

The Increase of Technology and Social Media

The recent increased access to social media and the rapid advancement of technology has enabled us to always be online and available, always scrolling and always waiting for the next notification or email. Although the accessibility to the Internet and the invention of smartphones has made communication between individuals as far as thousands of miles apart or just a couple of meters away incredibly quick and easy, it has also led to an exposure to unrealistic online advertisements. The abundance of ads has developed an unhealthy body image to us through constant exposure to a world of weight loss ads and photoshopped models. The usage of large social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram has also developed a need for attention, and made it easy for users to leave negative comments, causing us to become a lot more vulnerable and exposed to the opinion of others on the internet through cyber bullying.

The number of users of social media platforms increases day by day, and the widely used networks have become prime places for companies to advertise on. The ads and commercials seen online affect us more than we think, and the continuous usage of Photoshop on models, and the many weight loss advertisements we see online creates an unrealistic body image for many teens. A study conducted by the NEDA shows that the dissatisfaction many people feel, mainly women, about their bodies is highly likely correlated to exposure to the things we are shown through media and advertisements online (“Media”).

The pressure to be thin and fit is not only created through advertisements, but also through everyday posts from our friends. According to an article by the Crimson White, Nicole Muscanell mentioned that “Students may compare themselves with their friends on social media sites, and research shows that sometimes this can lead to increased negative effects such as jealousy, feelings of loneliness and anxiety” and since social media usage has increased from 55% to 73% since 2006, it is a current issue (Miller). The anxiety many teenagers today feel on social media does not only come from comparing themselves to others, but it often happens to be that they measure their self-worth according to how many followers and likes one picture receives. Therefore people only expose the good parts of their lives, the pretty pictures and the nice filters, and the cycle goes on and on.

Recent growth in access to technology with devices such as smartphones and laptops has enabled us to always be online and updated, but with this simple entrance to the infinite world of social media comes a danger to those vulnerable and targeted by the views of others, and to those in need of attention and acceptance. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other similar websites allow individuals to easily leave a comment or post a status, which has developed a way for people to be more critical and rude online. In a study conducted by Pew Research center, it was found that almost 75% of teens between the ages of 12-17 have access to the Internet on their phone, which has created an easier way for teens to post and comment, and it being one of the most prominent methods for cyber bullying (Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi, Gasser). The ease of putting others down and leaving rude remarks to others has increased through the use of this new technology, and saying cruel things has also become something that we frequently see. Social media has created a significant increase in opportunities for people to do so, and Dr. Donna Wick says, “Kids text all sort of things that you would never in a million years contemplate saying to anyone’s face” (Ehmke). Negative comments on photos or other posts can reach the point where

people begin to believe what is being said about them, which could cause a great deal of social anxiety in many individuals. Sitting behind a computer screen makes typing cruel things a lot easier, especially if you do not have to use your true identity. According to statistics from the i-SAFE foundation, one in three teens have experienced threats or bullying online, and surveys conducted by the Cyber Bullying Research Centre showed that people that are victims of cyber bullying are more likely to have much lower self-esteem, which could in worst case lead to suicide (“Cyber Bullying”).

It is clear that the recent growth of technology has many bad effects, and is often looked down upon because of the amount of problems it causes. However, the increased usage of social media has enabled quick and easy communication across the globe, which is something that is highly beneficial for many. Research done by Vodafone in which about 2,000 people were polled, showed that most people felt that technology has made their life and communication easier, and the same study concluded that nine out of ten kids believe that technology has increased their opportunities (Dunn). Staying in touch with friends and chatting with others in different countries has become incredibly simple through chat, email, Skype and FaceTime, and in a study conducted in the U.S, it showed that 91% of teens that use some kind of social network use the platforms to talk to people they see frequently, and 82% responded that they use it to stay in touch with friends or family that they may not see as often (Mesch). Online communication between people is facilitated by the growth of technology, and it is clear that the Internet plays a big role in the life of teens. Development that occurs between the ages of 12-17 is strongly influenced by technology, and the new way of communicating has lead to a new way for teens to express themselves and be creative through the use of social media and technology. The ability to share ones emotions and thoughts on websites such as Facebook helps develop a sense of individuality and development, and for many teens, being able to express themselves online through different

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forums, videos and posts, helps them increase their confidence in real life and makes communication easier. Online messaging makes it easy to continue a conversation that happened in school or during the day, and it is a very efficient way of communicating and a positive way for teens to develop their sense of individuality and let their online interactions shape the way they communicate not only online, but in real life (Mesch).

Social media and the increased use of technology facilitates communication between friends, family and strangers, and makes it incredibly easy to stay in touch with others or contact someone with ease. Although it is a very efficient and easy method of conversation, the increased usage of technology has developed a much more self-conscious generation through the constant need for acceptance and status through social media. The constant exposure to other peoples pictures causes us to compare ourselves to others, and the use of photoshopped advertisements and media makes us much more vulnerable to the publics opinion, and often leads to a development of an unrealistic ideal body image.

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