Social Media Is Connecting Us

What would happen if the internet went off for a day in the house? How would people connect with their family and friends around the globe? People nowadays depend on technology and internet connection to surf through the websites and connect with people around the world. This makes a person consider how our parents and grandparents lived without all this technology, and to what level has the internet technology reached to in just few decades. The internet usage could be for multiple things such as work or getting in contact with people, or for just having fun. *The Times* states, “More than 3 billion people are now using the Internet, according to the United Nations agency that oversees international communications” (Davidson). That is almost half of the world’s population. Also, the number of people using social media is almost two billion and are increasing rapidly. Although, some assume it has negative effects on self-esteem, especially among teens, its positive effects over-weigh its negatives. Social media has improved relationships among people because it has connected more people together and cut the long distances between them. It also has a major impact in coupling people with same interest, several of these relationships have ended in successful marriages. In addition to the increase in older people using social media, it has shown positively an increase in elders’ cognitive capacity. Most of all, having to share the joyful events with family and friend all around the world, is the most premium purpose for social media.
Social media has made it easy for all ages to display and visualize various images of celebrities and their fascinating bodies. According to some studies, this image can affect teenagers’ self-esteem; “We’ve long understood that movies, magazines and television damage teens’ body image by enforcing a ‘thin ideal.’ Less known is the impact of social media on body confidence. With the rapid aging down of smart phone ownership, most parents spend ‘digital parenting’ time on character coaching, making sure their kids think before they post and refrain from cyberbullying” (Simmons). This article talks about ‘the thin ideal’ that has been enforced in teenager’s minds at first by movies, magazines and television. Then comes along the smart phones that have made it easier for them to view social media and navigate and post whatever they want. These acts have caused parents to have concerns over their kids from cyberbullying and self-esteem issues. Trying to imitate what they see or look like these people, could cause these kids to have depression. On the other hand, this article says, “In the survey of more than 1,000 13- to 17-year-olds about how they view their digital lives, 28% said social networking made them feel more outgoing versus 5% who said it made them feel less so; and 29% said it made them feel less shy versus the 3% who said it made them feel more introverted” (Wallace). Here, it shows the results of a survey that was done on 1,000 teenage 13-17 years old. According to the surveyed kids, the results show that the positive effects of social media outweigh the negative ones in their social and emotional lives. I have experienced this issue with my teenage kids. They at first got driven by the images that celebrities post and to their own friends’ photos and figures, and they wanted to imitate them in many ways, but I never felt that it has affected or lowered their self-esteem. In fact, it has made them more confident and stronger. As they grow, they distinguish the false images from the real ones, and focus more on the inside
rather than the outside of a person. Reminding themselves of how great social media has made their lives easier to connect with their beloved ones overseas.

Social media has shrunk the distance between people all over the world. One of the main positive effects of social media is connecting people with each other throughout the globe quickly and easily. It cut the distance between families and friends who live thousands of miles apart from each other. A person in the U.S. could be sitting in his house chatting with or texting a friend on the other side of the world. This is the biggest achievement social media has done for humanity:

Social media's rapid rise is a loud, desperate, emerging attempt by people everywhere to connect with *each other* in the face of all the obstacles that modernity imposes on our lives: suburbanization that isolates us from each other, long working-hours and commutes that are required to make ends meet, the global migration that scatters families across the globe, the military-industrial-consumption machine that drives so many key decisions. (Tufekci)

The writer of this article confirms the benefits of social media on human lives; Social media came out of a desperate need from people everywhere to connect with each other. Today with our modern life, there is no time to go and drive an hour or so to visit a friend or a relative. This kind of life has deserted people from each other adding to it the long working-hours people need to survive in this tough world. In addition to the global migration that has divide families across the world. I, myself, is an example of an immigrant that came to the United States for a better future. If it was not for social media, I would not have been able to connect with my family and friends back home. Social media has made it easier, quicker, and cheaper for me. Not forgetting
the military that are scattered in many countries, they also need social media to connect with their families.

Social media has made it simple and convenient for people to connect with each other at any time and at a very low cost. Time and convenience are additional benefits of social media. In another article, it adds to the gains of social media to our lives “People increasingly prefer quick and frequent engagement with instant updates on news than a prolonged chat and are also finding new ways to catch up with friends from the comfort of their sofa” (Fowlkes). We are in the era of speed where there is no time to do everything we want. A quick surf through social media could keep a person updated of the latest news without a prolonged chat and in this person’s convenient time to do so. Most of my extended family live in the Middle East, and the only way I contact them is through social media, in particular Facebook. It is cheaper for them and me to connect through social media, in addition to the video chat which is a great opportunity for us to see each other and communicate. I remember watching live the wedding party of my cousin, even though I did not have the time or ability to actively be there. They called me through Facebook messenger, and I was able to share the celebration of my cousin’s wedding with my whole family. This was one of my happiest moments that I never have dreamt of happening.

Furthermore, more people are connecting online through social media and are having successful relationships. Most of these relationships ended up in happy marriages. According to an article, it says, “These marriages are proving to be just as strong and viable as more traditional unions. In addition to this, some couples are putting together social media prenups - special agreements governing what the couple deems to be acceptable social media behavior” (Rohampton). Social media, through online dating sites, was able to hook up people with same interests, and many of these relationships ended up in successful marriages. Uniquely, many of
these marriages proved to be steady and strong as traditional marriages. The writer also adds that some couples are putting together social media prenups which are special agreements to have acceptable social media behaviors, in other words to put rules for social media interacting. In another article, it states, “74% of the adult internet users who report that the internet had an impact on their marriage or partnership say the impact was positive. Still, 20% said the impact was mostly negative, and 4% said it was both good and bad” (Lenhart and Duggan). This study shows that the majority of 74% of adult internet users say that the internet has positively affected their marriage relationship or partnership. I think it is the way people choose to interact with each other. If they are serious and honest in their relationship, social media just tries to help people to get in contact with each other and leaves the rest to people’s decisions. I know friends from my church that met through a Catholic website and are successfully married. Social media has not only benefited young and middle generations, but also elders have benefited from social media.

Moreover, recent research shows that there is an increase in elders using social media. Elders are more interested nowadays in learning more about technology and using smartphones and computers. One of the reasons for so is not to feel isolated and to keep in contact with friends and family. According to this article, it reveals, “First, the intergenerational connections are often welcomed by old and young users alike, who now have an equalizing forum for communication too often neglected given the distance and circumstances of modern life. Among their own peers, older adults can form virtual communities with friends and family from past” (Agronin). In today’s modern life and due to long distances, elders feel neglected most of the time and have a lot of free time not knowing what to do. Communicating with others through social media, has helped them to being updated with friends and family. Many elders have joined
groups such as church groups, army buddies, even with their peers. These groups made them feel less isolated. More studies have shown other benefits of elders using social media, “More surprisingly, they also found those who had begun to use social media performed better in tests to gauge cognitive capacity and personal identity. Some reported that they were mentally and physically healthier than before while, in general, those in the control group steadily declined” (Morris). This study was made on two groups of elders; one that used social media, and the other did not. The group that used social media, proved to perform better in tests for cognitive capacity and personal identity than the other group. Even in the study some showed to be mentally and physically healthier than they were before using social media. I have witnessed this with my parents. Since they have been using social media to connect with us and other family members abroad, they have shown an increase in their cognitive capacity and more self-satisfaction. I feel they are overjoyed when connecting with their beloved ones through this new technology. This leads us to another positive effect of social media which is sharing joyous moments with others.

Sharing the joyful events with family and friends all around the world is something most people seek to have. Why not share in other people’s jubilant moments? In The Psychology Today Magazine, the author states, “With all of the suffering and pain in the world, wouldn’t it be a tragedy if people stopped sharing joyful events for fear of making someone else jealous? Imagine if people only discussed all of the negative things that surrounded them. Especially over this past year, don’t we have enough tragic posts appearing in our newsfeeds 24/7?” (Abrams). Feeling happy for others and sharing their joyous moments, gives the person a better feeling than the feeling of jealousy or remorse. For a person’s own mental health, it is better to look at the positive and bright side, and by sharing people’s joy, it gives self-comfort to the person. What would you feel if all that is discussed around you are negative and tragic things? I do not think
this will make you feel better. In another study, it shows, “Based on a multi-method approach, the results showed that positive emotions are more prevalent than negative emotions while browsing Facebook. Moreover, tie strength is positively associated with the feeling of happiness and benign envy, whereas malicious envy is independent of tie strength after reading a (positive) post on Facebook” (Lin and Utz). A study was done on groups of people based on multi-method approach and showed that positive emotions are more common than negative ones while browsing Facebook. From my experience, I feel a lot of joy when going through my Facebook page. Seeing my family and friends’ photos, their activities, and their joyous moments makes me feel blissful. I imagine myself with them gratifying that moment. When they are happy, I am happy too. Also, it keeps me updated with all the new things that are happening. The people, who do not feel delighted for other’s successes or happiness, I think they should question themselves for the reasons and try to diagnose the reason. They could be struggling with depression or low self-worth and might need therapy or seek help for that issue.

Despite, some negative effects associated with social media such as lower self-esteem or jealousy that could influence some teenagers. Social media’s positive effects over-weigh its negatives. Whereas, it has made the world around us a smaller circle through connecting with others. Social media has connected families and friends, migrants all over the world, militaries on duty distributed in many countries, and peers that have not been in contact with their school fellows for years. Also, it has coupled people through dating websites with the same interests and many of these couples ended up in happy marriages. Not limiting it to one generation, but all generations have benefited from social media starting from young kids to older people. Elders have shown improvement in cognitive capacity when using social media. Today, more elders are using social media and communicating through it. Finally, sharing others happy and joyous times
and events, is something one needs to consider. There is a quote by Jim Stovall, ““Be aware of what others are doing, applaud their efforts, acknowledge their successes, and encourage them in their pursuits. When we all help one another, everybody wins” (Abram). When we all can share the joy of others and encourage them, it will be a success to all humanity and the world would be a better place for us all. My family and friends, who I cannot reach physically, I simply reach them by social media. When I am down, I need someone close to talk to. I just call my sister through video chat and could spend hours talking to her as if she was close to me. We can do the simplest stuff through social media such as helping each other to pick clothes to wear, or how to do a cake. Social media has made the distance closer for me to connect with my beloved ones which is something I will always feel very grateful for.
Works Cited


