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Youth Use of Social Media and Its Relationship to Social Isolation

استخدام الشباب لمواقع التواصل الاجتماعي وعلاقتها بالعزلة الاجتماعية

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Abstract

This study aims to understand the relationship between social media and social isolation. Social media has become vitally important to members of society particularly the youth and exerts a growing influence on the cultural and social spheres, Given its close link to the cultures and values of its creators, and as a key feature of new or digital media, it inevitably impacts its user as the most significant and prominent modern medium enabling rapid audio-visual communication and given its strong appeal due to features like social networking and instant messaging it poses a potential threat to the family unit.

This threat manifests through the social isolation experienced by users, as well as behavioral disturbances and alienation from social and ethical norms Furthermore, the impact of social media networks on cultural and social spheres particularly on the family, the fundamental building block of society has turned this subject into a phenomenon worthy of study.

Keywords: Social media, social isolation, youth.

المخلص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى فهم علاقة مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي و علاقتها بالعزلة الاجتماعية ، فوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي أصبحت ذات أهمية بالغة لدى أفراد المجتمع خصوصاً منهم فئة الشباب، ولها تأثيراً متعاضداً في الجانب الثقافي والاجتماعي، باعتبار أنها مرتبطة ارتباطاً وثيقاً بثقافة منتجها وقيمهم، وبالتالي قد يكون لها انعكاس وآثار على مستخدميها، باعتبارها إحدى معالم هذا الإعلام الجديد أو الرقمي، ولأنها الوسيلة الحديثة الأهم والأبرز التي تتيح بدورها التواصل بطرق سريعة صورة وصوتاً، ولها جاذبية كبيرة لما تتيحه من خدمات كثيرة كالتعارف والتحدث، بالتالي قد تجعل الأسرة مهددة من خلال ما يسعى بالعزلة الاجتماعية لمستخدمي هاته المواقع، واضطراب السلوك والاعترا ب عن المعايير الاجتماعية والأخلاقية، كما أن تأثير شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي على الشأن الثقافي والاجتماعي وبخاصة على الأسرة اللبنة الأولى للمجتمعات الأمر الذي جعل منها قضية وظاهرة التي تستحق الدراسة. كلمات مفتاحية : مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي ، العزلة الاجتماعية ، الشباب .

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have permeated every aspect of social life serving as a means of communication and the exchange of ideas and information as well as the political, economic, and educational spheres, despite the immense benefits they offer across these areas, they can simultaneously pose risks to users.

there is ongoing debate regarding the extent to which social media contributes to the erosion of family and social relationships, with many researchers noting that spending the majority of one's time in front of computer and phone screens can alter the nature of human connections.

These technologies connect individuals to one another; many people spend long periods engaged with screens whether on mobile phones or computers for entertainment, shopping, excitement, messaging, watching movies, gaming, reading, and learning. Consequently, the time remaining in an individual's day is often limited to little more than sleeping and eating.

Meanwhile, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube which facilitate communication with friends and colleagues and strengthen social bonds are

witnessing growing popularity and high demand across diverse segments of society.

It fosters social interaction encompassing the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes occurring between interacting parties whereby they exchange numerous messages within a specific spatio-temporal social context, with each party's behavior serving as a stimulus for the other's.

Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube serve as platforms connecting millions of people who share common interests; these networks enable users to share files and photos, exchange videos, create blogs, send messages, and engage in instant conversations.

1 The Nature of Social Media Sites

1.1 Definition of Social Media Sites:

A term referring to a group of websites that emerged with the second generation of the Web known as Web 2.0 which enables communication among individuals within a virtual community environment, bringing them together based on shared interests or networks of affiliation ¹.

These are websites where internet applications provide services allowing users to create a publicly viewable personal profile within a specific site or system.

They also offer a means of communication via the internet with the profile creator's acquaintances or with other users of that site or system. Social networking sites are a collection of websites on the internet that enable individuals to connect and communicate with others.

These networks are highly effective in facilitating daily life and interpersonal communication, as they allow for the exchange of ideas, activities, hobbies, and various other forms of written, visual, and audio content.

2.1 Importance of Social Media Platforms:

— **Acquiring knowledge and experience:** They are among the most prominent channels for accessing up-to-date and diverse information, as well as for users to gain new skills and expertise. ²

— **Enabling personal development:** These platforms allow users to broaden their perspectives, enhance their understanding, and develop communication skills.

— **Direct interaction and communication:** Business owners and brands can communicate directly with consumers and gauge the success of their ventures.

— Providing an opportunity for individuals to express themselves and share their feelings and ideas with others.

— Social media platforms play a major role in the global exchange of information by leveraging digital communication technologies and enhancing network performance.

— They serve as a tool for storing information, while also contributing to the development of students' information-handling capabilities, scientific thinking skills, and creative thinking.

— They are highly significant in fostering freedom of opinion and expression.

— Enabling people to express themselves and share their feelings and ideas with others.

Contributing to enhancing the value of knowledge, critical analysis, review, and self-reflection.

— It serves as a form of alternative media where criticism is practiced and significant ideas and approaches are generated, provided it is utilized correctly.

— Social media platforms can be effectively leveraged in social initiatives through strategic planning across various projects.

— Social media can be utilized for social campaigns such as those combating poverty or disease, supporting political causes, coordinating demonstrations, or facilitating job searches.

1.3 Characteristics and features of social media sites:

Participation: Social media platforms encourage contributions and feedback from interested individuals, effectively blurring the line between media outlets and the audience. ³

Openness: Most social media platforms offer services that are open to feedback,

participation, and the creation or editing of pages; they encourage corrections, comments, and information sharing.

Conversation: Social media distinguishes itself from traditional media by enabling two-way conversation specifically, participation and interaction regarding the presented event, news, or information.

Connectedness: Social networking sites are characterized by their nature as interconnected social networks; this is facilitated by the links and connections provided on their pages, which link users to other social networking sites as well

Spontaneity: Communication via social networks is spontaneous, informal, and unpredictable; there is no prior planning or coordination of communication among members.

Low Cost: Registration on social networks is free; for instance, the Facebook homepage states, "It's free and always will be."

Ease of Use: Members do not require special skills to use social networks, and most of these platforms provide pages in the official language of each community.

Photo Albums: Social networking sites allow subscribers to create personal photo albums containing their own photos as well as images uploaded from various links; they also enable users to upload and share photos with friends, view them, and leave comments.

Sending Messages: The messaging feature allows users to send and receive messages directly between one another, regardless of whether the recipients are on the user's friends

4.1: Prominent Social Media Platforms:

Facebook:

It is a social network that has garnered widespread acceptance and engagement—particularly among young people—across the globe; yet, at its inception in February 2004, it was nothing more than a personal blog

Facebook's creator, Mark Zuckerberg, views the platform as a "social movement" rather than merely a communication tool or medium; he believes it will displace and

replace email and come to dominate all aspects of human activity on the Web ⁴

A free, widely used online social network that allows registered users to create personal profiles, upload photos and videos, and exchange messages with family and colleagues to stay connected. According to some statistics, internet users in the United States, for example, spend more time on Facebook than on any other website.

Twitter: A social network offering a microblogging service that enables users to send updates of no more than 140 characters—either directly through Twitter or via third-party applications developed by others, such as Kazlok and various other external apps.

Instagram is a free photo-sharing application and social network launched in October 2010.

It allows users to take photos, apply digital filters, and share them across various social networking services.

The platform fosters quick communication through images, comments, and "likes," and has gained popularity among both individuals and organizations. Instagram serves as both a photo-sharing app and a social network.

Instagram is a social media platform and an internet-based communication tool that enables interaction between individuals or organizations. It allows users to share photos and videos; it is completely free, and anyone can create an account on it.

5.1 Motivations for Using Social Media Sites:

There are several motives and reasons that drive an individual to use social media sites. These include: ⁵

Family Problems: The family serves as a protective shield for the individual, providing security, protection, stability, and a sense of grounding. However, the absence of this holistic environment can lead to a form of social instability, prompting the individual to seek an alternative to compensate for the deprivation such as that caused by the absence of one or both parents

due to life's challenges or family breakdown.

Idleness: Idleness resulting from poor time management or a failure to utilize time constructively can leave an individual feeling a lack of self-worth and searching for ways to fill that time; social media sites are one such outlet.

Unemployment: This refers to a process of disconnection and a lack of professional integration factors that undermine social and psychological inclusion and lead to social exclusion.

Social exclusion itself results from an accumulation of obstacles and the gradual erosion of social ties. It is a major social issue affecting the individual, driving them to seek solutions to escape their current situation even if those solutions are merely virtual.

Meeting people and forming friendships: Social media platforms have facilitated the formation of friendships by bridging the gap between real-world and virtual connections. They offer opportunities to build relationships with individuals from one's own community or from different ones, whether between the same gender or across genders.

Curiosity: Social media platforms constitute a virtual world teeming with innovative ideas and technologies that entice individuals to try and use them whether in their academic, professional, or personal lives.

6.1: Pros and Cons of Social Media:

: Pros of Social Media:

_ **Ease of Use:** Social media networks are designed to be user-friendly; any user regardless of age or socioeconomic background can easily navigate them and their applications.

_ **Transcendence of Place:** Social media networks overcome the geographical and spatial barriers that once hindered the spread of ideas, social interaction, and the exchange of knowledge and expertise.

_ **Transcendence of Time:** The rapid transmission of information via social media

networks ensures that every user can access information instantly, from anywhere.

_ **Flexibility:** These networks can be accessed via mobile phones, meaning a computer is not required to log in.

A virtual world for connection: Social media networks have begun to encroach upon traditional family and social gatherings. Furthermore, travel is no longer a prerequisite for seeing friends, hearing their voices, conducting business, generating wealth, or pursuing education. A window to the world: Millions of people particularly across the Arab world and beyond have found social networks to be a gateway for freely exploring the ideas and cultures of the entire globe.

_ **An opportunity for self-empowerment:** For those who lack the chance to establish an independent identity in society through which to express themselves, signing up for social media and filling out a profile allows them to create an independent presence one that exists on a global scale.

Greater openness to others: By connecting with someone regardless of differences in religion, belief, culture, customs, traditions, skin color, appearance, or inclinations you gain a friend whose identity differs from your own.

: Drawbacks of Social Media Sites:

_ Using such sites can hinder students from completing their work and reduce face-to-face interaction with their peers; it may also lead to social withdrawal, a tendency toward social isolation, and feelings of introversion.

_ Students often have mixed feelings regarding the consequences of their online actions ⁶.

_ Users feeling that their privacy is being violated on these sites.

_ People have become obsessed with sharing photos and videos; instead of living in the moment, everyone keeps their smartphones at the ready to capture content and share it with the world.

_ **Social isolation:** Most users of these apps and sites become isolated and cut off from those around them.

_ The proliferation of pornographic sites that publish images and videos promoting illicit sexual acts and spreading indecency among Muslims.

_ The spread of rumors and the exaggeration of events.

_ Discussions that lack mutual respect and fail to tolerate differing opinions.

_ Isolating young people and teenagers from their family reality and from participating in community events.

_ A lack of privacy, leading to emotional, psychological, and material harm.

2: The Nature of Social Isolation

1.2 Definition of Social Isolation:

_ Lexical Definition: Isolation refers to the state of being apart. It is said that "isolation is an act of worship isolated from something means to be in a position of separation from it a group means to part ways with them and withdraw from their midst."⁷

Terminological Definition: it refers to preferring a solitary life over communal life. This occurs when an activist focuses solely on establishing Islam within themselves indifferent to others or strives to establish it among the public through individual efforts, eschewing cooperation and mutual support with others active in the field. It involves a sense of lacking solidarity with others, stemming from the isolated individual's feeling that there is no one who shares their views and interests. Furthermore, it represents the individual's perception of not belonging to the group, manifested in their withdrawal from social and cultural participation.

Social and Cultural Participation

2.2: Concepts Related to Social Isolation:

Alienation:

An individual's sense of isolation, lack of belonging, and loss of trust; the rejection of social values and norms; and the experience of psychological distress. It involves the weakening and breakdown of the individual's personality integrity under the influence of cultural and social processes occurring within society.

Psychological Loneliness:

An individual's sense of a psychological gap separating them from the people and objects in their psychological field to the extent that they feel a lack of acceptance, affection, and love from others. This results in the individual being deprived of the capacity to engage in fruitful and fulfilling relationships with the people and elements of the environment in which they live and perform their role.

Introversion: The term "introversion" first appeared in the writings of Carl Jung in 1919—specifically in his essays on the conflicts of the infantile psyche.

It gained widespread recognition and attracted the attention of many psychologists. It is characterized by a detachment from external objects and a withdrawal into one's inner world, accompanied by a reliance on internal psychological constructs of a fantasy-based nature.

Depression: Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness. It may be accompanied by feelings of guilt, low self-esteem, and distress, and is often characterized by emotions such as worry, sorrow, despondency, anguish, and hopelessness.

Psychological Withdrawal: Psychological withdrawal is a defense mechanism employed by the ego; when an individual is unable to physically remove themselves from threatening situations, they alleviate anxiety by withdrawing from the situation and denying the existence of the threatening element.

3.2: Causes of Social Withdrawal

The causes and underlying motives of withdrawal behavior lie in the fundamental reasons that drive an individual to adopt and exhibit behaviors characterized by withdrawal.⁸

Thus, the causes of withdrawal behavior can be identified as follows:

• Fear of others; interacting with them becomes synonymous with psychological pain for the individual.

- Unkind, angry, or tense adults can instill a desire to withdraw in a child, as the presence of people becomes associated with pain.
- Harsh early experiences with siblings; the child becomes highly sensitive and self-conscious, anticipating specific reactions. Harsh early experiences with siblings can cause a child to become hyper-sensitive and self-conscious, anticipating negative reactions from others such as teasing, intimidation, or embarrassment which leads them to avoid social interaction.
- Parental hostility, domineering behavior, or neglect can drive the child toward social withdrawal.
- Failure to gain the group's admiration; a child who does not perceive themselves as a source of admiration for the group is prone to developing feelings of inferiority and withdrawing.
- These causes stem not only from environmental influences and socialization factors but also from heredity specifically, an individual's biological makeup and physiological functions. These include the processes of facilitating and inhibiting motor and cognitive responses, which significantly shape the behavioral traits characterizing an individual's habitual reactions.

4.2: Symptoms of Social Isolation

There are several symptoms that may manifest in an individual, indicating social isolation and suffering from loneliness or withdrawal. These include:

- Intense boredom and a lack of interest in shared conversations during social gatherings.
- A constant desire to withdraw from any social participation or interaction.
- A loss of interest in personal care, such as neglecting personal hygiene.
- Disarray and hoarding within the home or room of the socially isolated individual, stemming from a lack of concern for tidiness or their surroundings.
- Silence and a reluctance to engage in or participate in discussions.
- Behavioral changes may be observed in the socially isolated individual, such as alcohol addiction, drug abuse, or excessive smoking.

5.2: Theories Explaining Social Isolation Behavior:

As social isolation is a psychological variable and a response manifested through behavioral actions within an individual's personality, it has been addressed by various theories that explain human personality.

Behavioral Theory:

Behavioral theory posits that most human behaviors whether adaptive (normal) or maladaptive (abnormal) are learned through the individual's interaction with the environment and with physical and social stimuli.⁹

Through this interaction process, the individual acquires experiences, knowledge, and diverse behavioral patterns. From this perspective, the individual acquires healthy, adaptive behavior while also learning maladaptive behavioral patterns. Furthermore, behaviorists agree that learning consists of forming associations between stimuli and responses, whereby these associations are strengthened...

Psychoanalytic Theory:

Freud posits that feelings of isolation or loneliness stem from the repression within the unconscious of frustrating experiences acquired during childhood.

This repression arises from a principle of rejecting and denying anything that might cause pain or its manifestations, specifically by suppressing behavioral patterns that conflict with the social environment.

Consequently, this leads to a failure to secure the warmth, affection, and intimate social relationships with others that are necessary to satisfy the individual's need for belonging.

Self Theory:

Self Theory views the human being as an organized whole that acts within the phenomenal field, driven by the desire for self-actualization. The self seeks to adopt behaviors that garner acceptance and approval from others, while avoiding behaviors that meet with rejection.

Cognitive Theory:

Proponents of this approach argue that traditional behavior modification centered

on classical and operant conditioning models effectively overlooks the individual, neglecting their feelings, emotions, and thoughts. Consequently, cognitive theorists have focused on developing therapeutic interventions that actively involve the client in changing their own behavior.

These interventions emphasize altering cognitive processes and maladaptive thought patterns variously referred to as "self-talk" or "automatic thoughts"—in an effort to modify erroneous thinking

6.2: Negative effects of social isolation:

- Depression and sleep difficulties.
- Impaired cardiovascular function.
- Weakened immunity due to the impact on white blood cells, which play a key role in the immune system's response to infection.
- Accelerated cognitive decline.
- Increased risk of stroke and coronary heart disease.
- Elevated levels of stress and anxiety.

7.2: Addressing Social Isolation:

- Avoiding social media.

Many people are drawn to social media platforms in hopes of forging new friendships and alleviating loneliness and isolation; however, social media can actually have a negative impact on this issue. Constant interaction via electronic devices fosters virtual relationships rather than face-to-face encounters, potentially exacerbating an individual's social isolation.

A study found that owning a dog helps reduce the risk of premature death, particularly among individuals experiencing social isolation. Caring for a pet fosters compassion and kindness, leading to a sense of psychological well-being.

People experiencing isolation can turn their situation to their advantage by using this time for self-development and learning new skills. They can also enjoy activities such as listening to music, cooking, going for walks, or visiting relatives.

- Making new friends.

You should expand your social circle by creating opportunities to meet new people; having others in your life—and maintaining

regular contact with them—helps combat isolation.

A loyal friend can also play a vital role; you can share your problems with them, and they can help you overcome challenges while encouraging you not to remain isolated.

- Joining groups.

Whether at a club or through various activities, seek out group-based pursuits. Engaging in these activities helps you get used to being around others and working as part of a team, which is highly effective in overcoming isolation and withdrawal.

Participating in team sports is another excellent option; it is an effective way to build social connections while also boosting self-confidence.

- Setting life goals.

When a person has plans and goals to pursue, they can overcome this issue by striving to achieve those objectives.

- Engaging in extensive reading and expanding one's knowledge.

This greatly enhances a person's social poise and conversational skills, thereby boosting self-confidence; consequently, those around them become interested and eager to interact with the individual who tends toward isolation.

- Overcoming problems.

Encountering a problem does not mean life has come to a halt; rather, one must face the situation and work to avoid its causes in the future. Furthermore, interacting with others significantly helps in moving past the incident more easily and quickly.

8.2: The Relationship Between Social Media and Social Isolation:

Using social media has become a daily necessity in our lives due to the services it offers that simplify people's lives. However, excessive daily use of social networks can negatively impact mental health.¹⁰

American psychologists have stated that social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest have caused more people to feel lonely; similarly, a survey confirmed recent study conducted in Britain found that the majority of Britons consider Instagram to be the worst social media

platform in terms of its negative impact on the mental health of young people.

Numerous studies have shown that increased time spent on these online platforms reduces opportunities for genuine social interaction; indeed, the realm of social media poses a threat to social cohesion, leading to wasted time and the neglect of real-life obligations and social activities.

This has been scientifically confirmed by a study conducted at the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine which found that the more individuals use social media, the greater their sense of social isolation; the study also indicated that participants exhibited significant signs of depression.

Thus, social media platforms are among the most effective means of filling the void in people's lives and bringing them together rather than fostering the discord that currently prevails.

Consequently, there is a correlational relationship between social media and social isolation.

Conclusion:

Excessive use of social media weakens social bonds. This can be attributed to the fact that prolonged use fosters a deep attachment and preoccupation with these platforms, allowing them to dominate an individual's mind and emotions. Consequently, the person increasingly avoids others to indulge in their own preferred activities in solitude. This heightened sensitivity in relationships and growing introversion lead to a reluctance to engage socially or form connections with others prioritizing social media activity instead thereby hindering social adjustment.

Recommendations:

Efforts should be made to activate the psychological and academic counseling unit for university students, guiding them toward the optimal use of social media and helping them cope with psychological and academic crises.

Continuous support is needed to help reduce feelings of loneliness and enhance communication skills.

Academic counselors must prioritize raising awareness about the positive and negative impacts of social media.

Furthermore, additional studies should be conducted to shed light on the risks associated with social media specifically internet addiction including its symptoms, causes, treatment methods, and its influence on personality development.

Providing adolescents with greater opportunities for recreation such as sports activities and cultural competitions to draw them out of the virtual isolation often caused by social media.

Conducting further research and study into social media platforms and their link to social isolation among youth and within society, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon, delve into its root causes, and identify potential solutions.

Activating the role of the family and community in providing social support to young people; emphasizing the importance of family gatherings and participation in shared activities and events to strengthen and consolidate relationships, maintain family cohesion, and encourage the formation of real-world social connections. Utilizing time for activities that alleviate loneliness such as socializing with friends, mastering a profession, exercising, or visiting relatives.

Raising awareness among young people about the negative aspects of social media particularly its long-term impact on their mental health and behavior to prevent addiction and teach them how to manage their usage.

Setting time limits for social media use.

Fostering social interaction, building strong face-to-face relationships, and engaging with others in the real world.

Attempting to establish regulations to monitor social media content and creating specialized centers for youth in this area.

Encouraging young people to use social media in ways that benefit them.
Paying greater attention to the issue of social isolation and its link to social media usage, given that these platforms have become an integral part of an individual's life often causing them to become isolated first from themselves, then from their families, and consequently from society at large.

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