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## Social Media And Its Influences

Today there are approximately 3.5 billion people worldwide that use social media. Despite the first social media platform being launched on the internet only a little over two decades ago, social media has played a big role in the lives and routines of over half the human population. One could argue that for some it's one of the most important things in a person's life. Because of it we can connect with thousands of people around the world in a way humanity has never seen before. We use it for comfort, entertainment and as a way to keep up with our family and peers. To say the least, it's made quite a big impact on the world. But some would say that it's changed it completely.

Social media can be a heartwarming place where you can find people with the same likes and interests as yourself. Especially over the last two years, myself included, social media has made a lot of us feel less alone in a time where physical interaction has never felt so restricted to us in our lives. And of course these are all good things that the gift of social media has given us, however, these kinds of gifts are known to come with a price. Most are aware to some extent of the abuse and damages social media can cause on society. But a lot don't know how deeply rooted these issues are in the cracks of society and the ripple effect it has had on the way we function in our everyday lives.

We see the effects of these issues every day whether you take notice of them or not. It's hard not to go on apps like Instagram or Facebook and take a look into the next thing going on in your friend's life. We all go on these apps harmlessly, and we use them, and we use them some more, and then we use them some more until it actually does start to become harmful. For most people, social media becomes almost like a veil to conceal their actual lives. We spend time out of our day carefully designing our instagram feed and editing our pictures to fit the perfect aesthetic we want other people to see. And nearly all of the time the lives we tend to see online are not the ones actually being lived.

Why do we do this? Of course no one wants to exactly broadcast the very trials and tribulations of their personal life. Everyone is somewhat familiar with American psychologist Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs. In Contentworks "The Psychology of Social Sharing", they compare that very hierarchy to our psychological and physiological needs for using social media. At the very peak of the hierarchy is Self-Actualization, then going down to self esteem, love and belonging, safety, then finally physiological needs. We post things for different reasons as stated in the article and it emphasizes the need for social media towards the fulfillment of our needs as humans. I would personally say this is a little toxic to our psychological wellbeing, as I stated before social media can distort our perspectives of not only other people's lives but our own.

I find it a little humorous how we spend so much time posting online to fulfill our own esteemed needs without realizing how much it can actually bring them down. There are models posted all over instagram, everyone gets a little envious sometimes. And while a lot of us feel content and

satisfied with ourselves for the most part, for some people social media has been one of the biggest reactors for struggles with body image and self-esteem in both adults and adolescence. This is mostly the case unfortunately for adolescent girls.

For a growing young brain taking in vast amounts of information constantly, seeing that only a certain kind of body is presented as desirable among society versus anything different isn't exactly the message I'd feel comfortable with a young person seeing.

According to Facebook researchers from 'The Wall Street Journal', a whooping 32% of teenage girls said going on Instagram made them feel worse about their bodies when they were already feeling insecure. And as I've said before we see this in adults as well with the number of plastic surgery procedures being performed each year increasing exponentially. Popular procedures like the Brazilian Butt-Lift and Breast Augmentation have become more so of a trend for the everyday woman. So much so that the effects of social media have been linked to amplifying body dysmorphia. I one-hundred percent stand by the freedom of doing whatever you want with your body, especially for women, but I strongly believe it's important especially at a time like this where we practice and promote self-love.

Aside from changing the way we think and behave, social media has changed our overall outlook on life. Again, seeing the kinds of exciting things other people online are doing in their lives can make us feel less satisfied with the quality of our own at times. It's desirable for us humans to want to reach our full potential as stated in Maslow's Hierarchy. However, sometimes with social media this can often be enough to convince us that we aren't living up to our best potential.

There was an article written in 2019 by Psychology Professor at the Karl Landsteiner University of Health Sciences, Stefan Steiger, about research conducted that was studying the correlation between Facebook usage and life satisfaction. Ultimately, they found that there were no conclusive effects between the amount of facebook usage and overall life satisfaction. But, what they did find that I found interesting was that in one experiment they did find that users who had stopped using facebook had a higher life satisfaction than the users who had continued to use Facebook. Although the results of this study was inconclusive, I think it's safe to say sometimes to just put your phone down and enjoy your life.

There are many ways social media can and has harmed the psychological, social and mental wellbeing of our society that I have not mentioned. Social media addiction has now been classified as a clinical mental illness, and that should tell you itself the extent of the effects it can have on us. And while social media is an unavoidable force, there are ways we can combat it's negative effects so that we are able to live healthy lives. Spending less time on your phone is probably the biggest one. I know it is easier said than done of course, but taking breaks from your phone and social media hiatuses have proven to have positive effects on psychological and mental health.

 Promoting self-love and body positivity, so we can push people to love themselves more rather than comparing themselves and wishing to be something else. We need representation of different body types and physical features so people can see that there are people that look like them and they are beautiful and valid. Social media is not a projection of what real life looks like at all. Real life, real people are flawed, unfiltered and imperfect. We may use it to project the life we desire and want other people to see, but it's extremely important to live life as it is, raw and beautiful.

[The Psychology of Social Sharing. Why do people share content on social… | by Contentworks Agency | Medium](#)

[Facebook Knows Instagram Is Toxic for Teen Girls, Company Documents Show - WSJ](#)

[Frontiers | Facebook Usage and Life Satisfaction | Psychology (frontiersin.org)](#)