critical digital literacy skills that will help them be better equipped and qualified to navigate the challenges and opportunities of online communication. Having the right guidance from your parents and teachers, people can learn to harness the positives while avoiding the danger of online activity. If the platform continues to grow it will always stay relevant and be an important part of society.

Instagram

Instagram is another platform that has become a huge hit. Instagram was created by Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom. What is Instagram? “Instagram is a free social media platform for sharing photos and videos with your followers. It’s become an especially popular way to connect with brands, celebrities, and friends. Instagram has an array of features, from short-form videos to live streaming and private messaging” (Delfino & Antonelli, 2022, p. 1).

The app is like X, has rules and regulations for usage. Your age is a very considerable factor. It’s not uncommon to observe that some children tend to use a date of birth that is not there’s just to be able to use the app. There are numerous reasons why people may feel the need to use the wrong ages, the desire to access the apps features and connect with their friends. Some users may do so by accident because they’re not reading it before signing up and others may be aware. Recognizing the importance of age-appropriate use of social media sites is essential. According to Instagram Help Center, “Instagram requires everyone to be at least 13 years old before they can create an account (some regions like South Korea, Spain or Quebec have different age requirements). Accounts that represent someone under the age of 13 must clearly state in the account’s bio that the account is managed by a parent or manager” (Instagram, n.d.).

However, Instagram has been seriously criticized for promoting unrealistic physical appearances. These issues can contribute to the rise of anxiety and depression, and therefore you see people with low self-esteem and body image issues. When children are exposed to impractical beauty standards, they may feel insecure and less than if they do not meet those standards no matter how much you tell them they are beautiful or handsome no matter what anybody says. According to Perrigo (2021), “According to researchers, platforms like Instagram

can contribute to body image issues and depressions because humans have an innate desire to compare themselves to others” (para. 1).

Cyberbullying is a very prominent negative effect that happens a lot on Instagram. Instagram may seem safe or innocent for adults but even for adults it’s not harmless. So, for school aged children it can be very effect for their mental and physical health. Instagram is a platform where you can you comment on random people post and message random people, even if you do or don’t know them. Depending on that person’s settings on the app. This can expose children to hurtful comments, harassment, and online threats. “Instagram was highlighted as having become the vehicle most used for mean comments” (Wakefield, 2017, para. 1).

Cyberbullying has become a significant concern in the context of social media. Instagram has been linked to have effects on both mental and physical health. Studies have shown that people who deal with cyberbullying or experienced cyberbullying may be at a greater risk of developing mental health issues such as low self-esteem, depression and even anxiety. Being exposed to hateful comments constantly or harassment, threats even can take a toll on someone’s well-being.

According to Creamer, “It is interesting to see Instagram and Snapchat ranking as the worst for mental health and well-being – both platforms are very image- focused and it appears they may be driving feelings of inadequacy and anxiety in young people” (para. 3).

Instagram has been integrated into teenagers and younger children's daily routines. The platform has become kids' primary means of social media, using it as a way to interact, share information, and to express themselves. The app is very popular and it's one of the go-to apps for younger individuals worldwide. This type of engagement has made the platform huge, and it has a huge impact on society's well-being. In a recent study, Pew Research Center (2018, as cited in Lorenz, 2018) found that "72 percent of teens use the platform, which now has more than 1 billion monthly users" (p. 1).

Instagram can be a useful app as well. This app can help all people connect with friends and family all over the world, while also being able to express themselves creatively. Something like Facebook but more casual. People find it important and valuable to be able to stay in touch and make connections across the world. Instagram provides a way for creative expression, you can share your thoughts and ideas through stories, reels, images, and videos. It offers a more relaxed atmosphere compared to Facebook.

Instagram can also be used for educational content. Teachers can use the platform to share educational content such as videos that support classroom learning. There has been research about using hashtags to extend your learning, sharing student work and to be able to connect to other educators. Ax Cox (2019) pointed out in her article, "Teachers are lifelong learners, and a simple way to extend your learning is through hashtags. Hashtags are an easy way to find relevant information related to education. You can search for posts, people, places, and even tags (general or specific information)" (para. 2).

Instagram is a valuable educational tool depending on how you teachers and students decide to use it. It allows teachers to enhance the learning experience in creative ways. Being able to share content that's educational, such as visual resources, informative videos, and

instructional videos. This will allow us to keep students engaged and you're catering to different types of learning styles. Teachers are giving opportunities to directly engage with students, with having a sense of community and support in the learning process.

This platform can be a place where children showcase their talents and interests. Instagram serves as a platform that is extremely versatile. Many emerging comedians, for example, have used Instagram to express themselves creatively, being able to gain recognition as they gain more following, confidence and positive feedback from their followers. Moreover, Instagram offers a way for children to stay connected with friends and family, even when you're across the world. This sense of connection helps in a major way. Instagram's effect in education, building connections, and allowing creativity should not be undervalued, as these details cooperatively shape its impact on modern society.

Roblox

Roblox is an online gaming platform so it's not your traditional social media platform, but it does have social elements, and people can use it to interact with one another in many ways. What is Roblox? "Roblox is a global platform where millions of people gather together every day to imagine, create, and share experiences with each other in immersive, user-generated 3D worlds. The types of gameplays on Roblox are just as limitless as the imagination of the creators themselves" (Roblox Corporation, n.d.). Roblox launched on September 1, 2006. Roblox creators are David Baszucki and Eric Cassel (Jones, 2023, p. 1). As of 2023, Roblox has 214.10 million active users (Roblox & Statista, 2023, p. 1).

While Roblox offers a wide range of games and activities, there are several negatives' aspects associated with it, but there can be some positives as well. Roblox has been criticized for its lack of moderation and safety precautions for its users, which allows inappropriate content to

be shared and accessed by younger people. The chat feature on Roblox poses a significant risk to children's safety as it can expose them to cyberbullying, harassment, and grooming by predators. These chat features can lead to social isolation and anxiety in children who are victims of bullying. Young children are chatting with grown people and those grown people are often grooming them and getting personal information from them. "A lawsuit lodged in San Francisco this week has alleged that Roblox enabled the financial and sexual exploitation of a young girl" (Partis, 2022, p. 1)

Roblox has been associated with scams where players are tricked into giving away personal information which many school-aged children have been tricked into doing simply because their discernment isn't developed yet. The games' addictive nature can lead to excessive screen time and neglect of other important activities such as schoolwork and other interactions. The huge number of screens on Roblox can cause eye problems, not being able to sleep well, and causing headaches.

While Roblox does have many negatives, there are also some positives within the online gaming platform. One positive is that children can create games and be game developers which in the end can lead children to finding their passion in life. By allowing them to create games and develop their skills, Roblox can help nurture that. When it comes to coding, problem-solving, and designing. This game development can serve as an educational tool if used the correct way. Helping people discover and pursue passions in fields such as gaming designing, architecture, technology, or programing.

Acosta (2022) talks about using Roblox as an education tool throughout his narration:

We get the opportunity to imagine objects beyond the bounds of physics and reality.

Roblox is a phenomenal bridge to STEM. Whatever you end up doing in life, the insights

you will come away with from here will be extremely valuable, because they will familiarize you with programming and creativity, which are essential components of engineering. (p. 1)

Roblox has a different virtual environment where people of all ages, especially children, can have the freedom to design and have digital experiences. This takes care of not only gameplay but the way you can create worlds, characters, and different objects. Roblox has the ability to inspire people to use their imagination and being able to engage with STEM concepts. This app makes a good tool for education and different skill developments and ultimately adds to the impact of social media platforms in today's society.

Roblox offers a way for people to connect with one another without being forced to do so. This gameplay allows you to meet new people, interact with new people and overall leads to making new friends. It fosters social interactions in online settings. Taking after the shift toward virtual socializing & communication in today's society. Online communication is becoming a popular thing, and this aligns with societal trends in the way we interact and form groups.

Positive interaction on Roblox can be good for people's mental health. If used in a balanced and healthy manner. "Roblox can promote mental health, wellness, and healthy self-concepts through social engagement, positive reinforcement, and emotional regulation. Roblox can provide emotionally safe forums where players can work through personal issues" (Symanska, 2022, para. 4).

In today's technology world, where online platforms like Roblox are a huge part of children's lives, it's important for society to address these issues through educating. Ensuring that younger kids are equipped with the knowledge they need to protect themselves. Understanding that online platforms should be safe and secure environments.

The platform has a huge influence in society and goes beyond just entertainment. Incorporating the steadily evolving digital culture, the ability to be educational, and the development of skills that are extremely important in today's world. Promoting STEM learning stimulating creativity, and developing social interaction in a digital environment, Roblox is an influence in today's society.

Media's Pandemic Impact

Youth only see what's shown on social media which is not always what it seems to be. It's not always glitz, glam and people aren't really that happy right? You never see the struggles behind it all and you don't know what's going on behind that social media post. Technology can lessen children's attention span, oftentimes their vocabulary can become nominal, it can alter their concept of what real life is, it can also cause their self-esteem to decline, let's not forget that that they can become very lazy and unmotivated when it comes to putting effort into their work. On the other hand, social media can improve their communication skills, socialization, can also enhance their opportunities to learn, can develop a better sense of networking skills, and it provides the ability to access other people who share the same interests as them which can help them develop a sense of friendship or intimacy.

COVID-19 caused a huge growth in social media. During the pandemic, people took to social media to pass time and if you were having to be quarantined, you were using social media to pass by hours. People heavily relied on social media not only for passing time but for staying connected with the people they love and care about, being able to get important information and doing schoolwork or working for their job, and just strictly engaging in a variety of content. Quarantine kept people isolated in their home, social media proceeded to ride as that was the only way to maintain social connections and keeping yourself entertained. According to Megan

Marples (2021, “Children are racing up hours of screen time since the pandemic began, and there doesn’t appear to be an end in sight” (para. 1).

According to Eshleman (2021), “Social media makes it easy to compare oneself to another. Most people put on social media what they want you to see. And by using social media, all of us have the ability to access endless information anytime we want to and that can be very hard for kids” (para. 3). Her statements address the impact of social media on people, especially younger children. Unrealistic self-perceptions come from the comparison on these platforms. Also, the amount of access that you have to information on social media is challenging for people who have trouble finding out what is true and what is false. This is where the concerns about cognitive and psychological effects start to be a problem. Informed guidance is a must when it comes to social media.

The world we live in today, social makes you feel awful if you don’t fit into the “norms” and leads to self-consciousness if someone starts to align themselves with not fitting prevailing societal standards. From appearances, eating habits, attire, and the possession of brand items you own. In this article, she writes about the use of TikTok, which is a huge popular social media platform that has about 30% of its users under the age of 18. Eshleman states that, “Another study talks about how kids who use TikTok are developing tics and having tic-like attacks. They’re experiencing a movement disorder brought on by stress and anxiety- presumably made worse by the pandemic and teens increased social media consumption (Eshleman, 2021, para.4)

O’Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011) mention the usage of social media by tweens and teens, benefits of children and adolescents of using social media, and the type of risk with younger people using social media. Throughout the article they focus on the enhancement of learning opportunities, communication, and socialization, cyberbullying, harassment, being able

to access health information, sexting, and Facebook depression. The article also investigates the role of a doctor in educating parents on the impact social media has on children. They note that they want parents to be aware of the nature of social media sites. “Some parents may lack a basic understanding of these new forms of socialization, which are integral to their children’s lives” (O’Keeffe &, Clark-Pearson 2011, para. 3).

In the article by O’Keeffe, et al, it discusses the influence of media, including television, the internet, video games, and other forms of media. The article explores certain topics that relate to media consumption, screen time, the potential effects that it could have on a child and gives tips and recommendations for parents on managing media exposure for younger people.

According to a recent study, “the average 8- to 10-year-old spends nearly 8 hours a day with a variety of different media, and the older children and teenagers spend > 11 hours per day” (Strasburger et al., 2013, para. 2). This type of media engagement encompasses a wide range of different activities, including using the internet, watching television, playing video games and engaging with social media platforms.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is another social media platform that isn’t your typical social media form. What is WhatsApp? WhatsApp is “Free messaging application owned by Meta (Formerly Facebook). Users can send text and voice messages on the platform or communicate live via voice or video chat. WhatsApp also supports location and image sharing” (Martin, 2023, p. 1). WhatsApp has had a significant influence in today’s world. The app was founded in 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koum. (Martin, 2023, p. 1).

WhatsApp has changed the way people communicate, it allows people to instant message fast and efficiently, voice calls and video calls. Just like any other app, WhatsApp has impacted

today's society in a negative and positive way. This app doesn't have the best security and with that means information could get leaked, your app could get hacked, and your privacy is being shared. "It's no surprise that the detractors of WhatsApp narrow in on its unstable security. From massive leaks to unsavory links to growing movements of disinformation and conspiracy theories, it is out in the open that WhatsApp has a lot to improve on this end" (Marque Pham, 2022, para. 9).

WhatsApp has taken steps to address some of these concerns, but the platforms challenges put the spotlight on the issue of balancing people's privacy, security, and information in today's digital world. When it comes to social media apps, platforms, and gaming system, privacy and security is what individuals and communities expect from digital platforms.

WhatsApp has influenced society in a positive way as well that gets people to use the app more. This app allows you to use it without cellular connection so those times when you don't have service, you're still able to use the app. But with traditional SMS, you can't do that. WhatsApp avoids extra charges from your carrier as well. It's a very cost-effective communication tool because it operates over the internet. This is another reason why WhatsApp is so popular. According to McAllister (2023), "Many carriers still impose strict limits on your cellular usage. For example, the number of messages that you can send or receive, or the amount of data that you can use" (para. 3). Because WhatsApp only operates over the internet and not through your carrier, you can bypass these limits entirely and not have to worry about that like you do with messaging regular.

Low self-esteem

Low self-esteem is often associated with social comparison. People who allow social media to guide their life tend to have a decline in self-esteem. Various social media outlets have

been tied to causing low self-esteem and poor body image within society. According to Firestone (2017), “Low self-esteem is characterized by a lack of confidence and feeling badly about oneself. People with low self-esteem often feel unlovable, awkward, or incompetent” (p. 1).

People with low self-esteem may turn to social media to feel validated, to feel important, to feel beautiful, and look for affirmations from other people. Posting certain content with the hope of receiving a lot of likes or comments to boost self-worth. Relying on validation from social media can be momentary and unsatisfying, that could lead to aggravated feelings when the validation doesn't meet expectations. This issue can be positive and negative, just depending on how you look at but over time, the reliance on social media affirmation can create a habit where you're constantly seeking that validation. Which may not provide a long-lasting solution.

“Social media can also lead to stress to a teen's daily life, especially when it comes to evaluating their own social media updates. Each time they post a picture or status update, they can worry about the number of likes, shares, and comments the post will generate” (Bergman, 2023, para. 6). This obsession is yet another opportunity for comparison and potential embarrassment about how others view them, especially if another person's got more attention and positive feedback on their post. This behavior creates a reputation for people to want to be in the desire for recognition and approval from others on social media, which can be temporary and superficial.

Today's society starts to affect mental health when you're dealing with low self-esteem because of social media. The constant hunt for validation can contribute to anxiety, and stress. Not only does it affect mental health, but it influences your behavior, priorities, and values. Seeking validation on social media can sometimes lead to people only posting what they believe will get a ton of likes, then that starts to take away the authenticity of social media. Social media

has made prioritizing online validation over genuine self-reflection and self-acceptance. This can lead to how people measure their worth.

According to Bergman (2023), “Unfortunately, such comparisons are even more rampant online” (para. 3). Social media can be more addictive than even alcohol or cigarettes, especially because the internet is ‘free,’ easy to access, available 24/7, and seemingly harmless. However, numerous studies indicate that social media use is linked to increased risks of depression, anxiety, loneliness, and low self-esteem. Social comparisons are indeed a significant concern going forward and will always continue to be if nothing changes. These factors make it very hard to escape the false reality of social media and this contributes to its addictiveness.

Studies are constantly trying to suggest a strong association between the outrageous use of social media and the risk of mental health issues. Depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, abandonment, and eating disorders are a part of the mental health issues people can fall victim to. These challenges have consequences that echo through society. Spreading awareness of these effects has motivated discussions about media literacy, the importance of balancing social media, and to balance online interactions with real-world connections. Confronting these issues is important to mitigate the influence of excessive social media use on today’s society and emotional well-being.

Bullying

There are many different forms of bullying, but the most prominent form of bullying is seen through social media which is cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is “the act of intentionally and consistently mistreating or harassing someone through the use of electronic devices or other forms of electronic communication (like social media platforms)” (Bottaro, 2022, p.1). This article they’re doing discussing cyberbullying, the effects, and the things that can be done about

it. Cyberbullying can be in many forms whether it's spreading rumors, posting hurtful comments or images, or creating fake pages to bully other people anonymously. Over the years cyberbullying has become more and more prominent among people.

Cyberbullying is serious and very concerning. This issue primarily impacts children and adolescents in today's world. Some people may downplay how serious cyberbullying is and relate it to just having to grow up, but that type of attitude is far from reality. Bullying can have a long-lasting mental and emotional consequence and if not addressed it can become severe. Today's world online interactions are a part of people's daily lives but it's important to still understand and bring light to impact of cyberbullying on the well-being of people. Addressing these issues is a start but also creating a digital environment that highlights respect, healthy communication, and a consideration of other people's feelings.

Bottaro (2022) stated these numbers in this narration:

As many as 15% of young people between 12 and 18 have been cyberbullied at some point. However, over 25% of children between 13 and 15 were cyberbullied in one year alone. About 6.2% of people admitted that they've engaged in cyberbullying at some point in the last year. The age at which a person is most likely to cyberbully one of their peers is 13. (p. 1)

When a child is a victim of cyberbullying, it causes a decline in self-esteem. It can lead to anxiety, depression, and even suicide or suicidal thoughts. Younger children start to feel less than and as if they don't fit in because they don't have friends to stick up with them and people make them feel abnormal.

Bottaro (2022) also stated this numbers in this narration:

Those statistics emphasize the prevalence of cyberbullying, especially among young people. 25% of children aged 13 to 15 deal with cyberbullying in just one year is quite concerning and highlights the issues. The fact that 6.2% of people admitted they've engaged in cyberbullying gives away the problem of this problem. (para. 3)

Today's society, digital interactions have a huge influence on our lives, these statistics highlight the importance of talking about cyberbullying. It's crucial to recognize the harm that may be caused to someone's mental and emotional well-being, especially in younger adults or school-aged children. Both can be victims and perpetrators. Numbers don't lie and it underscores the need for diverse efforts in awareness, education, and support to deal with cyberbullying's impact on society. There needs to be more promotion of respectful and online behavior.

There's different types of online bullying and it can all be different. There's Harassment, Impersonation, Verbal, and even exclusion or isolation can be viewed as bullying. "Harassment can include comments, text messages, or threatening emails designed to make the cyberbullied person feel scared, embarrassed, or ashamed of themselves" (Bottaro, 2022, para. 5). This type of bullying can influence individuals in today's society. Being harassed leads to being fearful, shameful, and feeling humiliated which can deteriorate someone's self-esteem and mental health.

Social media plays a huge role in individuals' daily lives, encountering negative comments and hurtful words can impact a person's image. Leading to things like stress and anxiety. Creating a more respectful online environment is obviously important and encouraging individuals to understand the effects of cyber harassment. Impersonation is where "A person may try to pretend to be the person they are cyberbullying to attempt to embarrass, shame, or hurt them publicly" (Bottaro, 2022, para. 6). Impersonation is just as big of a deal as being harassed online.

Being impersonated on social media can have a significant impact on people in today's world. Impersonation can be embarrassing and can cause emotional distress. When people are impersonated via social media depending on what you're doing, it can hurt people's reputation and give people trust issues in those social media sites. Because you don't know who you can or can't trust. It makes people feel violated and it's not cool. That's why protecting your social media and your identity is important because it allows individuals to avoid running into that problem. Especially because being impersonated isn't making a fake name pretending to be you, it can also be someone hacking into your account and changing things within it.

Parents and schools should enforce police/rules about cyberbullying and have guidance and counseling for those school-aged children who are dealing with that. There should also be more awareness when it involves younger adults and adults as well. Parents and teachers can promote responsible social media usage and stop cyberbullying. Establishing a more responsible online environment for people in today's society. Having clear guidelines for both parents and teachers will set the tone for online behavior and what is and isn't acceptable.

According to Abramson (2022), "Parents play a crucial role in preventing cyberbullying and associated harms" (para. 4). Providing support for people who are dealing with cyberbullies is just as important as anything else in this world. It's not highly addressed as much as it should, but it needs to be. We live in a world where social media has a major influence, being proactive will help create a space where people can express themselves, learn, and communicate without being embarrassed online. Nobody should get online and fear they're going to be harassed or harmed.

Social Skills

There's a huge connection with social media and social skills in the world today. Social media can positively and negatively affect individuals' social skills. Studies show that social skills and the media influence have become important. Folks of all ages use technology that intertwine with their real-life interactions. There has been questions on how does social media affect teens' social skills, technology, and online communication impact the development of people social skills in everyday situations.

According to Bergman (2023), "Positive social media interactions can help teens build some skills, but online interactions have different contexts and challenges" (para. 3). Positive social media interactions are important and help people develop certain skills but it's crucial to remember that too much of social media can make it challenging for you to communicate face-to-face. An advantage that could come from positive social media interactions is being able to improve your digital communication and understanding the right and wrong way to express yourself or your thoughts.

Nonetheless, social media introduces us to a lot of challenges. As people spend too much time on social media and having online conversations, that can affect your need to want to speak face-to-face with someone. Affecting things such as body language, facial expression, your vocal tone and pitch, and personal space. Making it more difficult to interpret and project emotions the correct way. Mr. Bergman mentions that in his article, "If a teens social media engagement outweighs their in-person interactions, they may also struggle to identify critical cues such as: Body language, Facial expression, Vocal tone, and Boundaries" (Bergman, 2023, para. 6).

Social media creates and includes a performative characteristic, where people may choose to alter their image and that's basically ruining who you are and being your true self.

Social media has that type of influence on individuals to where they want to present a selective or glamorized version of themselves. Younger folks and teens especially start to be mindful of what they post and look like on social media and share. Only want to post positive experiences and the most attractive aspects of their lives. According to Abrams (2022), “Between the ages of 10 and 12, changes in the brain make social rewards- compliments on a new hairstyle, laughter from a classmate- start to feel a lot more satisfying” (para. 3).

This type of performative outlook can lead to an inconsistency between one’s online personal and real life. That impacts the originality of yourself and the uniqueness because some people may look at your online personal as the genuine individual, which could lead to being misunderstood. Social media outlets like Facebook, Instagram, and X have made communication more accessible than ever. They have created an environment in which children would rather communicate through a screen rather than having face-to-face interaction.

In today’s world is important to have face-to-face encounters, it’s crucial. Social media communication and online communication are common, but it remains essential for parents and educators to highlight the value of in person interactions especially for younger children. Partaking in face-to-face provides people with a unique set of social skills and prepares them for what they’re going to always encounter outside of social media. These skills are helpful because you’re able to identify non-verbal cues.

“According to the researchers, the best approach seems to be for parents to monitor and media social media usage use in a way that supports teens’ autonomy. That means explaining rules in a developmentally appropriate way and listening seriously to the adolescents’ point of view” (Bergman, 2023, p. 1). Having this approach benefits everybody and allows children and

teens to learn the importance of face-to-face. Real-life interactions build stronger and real relationships with people.

Problem-solving, being a good listener and being able to collab with someone else all can be developed from in-person interactions, which are crucial not only for your personal life but in a professional setting as well. Communicating online offers a lot, it's easier, convenient, and even though it's those things, it doesn't replicate to face-to-face interactions. Pushing people to engage with family members and friends in real-life atmospheres helps ensure that they develop a good set of social skills. Being equipped to thrive in this world where both offline and online communication play meaningful roles.

Understanding these nuances is important because social media is a huge part of our daily life. Being able to navigate social media platforms that offer bot good benefits and disadvantages when it comes to skill development, requiring people to adapt to different ways to communicate while also realizing the importance of respectful, genuine, and intimate conversations.

Academic Performance

Imagine staying up all night only getting a few hours of sleep and being expected to wake up for school the next day. Your focus is not going to be on your teacher and the lesson that he/she is going over. The result of that will be failing that class and noticing a decline in your academics. The impact of social media usage and lifestyle habits on academic achievement. "An hour spent on social media lowers the odds of good academic performance by 24%" (Bou-Hamad, 2020, p.1).

Children that are in school that have a math score of 75%, could be knocked down to 57% because of your social media consumption. Getting a good rest is important and could be the reason you pass or fail a class and do bad or good in school. Social media reduces academic

performance through distraction. People often spend hours scrolling through their feed on social media instead of studying or completing homework assignments. This can lead to poor time management skills and reduced productivity. It can also lead to sleep deprivation. Students who spend their late nights scrolling on social media accounts are likely to feel tired and indistinct during school hours.

“Over 60% of students who experience cyberbullying reported that it immensely impacted their ability to learn and feel safe while at school” (Hinduja, 2018, p. 1). This impact extends beyond social media, and it influences individuals’ ability to learn and feel safe while they’re at school. That’s how much impact cyberbullying and harassment has on students. Being cyberbullied creates a hostile environment for the people who are experience cyberbullying online and offline.

This leads to students feeling worried and anxious about being in school because they believe they will get attacked. These feelings can make it hard for those individuals to focus on school and their studies. Which leads to those that are affected may stop doing well in school and they may fear encounter with their online tormentors. This type of insecurity can eat away at their overall well-being and affect their sense of safety in school.

Student’s minds can become clouded with the nonsense seen on social media platforms and it starts to be the only thing they can think about in class. Students will also tend to put their homework to the side and get on social media because they fear if they’re not on it, they’re missing something. They look at homework as something that is a burden to them instead of something that is helpful because it’s taking their time away to be on social media. “Gallup also reported that 6.7% of teens said they spend two or more hours on social media and only 29.1% said they spend that much time doing their homework” (Adgate, 2023, p.1).

Enhancing their time management skills by learning the method of dedicated study period and staying on social media during those time periods. Getting rid of distractions, like Instagram or TikTok, from their study aware is essential. Create an environment strictly for schoolwork because that can reduce the temptation to be on your phone and possibly increase their overall productivity.

It's crucial for schools and educators to be aware of cyberbullying and not only as an online issue but as a matter that helps the overall school be a better and safe place for students. Creating a safe and supportive atmosphere where people can be themselves, learn, and thrive, both offline and online. A school's climate influences students' academic performances and how well they're doing. Cyberbullying creates a place where people are afraid and worried, especially if it is unchecked.

Schools should aim to foster an environment where students can learn and interact without coming across a bully. Mitigating the impact of bullies but also equipping students with the right skills, attitude, and emotional resilience, allows them to thrive and succeed in a world where online interactions are always going to happen and it's going to always be a huge part of our daily lives. By doing so, schools can empower people and teach them how to navigate and handle these experiences, which will benefit their overall well-being and success inside and outside the classroom.

Mental health

Mental health refers to the state of an individual's emotional, social well-being, and psychological well-being, which serves as a component of overall health and directly impacting the quality of someone's life. Mental health has a wide range of factors, including self-esteem, coping mechanisms, flexibility, and the ability to form healthy relationships.

Social media can cause a decline in people's mental health in numerous ways. People who are victims of being cyberbullied, which is done through online platforms, can experience depression, altered self-esteem, and anxiety. Social media can also create an addiction and make people feel like they're addicted. "Social media is designed to hook our brains, and teens are especially susceptible to its addictiveness" (Miller, 2022, p.1).

Decline mental health can bring on different physical symptoms such as stomach pain and headaches. People who deal with anxiety and depression may also start to socially isolate themselves or have a difficult time building friendships and relationships with their peers. Some studies there have been situations where people have felt so overwhelmed, and their mental health starts to decline so much that they start too self-hard themselves.

According to George, "Rates of depression, self-harm, and suicide among adolescents in the United States have steadily increased over the last 10 or so years, particularly among adolescent girls" (George, 2019, p.1). Self-harm, depression, and suicide has shown a serious upward trend among individuals in the United States in the past few years. This trend sadly has been more in young girls. Observing this research and findings is a serious concern with mental health.

Both parents and educators being able to recognize these warnings and signs are essential and those people who are dealing with that need some type of resources, that goes for adults as well. Mental health needs to be prioritized in the well-being in school and outside of school. This influence affects everything, directly impacting academics and quality of life.

Thinking Skills

Incorrect information always spreads like a wildfire on social media because people tend to share content without verifying the accuracy. Eventually, this will cause people to have lack of

trust in reliable sources of information and also a general spoiling thinking skill. Social media has the chance to decline people's critical thinking skills. It can create the promotion of a filter bubble. A filter bubble is "a space where our previous online behavior (search history, likes, shares and shopping habits) influences what we see online and on our social media feeds and in what order" (Chinyanganya, 2023, p.1).

Not only could it create a filter bubble, but also a social media echo chamber. The two are used in the same way but there is a difference between the two. A social media echo chamber is "when one experiences a biased, tailored media experience that eliminates opposing viewpoints and differing voices" (Cabianca et al, 2023, p.1). Exposed to things that reinforce already preexisting views and opinions. People follow users who share the same values, views, and opinions as they do which can create an environment where different opinions are not heard or even considered. On TikTok your "for you" page is based upon the videos you interact with.

"In recent years, social media creators have done a really effective job of creating algorithms that can keep track of what you engage with, and provide more content based on your preferences and interests" (Rawat, 2021, p.1). Social media platforms have made it to where they can track users' interactions and alter it to content based on persona preferences. Technology has advanced and that influences society.

This type of experience can enhance users online experience because it's what you're seeing on your social media feed that aligns with your interests. It's important to consider the broader impact that has on society. As I mentioned previously, it creates echo-chambers. This can limit things we see to potentially reinforcing biases and altering the range of information people encounter and see online.

Social media is designed to keep people entertained and engaged for long periods of time. For younger people, it can become very addictive and spend hours upon hours just scrolling on their social media feed. Affecting self-thinking skills withing younger individuals and the community. Huge amount of social media usage can reduce the ability to think critically and independently. Instead of analyzing and learning to form your own opinions, you start to rely on what information you see or hear online.

According to Rawat, “The problem with social media echo chambers is that they discourage critical thinking. By only being exposed to people wo agree with you, you are prevented from considering other perspectives, which perpetuates close-minded attitudes” (2021, para. 3). Coming across things that you agreed with or like can discourage critical thinking. People are constantly being exposed to viewpoints that align with theirs and then that starts to become a problem when you run into people with different perspectives. That creates a close-minded attitude and the consequences of that can affect the world today.

While yes, echo chambers could have some benefits but the way it could limit the ability to relate and empathize with other people online or offline, is crucial. Only being exposed to things we agree with or like could lead people to struggle with understanding other people’s point of views. Not being able to understand the concerns and experiences of others can lead to social splitting and a lack of understanding in society.

The influence echo chambers have on people in today’s society has to be considerable. The impact contributes to an environment of splitting up, hindering people being open-minded individuals, and being relatable. It could only have a long impact on society. Motivating people to be exposed to different viewpoints and critical thinking is important to counteract the influence of echo chambers and promote a healthier online environment.

Wanting to be Accepted

People want to be accepted, people want to be valued, and people want to seem like they belong in this world we live in. Nothing is wrong with that until it becomes a serious problem that needs to be addressed. So, when it starts to become a psychological problem or emotional problem that's when it needs to be addressed but in today's society, you see this everywhere. School, social media, when you're around friends and family, you just want to feel like you belong. Fabris et al., 2023 suggest, "Belongingness is a key factor in the psychological development and school adjustment of children and adolescents" (p. 1). Wanting to fit in is crucial in psychological development for teens and children.

Acceptance is the same as belongingness, valued and connected with a certain group of people or community, whether it be school or within certain friend groups. When people start to feel more of a sense of acceptance, you're more motivated and engaged. That's essential when we're referring to children and adolescents because they then feel as if they're part of the school and not just going there every day. You start to have more of a positive relationship with teachers, friends, and they accept who you are.

People use social media to connect with their peers. Sometimes you're looking for a sense of belonging and other times you're just looking to make friends and be with people who don't overlook you and make you feel valued. So, on the other hand it could lead to a crowd that fits right in with you. It takes some people a while to find a good group of individuals who you can truly be yourself around. There are so many different ways you could feel that acceptance and that sense of belonging. "The extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment" (Fabris, et al., 2023, para. 1).

Younger teenagers and kids are still trying to figure out who they are and mature. A lot of school-aged children often feel like they don't have friends or certain groups they can fit in with. Social media has benefited a lot of children and people in general find those groups of individuals they can fit in with. Often finding themselves within a group of people who have the same interests, beliefs, and values as one another. Feeling accepted within your school and community can be a positive cause and positively affect academic outcomes. Being around people who are relatable to you can improve your networking skills and social skills.

Those are good things but wanting to be accepted could very well be a negative thing as well. Because there's a huge connection between social approval and self-worth. According to Hagan, 2020, "The emotional distress from social disapproval can cause worry, self-neglect, self-doubt, and anxiety" (para. 1). Worrying can cause people to believe and fear that they don't fit in because they were disapproved of by a certain group or certain people. That can cause stress and anxiety. When you're feeling neglected, people could start to neglect their own well-being and self-neglect could cause problems with your physical and mental health.

Through the usage of social media people can join groups on Facebook or other social media apps that have the same hobbies and passions as yourself. You can follow them, befriend them, and get inspiration from them. Facebook communities allow people to express themselves without feeling embarrassed or weird. It's almost like a judgement free zone because those people also have the same interests or opinions. Folks are able to freely share their thoughts, experiences, opinions, and feelings with others who understand them.

In today's world the influence it has on society is crazy. Social interactions often extend into the fear of social disapproval and that has been a major problem. According to Ioanasolea (2018), "For biological reasons related to our perpetuation urge and the need to consolidate our

position within the group, we can conclude that the fear of disapproval is embedded in our DNA” (para. 2). Online platforms can amplify these problems and insecurities. The constant view of idealizing oneself can lead to self-comparisons and feeling of inadequateness.

This type of stress emotionally can cause various societal issues, including things like depression and anxiety, as well as a kilt self-esteem among people. It can affect the way we engage offline and online, that’s something that has been mentioned previously. Online discussions and debates can lead to discouragement because of the fear of social disapproval. Being afraid of being disapproved is draining for your mental health because then you never do anything without second guessing yourself.

Fitting in and belonging are key factors in today’s world. It has such a influence on society, negatively and positively. It influences different aspects of people’s development, including emotional well-being, academic performance, and overall school gratification. It builds for a healthy social atmosphere that also provides emotional growth. Encouraging students to be more engaged in their studies and having a positive outlook on their whole school experience.

Promoting mental and emotional well-being and self-acceptance is crucial to diminishing or lessening the negative impacts of social disapproval in today’s world. It plays a large and crucial role that should be addressed and brought awareness to. Addressing these issues is necessary for a more compassionate and supportive society where people can freely express themselves and truly be who they want to be, without the fear of being judged.

Effective Networking Skills

People use social media a lot, from school-aged children, adolescents, younger adults, and adults. Too much of it can be looked at negatively, and studies have shown that it can improve their social skills. Social media gives people the opportunity to connect with people of

all kinds of backgrounds and cultures. As stated in another section, you're able to share thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and life experiences with others.

Developing networking skills means building connections with other people. Networking is important for many reasons. Learning how to network can build relationships that could take you further in life. Networking can help people express themselves, build relationships, have better literacy skills and you also learn how to use online platforms better than most people. "Networking is the process of making connections and building relationships. These connections can provide you with advice and contacts, which can help you make informed career decisions" (Career Education, 2023, p.1).

Being able to network is an essential dynamic process that involves building connections and cultivating relationships with people who share similar or the same interest or professional goals. Networking has the power to provide people with valuable advice, better insights, and getting you in touch with people that could change their career. If correctly done the opportunity that you could discover could be life changing.

Having strong networking skills open up doors that you may not have encountered otherwise. This could be from certain jobs or certain projects, internships, or educational opportunities. According to Doyle (2022), she suggests that "Nearly 80% of professionals consider professional networking to be important to career success" (p. 1). Possibly running into job openings is one of the most direct pros of networking. Having these connections with people in the professional industry or individuals who often hear a lot about these jobs can lead to a career job.

Colleges are always trying to network with high school kids. Being able to network has always been an important and has become more important in today's digital age. Improving and

learning communication with people for better opportunities is essential. People with improved networking skills tend to be able to have numerous jobs offers and opportunities right out of high school because of the use of their networking skills. Having the chance to further your education and skill development is some of the things that can come from being able to network.

Social media plays an important role in helping people network correctly and plays a pivotal role in helping professionals discover different opportunities. There's a platform called LinkedIn, that can serve as a global networking platform. LinkedIn connects you with people who are close in your area, people with similar interest, and gives you the potential to be with employers and mentors. Sharing projects, your achievements come with ease on social media because it contributes to enhancing visibility and discovering new opportunities.

“LinkedIn is a social network that focuses on professional networking and career development” (Johnson, 2019, p. 1). In the world today, the influence that apps like LinkedIn have on society is profound because it has specialized online platforms to transform the way individuals interact. Being able to use social media for networking offers plenty of benefits. Providing access to connect with professionals, experts, and peers worldwide. Networking via social media can be very efficient because it's more time efficient for one. Another reason being is that fact you can seek advice or have open discussions.

Social media enhances and gives people the chance to showcase their skills, projects, and achievements. Which could allow you to attract potential employers or collaborators. These communities that exist online are focused on specific industries or interests that make networking and knowledge sharing easier and more efficient. Various job opportunities are advertised and shared on social media platforms, which makes that crucial for people who are seeking employment. Through being traditional face-to-face or via social media, networking

gives you the opportunity to grow, an opportunity alone, and being able to contribute positively to individuals and society as a whole.

Being able to discover new opportunities through networking is a dynamic thing that can significantly improve and influence someone's career success. It opens up doors that wouldn't have opened up for you and expands your horizon. Doing all that also provides the chance to make a big career decision that could be something you've always wanted to do and align perfectly with your goals and ambitions. Networking today has a huge impact on people in today's world but networking via social media is the next biggest thing.

Leveraging Social Media

Society has had a huge impact on the world today. Social media platforms have become a powerful tool that people use to advocate. As people have started to use their social media platforms to raise awareness about racism, important issues and advocating for change. These online platforms allow people to express themselves along with their opinions and facts to connect them with similar minded individuals.

Activism has been a huge part of social media since COVID-19. Activism is "efforts to promote, impede, direct, or intervene in social, political, economic or environmental reform with the desire to make changes in society toward a perceived greater good" (Wikipedia, 2023, p. 1). Advocacy for something is creating awareness, believing in change, or giving a support for a cause in political movement, belief, or organization. Activists can use many different approaches for protesting, rallying, petitions, and using social media for campaigning to raise awareness and to advocate for their cause.

In recent years, there's been all sorts of people advocating for some type of cause. Social media has become a huge tool for advocacy, with 2020 making an influential turning point.

Think about the Black Lives Matter movement, this movement gained global attention and had huge movement through platforms like Instagram and Twitter. “Hashtag activism is tool that leverages people’s use of digital media to support the activism that they are already doing on the ground” (Hudson, 2021, para. 1). Advocacy reached social media to bring awareness about social justice issues, root for change and rally supporters.

Activism has been going on dating back to old history. For example, the civil rights movement, environmental movement, and feminist movement. These movements were a huge influence on bringing us changes to society by going against the status quo and fighting for justice and equality. The feminist movement was to help not have women have subordinate roles in society. Women were fighting against norms that were made for them and going against the limitations that the society has put out there.

These women were questioning and critiquing the gender roles that were put out there and going against the traditional way of doing things. “Social media is a big part of moving the feminist movement forward” (Alfonseca, 2023, p. 1). Women were challenging the idea that their only roles should be taking care of the household, homemaking, and being a caregiver. This movement worked to make laws different and certain policies that weren’t in favor of women. For example, voting rights, dealing with workplace discrimination. The efforts that were put into this paid off because it is shifting the status quo towards gender equality.

Alfonseca states, “we’re seeing more women leaders, we’re seeing more women scholars, we’re seeing more activist, we’re just seeing women really go out in their own authenticity in their own identities and live more truly and authentically” (2023, para. 4). This just a testament to the progress that has been made by the movement. These women have faced many challenges with this movement but they’re breaking free of gender norms and making their voices be heard.

Seeing more women be bosses or in position what most people considered to be jobs for men, is a sign that a change in the status quo is happening because women are no longer confined to certain roles.

The growth and rise in society normal have led to more polices, different identities, and a huge platform for females to thrive and help out in many different fields. As this movement continues to improve gender equality, it's going to continue to inspire other women who aren't as confident about themselves to live authentically. It gives voices to those women to pursue their aspirations and participate in reshaping the world for the better. This truly is a testament to the impact social media has on society in today's world. This ongoing quest for a better future and a fair landscape all over the board of genders. This movement still remains in need for a change, but society has witnessed a profound shift towards all access for women.

Activism is not just limited to big movements. Small movements are a thing too and can be seen on an individual level through standing up for injustice. Actions that are taken towards creating a positive change can be counted as activism. Some people believe activism is using your voice and standing up for what is right, and others may see activism as putting themselves in a position that can be life-threatening. There's a movie called "The Hate U Give", the main character is played by Amandla Stenberg. This young female becomes an activist for police brutality towards African American. She uses online platforms to advocate for justice. Her boyfriend's death become a major news story. This movie is a prime example of people putting themselves in harm's way, just to advocate for justice.

People have been using online platforms to advocate for many different things, such as gun control and racial justice. Creating hashtags, online campaigning, and videos to share their messages. Social media platforms have allowed them the opportunity to make their voices heard

and to reach a broader audience than it ever has before. People that use social media to advocate for what they tend to believe is right can be empowering to our society. Activism is an important tool for creating big change in society. “Social media platforms have played a crucial role in both spreading information and resources to those seeking information and news about the BLM movement” (Coronado, 2020, p.1).

Things like fighting for human rights will always be an ongoing issue no matter your skin color or your gender. Activism plays a huge role in shaping the world to be a better place. Information spreads like wildfire and it has led to people being more engaged and informed in today’s society. Folks are using their online presence to support many different causes that they are passionate about, creating a sense of unity, and empowerment. As online platforms continue to grow and evolve, the influence on activism and advocacy will also continue to grow and shape society today.

Nurturing a Critical Mindset

Being able to think critically can go a long way. There are many different situations where you might need to have critical thought process and be able to think logically. “Critical thinking is the ability to effectively analyze information and form a judgment” (Ryan, 2022, p.1). This involves questioning assumptions, taking a look & considering different perspectives, and recognizing the situation you find yourself in. Thinking critically isn’t about how fast or how quickly you can answer.

Being a critical thinker involves the ability to think identify certain flaws in an argument that you may be in while also deliberately analyzing information. You’re able to evaluate what you know is true and what is not, and make a rational decision based off that. Social media is a platform that can influence people’s critical thinking and decisions people make in today’s

world. Information is so accessible that sometimes you may want to think quickly and react of certain judgments. It's essential for people to realize that social media does offer a lot of valuable information but thinking critically is essential as well so you can look at the credibility of the information you're coming across.

Realizing the difference between a reliable source and an unreliable one is important to evaluate. Social media can hinder these thinking skills and depending on how people interact with it, it can impact a huge range of people. While there are many concerns about the negative effects of social media on people's health, online platforms can also be a resource that can teach your children, adolescents, and young teens to develop critical thinking skills. According to Maurya (2017), "Students can hone their critical thinking skills by engaging with others in thoughtful discussions and debate on social media" (p.1).

Social media provides students with access to vast amounts of information that can come from different sources. Due to students having this accessibility of information they should start to analyze and evaluate the reliability of these sources. That will allow them to engage in discussions with people from different backgrounds while being credible. Social media challenges people to think critically about the content that's being consumed because it exposes you to different perspectives and opinions.

Moreover, it urges folks to question their own values and beliefs, which is crucial for critical thinking. Critical thinking is a vital skill for academic success and in a professional setting. While allowing individuals to approach different situations and problems with a clear mind and better understanding without prejudice. Social media does have its disadvantages, it can also be an important tool for helping children, teenagers, and young adults develop critical thinking skills that will be beneficial for the rest of their lives.

Availability of Educational Resources

Social media can provide opportunities for educational learning. It has transitioned the way we communicate and access information. While also being super beneficial in the way people learn within the school system. Certain platforms have provided access to a ton of educational resources that haven't always been available. Students are able to connect with their teachers and classmates with whatever subject they are working on. According to Hub (2023), "Social media provides a platform for enhances communication and collaboration between students, teachers, and parents" (p. 1).

Social media has opened doors to a huge amount of education resources and accessibility. Certain platforms have impacted learning and making information more accessible than before. Students and learners that are from different backgrounds now have the ability to learn from videos, article, and tutorials. Social media motivates knowledge and laborate learning, encourages people to share their knowledge, and have meaningful discussions. They are able to join online communities or groups where they can ask questions, share resources, ideas, and work on projects together.

This has a major impact on society today with educational resources through social media. Going against the traditional way of learning and breaking down the status quo. People are now able to foster a culture of continuous learning. Individuals of all ages can acquire new skills, take a look at different perspectives, and allow you to stay informed on a broad range of topics. Students are now more informed and are better equipped to make smart decisions. Social media is an excellent source for educational content.

According to Wade (2017), "And the best tool available for teachers is social media itself. Only by being open-minded and using the technology themselves will they be able to

really reach out to students” (p. 1). As more students have access to educational resources and the means to learn, society as a unit can be more adjustable, interconnected, and advanced. This type of evolution in the world today is shaping the way we speak, think, interact, and address certain issues. This allows students to expand their knowledge way beyond what is being taught in the classroom.

Many organizations post articles, videos, podcasts, and e-books on social media channels that can be accessed by people for free. This also allows students to learn beyond the classroom. Certain programs can be very beneficial for students who may not have the same access in the classroom that some individuals may have. Social media has opened up new opportunities for education resources to children. Social media has the potential to continue to transform the education system and the way we learn by making good quality education available to everybody.

There can be valuable knowledge in social media with different insights on various topics and studying purposes. In the educational system it’s crucial to be active social media platforms as much as possible because that’s where most of your students are anyway.

Lisa Wade (2017) talks about how it’s important to use social media during school in her narration:

An increasing trend of adopting social media in school is starting to show. And since students already devote a lot of time to social media and connecting with others outside of school hours, why not do it during school as well. (p. 1)

This enables schools to use training systems that can be more effective and aligned with society today and that’s going to relate to students.

The access to knowledge from social media is an essential resource. Participating in social media platforms can allow people to have a huge pool of information and data. This type of information can be used for studying purposes, learning purposes, and allowing educators to better understand what exactly the student needs. Allowing your strategies to be in tune with the students and ensuring you're being more effective and aligning with students' preferences. The presence of social media has shaped student culture and society today.

All in all, this provides a happy medium for students to be engaged in their studies, their environment, and developing a sense of belonging and community. This can positively influence people's overall learning experience and will help students feel more confident and comfortable. Students start to feel connected and supported throughout their leaning experience. It's a new way that the learning system can adapt to the new way of learning and the changing landscape of education in this technological heavy society. Providing quality learning and enhancing learning opportunities to students.

Conclusion

Social media has become very influential in our everyday lives, changing the way we communicate and interact with one another. Most people see social media as helpful or harmful too but it's way more to it than that. Technology has evolved and has had long-lasting positive and negative effects on people. From shortening their attention span, not being able to use their words clearly, altering what people think of reality, a lesser outlook of themselves, and the lack of motivation to want to do anything and putting forth hardly any effort.

These online platforms had positive effects as well. Improving communication, developing new and different learning opportunities, improving networking skills, and also providing you access to friends, family and others who live far away or close, but you just don't

get to see them but still want to be in touch. The folks who develop social media are always looking for ways to improve the app and make it fun and safe.

Platforms like X, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and Facebook have become huge and has provided us all with some beneficial gain to it, connecting millions of people around the world through their app. There has been an obvious turning point in the way we communicate and interact online. In this evolving technological culture, the growth of social media is undeniable. It's important to recognize that it's obvious not always the best for us and not always the worst for us.

The way numbers are increasing when it comes to the number of people who use social media is having an impact on society. One of the biggest concerns is the effect on people's mental health, especially younger children, teenagers, and young adults. Being so concerned with what's happening in the news and online can be a huge indicator for stress and anxiety. For younger people, it becomes even more complex. Online platforms can reshape their communication skills, default attention spans, and have unrealistic ideas set by influencers.

Social media does provide a good and beneficial platform where individuals can be creative and express themselves, but it can also expose people to harmful content. Violence, drug abuse, and explicit material isn't a thing that kids should be seeing. That only can encourage bad behavior and bad habits, you start to see an unhealthy lifestyle and some body image issues. Those challenges are starting to be more complex to deal with and they start to underline the need for a balanced approach to moving through this digital era of technology.

In today's society, our lives are intertwined with technology. The impact of social media has gone far beyond what we truly understand. With that being said, people must remain watchful, equipped with good knowledge and certain strategies that can help mitigate these

negative effects caused by social media. Influence digital literacy and responsibility of these platforms, can help future generations balance social media. It's essential for parents and educators to monitor children's usage of these platforms carefully and thoroughly.

This world of social media is a hard and complex landscape, offering good opportunities and shadowy challenges. It's essential to remember that what we see on social media isn't always the full picture. Behind that Instagram post is struggles, hardships, and everyday life problems that are a part of everyone's life. We encounter images that may not always represent the truth and that can be confusing for younger children, especially those who are still navigating and figuring out their life.

As technology and social media continue to grow it's important to remain and be a responsible user. To truly gain from these platforms, we all need to develop better critical thinking skills. Which would enable us to navigate through the digital landscape with awareness and balance. Social media is our canvas and a mirror, not only does it reflect the life we live but our challenges, choices, and truly our path to the future. Staying connected has become more influential than ever.

Being in this digital connected world, cyberbullying has become a huge problem. Spreading false narratives and rumors and creating fake profiles to bully are just two of the tactics that are associated with cyberbullying. This problem is looked at sometimes as the growing up process but that isn't okay. The impact that being bullied has on children and people are profound and can lead to mental and emotional damage. Online interactions have become a part of our lives but it's essential to know and understand the influence cyberbullying has on people.

Creating a safe space within social media is just about fostering respect for one another and having empathy and compassion in a world that can be so hateful. Fighting against cyberbullying can't and will not happen overnight but understanding the seriousness of it, bringing awareness, and standing up for those who are bullied, can help take the right steps to tackle this issue. These steps can help build a more inclusive and considerate era of technology. This battle is constant and is an ongoing one, but it is worth fighting for.

Social media can be a performative aspect where people believe they are inclined to present a different idealized version of themselves. This can create a fake polished online persona that can lead to a huge disconnection of someone's true identity. Individuals will always want to appear flawless and glamorous. This behavior is particularly among younger people who become so selective about what they should or shouldn't post and start to focus too much on showing only the things that are going good in their life.

These platforms can enrich the communication landscape. It's still important to be mindful of the potential that can arise. Online interactions may start to overshadow the desire to communicate in person and start to impact vital things like body language and facial expression. Understanding how to balance online interactions with face-to-face communication is still important and shouldn't be a forgotten skill.

In conclusion, the rise of social media has been a life changing force, influencing daily lives in many ways. It has changed the way we communicate, shaped new avenues for personal and professional networking, and has started to shape how we learn and get our information. Yet, it has also brought challenges along such as cyberbullying and the creation of echo chambers that start to mess with people's critical thinking. Understanding the nature of this technology base era, we can start to put a positive thing while also addressing the negatives.

Educational institutions play a huge role in getting the maximum benefits out of social media for students. As people start to move forward in today's society, it's important to stay and remain vigilant, create a society where social media is a tool for education, empowerment, and connectivity rather than a negative place. Accepting the potential that comes with social media can help change and we can all benefit together to shape a more inclusive, friendly, and informed society.

References

- Abramson, A. (2022, September 7). *Cyberbullying: What is it and how can you stop it?* American Psychological Association.
<https://www.apa.org/topics/bullying/cyberbullying-online-social-media>
- Acosta, M. (2022) *Using Roblox as an Education Tool. Bridge To Stem.*
<https://www.bridgetostem.com/us/blog/post/using-robloc-as-an-educational-tool>
- BBC Technology. (2017). *Instagram 'Worst for Young Mental Health.*
<https://www.bbc.com/news/health>
- Bergman, M. (2023) *Social Media Victim's Law Center*
<https://socialmediavictims.org/mental-health/self-esteem/>
- Bottaro, A. (2022) *Cyberbullying: Everything You Need to Know. Very Well Health*
<https://www.verywellhealth.com/cyberbullying-effects-and-what-to-do-5220584>
- Cox, J. (2019). *Ways to Use Instagram to Enrich Your Classroom. TechHUB.*
<https://www.teachhub.com/technology-in-the-clasroom/2019/11/ways-to-use-instagram-to-entich-your-clasroom>
- Delfino, D., & Antonelli, W. (2022). *A Beginner's Guide to Instagram, the Wildly Popular Photo-Sharing App with over a Billion Users. Business Insider.*
www.businessinsider.com/guides/tech/what-is-instagram-how-to-use-guide
- Dixon, S.J. (n.d.). Topic: Instagram. *Statista.*
<https://www.statista.com/topics/1882/instagram/>
- Dixon, S.J. (2023). *Snapchat Daily Active Users by Region. Statista.*
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/552671/snapchat-app/>
- Eshleman, K. (2021) *Effects of Social Media on Children. Health Essentials.*

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/dangers-of-social-media-for-youth/>

Facebook. *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Facebook>

Firestone, L. (2017) *Low Self- Esteem: What Does it Mean to Lack Self- Esteem? Psych Alive*

<https://www.psychalive.org/low-self-esteem/>

Help. *Core Psych Blog*.

<https://corepsychblog.com/2022/06/the-importance-of-roblox-for-mental-health-treatment-and-how-it-can-help/>

Huff, C. (2022). *Media overload is hurting out mental health. Here are ways to manage headline stress. Monitor on Psychology*.

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/11/strain-media-overload>

Infographics – Screen Time vs Lean Time. (2018). *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

<https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/multimedia/infographics/getmoving.html>

Jones, E. (2023) *The History of Roblox and Its Rise to Eminence. ONE37pm*

<https://www.one37pm.com/gaming/history-of-roblox>

Lorenz, T. (2018). *Teens Are Being Bullied “Constantly” on Instagram. The Atlantic*.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2018/10teens-face- relentless-bullying-instagram>

Marples, M. (2021). *Kids nearly doubled screen time during the pandemic, but there is something you can do about it. CNN*

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/01/health/children-screen-time-increase-pandemic-study-wellness>

Marque Pham, M. (2022) *Time to Say Goodbye? The Disadvantages of WhatsApp.*

Pangea

<https://pangea.ai/blog/general/time-to-say-goodbye-the-disadvantages-of-whatsapp>

Martin, R. (2023). *WhatsApp. History & Facts. Britannica.*

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/WhatsApp>

McAllister, J. (2023) *Why Use WhatsApp Instead of Text? 8 Reason Why! James*

McAllister Online

<https://jamesmcalliseteronline.com/why-use-whatsapp/>

Merriam-Webster. (2023). Social Media. In Merriam-Webster.com

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media>

Miller, S. (2022). *The Addictiveness of Social Media: How Teens Get Hooked. Jefferson Health.*

<https://www.jeffersonhealth.org/your-health/living-well/the-addictiveness-of-social-media-how-teens-get-hooked>

Musk Says X Monthly Users Reach ‘New High.’ (2023). *Social Media News | Al Jazeera*

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2023/7/28/musk-says-x-monthly-users-reach-new-high>

New User FAQ. Twitter.

<https://help.twitter.com/en/resources/new-user-faq>

- O’Keeffe, G.S., & Clarke-Pearson, K. (2011) *The Impact of Social Media on Children, Adolescents. Pediatrics, 127(4), 800-804.*
<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/127/4/800/65133/The-Impact-of-Social-media-on-Children-Adolescents>
- Partis, D. (2022) *Lawsuit accuses Roblox of enabling sexual exploitation. Games Industry.biz*
<https://www.gamesindustry.biz/lawsuit-accuses-roblox-of-enabling-sexual-exploitation>
- Perrigo, B. (2021). *Instagram’s Body Image Problem May Be Unfixable, Experts Say. Time.*
<https://time.com/6098771/instagram-body-image-teen-girls/>
- Pew Research Center. (2018). *YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat are the most popular online platforms among teens.*
<https://pewresearch.org/internet/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018>
- Roblox Corporation. (n.d.) *Parents*
<https://corporate.roblox.com/parents/>
- Ruby, D. (2023) *Roblox Statics – (Users, Revenue, & Trends)*
<https://demandsage.com/how-many-people-play-roblox/>
- Shaw, C. M. (2015). Using Facebook as an Educational Resource in the Classroom.
Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies.
<https://oxfordre.com/internationalstudies/display/10.1093/acrefore>
- Shewale, R. (2023). 68 Facebook Statistics – User, Revenue & AI Usage (2023).
DemandSage.

<https://www.demandsage.com/facebook-statistics/>

Symanska, D. (2022) *The Important of Roblox for Mental Health Treatment and How It Can Help*

<https://corepsychblog.com>

Vargas Vega, M.M. (2023). *The Impact of Facebook on Society: A Look into Its History and Significance. Medium*

<https://medium.com/@mayormaria/the-impact-of-facebook-on-society-a-look-into-its-history-and-significance>

Wakefield, J. (2017). *Instagram Tops Cyber-Bullying Study. BBC Technology.*

<https://www.bbc.com/new/technology>

<https://help.instagram.com/5179020941588885>