

SOCIAL MEDIA HAS A DETRIMENTAL CONNECTION BETWEEN PEOPLE AND
THEIR AUTHENTIC OFFLINE SELF.

Social media has a detrimental connection between people
and their authentic offline self.

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Abstract

This paper explores the three main negative effects that social media has on users and their relationship with their authentic offline identity. Furthermore, the articles vary from identity and social media definitions and their users for the negative impacts on the offline true self. According to Berzonsky(2016), Lucie Caffrey(2017) stated that traditionally the identity is defined as a constant and precise feature of the “self”, where individual participate in activities for the discovery of own true-self throughout their life pan. However, in the digital era, with the implementation of social media in our daily lives, the construction of the self has changed; social media platforms have had a negative effect on the individual’s self-causing a major impact in their offline world. The main content of my conference paper is discussed and analyzed about the fact that social media has weakened the relationship between users and their authentic offline self. The discussion shows how social media and the online personae created has caused harm to its users’ offline self and their effects on them.

Keywords: Social media, online identity, authentic offline self, negative effect, mental health, well-being and life satisfaction, offline behavior, self -validation

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INTRODUCTION

Due to the emergence of technological advancements and the creation of social networking sites, a drastic change concerning the self-construction has occurred. Several studies have showed that social media has negatively influenced the user's offline identity according to their daily lives focusing on self-development, relationship and socialization. As cited by sociologist, Derek Egan (2013,p.10) defines social networking sites as a platform where they grant moment and wide-achieving correspondence consistently, and speak to an unmistakably late present day circle in which social capital can be accumulated and showed, while empowering users to build a different yet rise to personality in an online domain. In my conference paper, the relationship between social media and identity will be analyzed and discussed to give a background information on how these networking sites has had a negative effect. In addition, my supporting arguments will be discussed on how social media has weakened the relationship between users and their authentic offline self and how it negatively challenged the offline identity construction compared to before the implementation of social media. Focusing on the effect on the social self, physical self and the mental self of an individual using social media platforms on a daily basis. Furthermore, the relationship between the identity creation and social media has caused a depersonalization of the self-according to a psychological theory (Caffrey, 2017,p.3). However, counter arguments will also be analyzed and discussed as social media also contribute positively such as facilitating their self-validation.

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Social media and identity

The technological establishment on which our general public is now built has unsurprisingly led to a shift in the way online interaction is performed, permitting new manners by which we convey what needs be and keep up social connections. In the online circle, self-portrayal is for the most part brought out through internet based life stages, which have separated both physical imperatives and ordinary expressive gestures that exist in eye to eye connection, enabling clients to interface crosswise over existence through a curated form of 'oneself'. According to Janusz Mierzwa and Hubert Jurjewicz (2016,p.143), some findings has evaluated the potential of the relationship between social media and identity. In the same vein, those needs that were traditionally develop in the offline world is now develop on social networking sites as the online world. For example, according to a research conducted by Wilson(2010), Riva et al.(2016) stated that the significant reasons that incite users to use social media platforms are that they have the possibility to aspire to their needs for their identity construction and because they get the opportunity to experience the “best” in those platforms. According to Giuseppe Riva, Brenda Kay Wiederhold and Pietro Cipresso(2016), Maslow(1987) stated that the different needs for an individual’s identity construction are not unique and self-sufficient, but it is classified as a hierarchy of vital needs; the psychological needs, safety needs, associative needs, needs for self-esteem and needs for self-realization.

SUPPORTING IDEAS

Mental health

During the construction of the online self, human crucial feature, the memory, has been severely impacted. On social media, the offline self is stored and collected outside of the physical body therefore allowing the creation of an online personae (Caffrey,2017,p.24) and users lose their ability of offline self-reflection therefore leading to a loss of control

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in their everyday life actions. The fact that social media allows the elimination of the offline self during the online construction, this creates a sense of confusion for the user as the platform is convincing the individual that online identity created is their real identity. Social media make users develop mental health issues in the offline world therefore weakening their authentic offline identity as Caffrey(2017), Lovink (2017) defined social networking era as an environment where users are self-obsessed in a condition of auto-data and auto-intoxication. This feeling of being intoxicated eventually affect the mental health as the user is stuck in a vicious cycle where they are not able to identify that the distortion of their offline self on online platforms is harmful for them as social media platforms allows them to feel validated with this distortion of their true-self. According to some research and to the Goffman theory on identity, an individual search for the validation from others, the need of being constantly noticed and getting recognition from others and due to social media, some individual finds the ability to achieve those desires but the return to reality is mentally fatal for them. According to Janusz Mierzwa and Hubert Jurjewicz (2016,p.140), a result conducted in the US showed that 53% of social media users are experience a negative shift in their real life and that they are experiencing a lack of self-confidence compared to their offline friends. In 2012, Medical Gazette stated that it is assumed that the social network, Facebook can develop anxiety and increase a user syndrome of inferiority (Mierzwa& Jurjewicz, 2016,p.141). The social comparison theory stated that it is normal for an individual to compare himself with others to search for accuracy in their self-evaluations but the emergence of different social media platforms, has increased self-comparison by creating a negative effect on the user mental state. The more social media users grow the more self-comparison will increase and users will continue to compare them (Elisabeth Gallinari, 2017,p.100). The self-comparison on social media platforms unfortunately make users unappreciated their physical offline self and therefore cause a disruption in their mental state. Generally, when the mental state is affected it contributes to a lack of well-being and life satisfaction.

Well-being and life satisfaction.

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Social media has a detrimental connection between users and their authentic offline self as it has created a threat for their wellbeing and life satisfaction. Traditionally, the predominant influence concerning the self was family, friends, school, community and other extra-curricular activities and where it has led to a healthier and easier identity construction whereas in this new environment, social networking sites has become a huge part of an individual's life therefore is an external influence which determined the identity construction (Taylor,2011, Caffrey,2017). As stated by Teigan Stafford-Bush (2017,p.9), Mascheroni, Vincent and Jimenez (2015) identified that social media has an adverse effect on mostly teenage girls self-body image and feedbacks from the others users leads to a disruption in their mental well-being, to an emotional distress, questioning appearance , social anxiety and to a distorted self-perception. The fact that the liking trends is popping on social media, it does not help teenage girls to accept their true physical self. In addition, social media are well known to set constructed beauty standards according to photos shared on the platforms by the users therefore the impact of those platforms and society beauty standards create an object of confusion between the offline body and the online personae for users (Bush,2017,p.10). Users can also suffer from the syndrome of inferiority offline creating a disruption in their life satisfaction due to other users online constructed identity. As social media platforms portray perfect lives through posts, the individual tend to self-reflect and compare his offline identity which result to a decrease in the ability of the individual to self-analyze themselves according to traditional standards of the self (Caffrey,2017,p.21). A study conducted by Kross et al.(2013), Fabio Sabatini and Francesco Sarracino (2014,p.6) stated that Facebook has predicted negative shifts between the online network and the well-being and life satisfaction of users and that the more individuals make use of this networking sites the more this negatively affect their life satisfaction over time. The online interaction versus the offline interaction is completely different and this can affect human beings emotionally (Baixue Wang, 2013,p.9). Traditionally, offline communication help individuals in social interaction and creating sense of well-being internally, however with the implementation of social network offline interaction are rare resulting to no social communication. The more people make use of social networking sites the more they prevent themselves from offline communication, therefore also preventing themselves

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from have a positive state of emotion (Mierzwa&Jurjewicz,2016,p.142). For example, Kross et al.(2013) has conducted a survey showing the negative effects on social media users' well-being and life satisfaction; the more time they spent on the network, Facebook, the worse they felt afterwards and the use over two weeks lead to a major decrease in their life satisfaction (Fabio Sabatini and Francesco Sarracino,2014,p.6). The addiction caused by the different networking sites lead to life dissatisfaction and to a disrupted well-being and therefore negatively affecting the user's offline development.

Offline identity development

On social media platforms, users tend to construct a different personae; acting another identity leading to an effect of behaviorism with their authentic offline self. In addition, Lucie Caffrey(2017,p.15) stated, the relationship between individuals and technology is radically changing the self as an individual is creating new ideas on the self. New ideas of the self are being created by the user as social media has given unlimited opportunities to its user to behave differently from their actual offline behavior and therefore the user decide to merge its online behavior in their real life. Traditionally, the theory of the self-comprises with some aspect of behaviorism. In the offline world, individuals spend only approximately 30% of their time talking about themselves to others whereas on social media where there is an unlimited amount of self-disclosure, users tend to talk more about themselves, approximately 80% of the time where it develops a culture of narcissistic (Caffrey,2017,p.26). As a result of an unlimited self-disclosure online and a heavy culture of narcissistic offline, users tend to act in real life. As cited by Goffman(1959), Caffrey(2017) stated that users may prefer the versions where they tend to act a desired identity to others, and they portray that in their real life rather than performing their true self offline. Social media users are driven by their narcissism and their ego on the construction of the self which results that users could be in threat of being expelled from the rationalities and substances of the disconnected world (Caffrey,2017,p.22). According to the sociological side, individuals traditionally tend to perform a certain role depending from the audience offline however nowadays due to the online personae, individuals are confused about the roles that they should be playing offline. As studied by Goffman (1959), Kelly McCarty(2012,p.10) stated that the offline

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roles that an individual's play in the offline world is normal for the construction of their identity and that these roles defines themselves as a complete individual however with social media identities, this traditional cycle for the identity formation is disturbed because users do a mismatch and the online personae become an object of confusion therefore affecting its offline behavior. In addition, the fact that the online personae can be transformed and construct over and over, has contributed to the effect that individuals feel the need of portraying different roles in their offline environment and confusing the true self. The online identity can easily shift from one environment to another so the personae that is played online by the individual could have a negative effect on how the individuals perceived themselves in the offline world (McCarty,2012,p.11). For example, according to research conducted by Luca Cerniglia, Silvia Cimino and Michela Erriu (2017,p.20) showed that adolescents aged between thirteen and nineteen years old, are often not capable of differentiating their virtual identity with their real identity and they therefore perform and act different roles in the online world and therefore affecting their offline behavior.

Self-validation

However, even though the analysis above showed that social media affect negatively their user, social media can positively contribute to a user offline identity. In the same vein, this social capital can be described as a remarkable possibility of affordance where theses networking sites provide them with some items for their identity construction which they cannot achieve in real life. Social media platforms give the freedom to users to construct an identity that are different from their actual self so as to achieve certain opportunities that are not possible in the offline world (Caffrey, 2017,p.16). Social networking sites paradoxically provide to its users a certain independency concerning their self-validation. According to Adriana M. Manago (2015,p.7), another essential part of character improvement is shaping an identity that is by and by significant and furthermore socially endorsed. Curiously, online life incomprehensibly incites expanded articulation of exceptional selves and furthermore expanded access to the suppositions of others. In this manner, millennial youth face new assignments in planning increased capacities with regards to social approval and self-ruling appearance as they process their

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identity amid youthfulness and developing adulthood. With access to data and criticism from different and various social gatherings in their online systems, youth could be developing modern capacities for sourcing numerous perspectives to plan an autonomous feeling of self (Manago,2015,p.7). Furthermore, they now have the capabilities of anticipating both positive and negative feedback.

Conclusions and limitations of these studies.

The self is an ongoing concept that will keep on changing over and over. As it has been discussed and analyzed above, social media has a detrimental connection between users and their true-self causing distortion in their mental state, then contributing to a negative effect to their well-being and offline life satisfaction also contributing to a negative shift on their offline behavior. However, social media can also contribute positively where it enables its users to be independent with their self-validation. Social media should find other ways to strengthen the relationship between their platforms to the users true-self-identity. The limitations of all the articles in general is that they only focus on a certain range age of users and that the case study is limited to only a specific culture not to a diverse one so as to gain more suitable results.

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