Analysis of negative effects on social media

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Abstract: Social media is very important to the development of society, but there are big differences on the advantages and disadvantages of social media. This study attempts to evaluate the negative impact of social media, in order to provide a useful reference for social media platforms to reduce the scope of negative impact, and for public institutions to formulate social media management solutions.

1. Do advantages outweigh the disadvantages

The composition topic of IELTS on 2 June, 2018 is "Many people prefer to socialize online rather than spend time with their friends in local community. Do advantages outweigh the disadvantages?" The majority of examinees chose social media's positive influences as the main point of view, which is reasonable owing to the fact that social media does help to gain more new ties (Vriens, 2018), improve learning enthusiasm (Chawinga, 2017) and promote citizens' participation (Chen, 2016). Nevertheless, Webb (2016) once stated the mass spread posts on social media can cause serious consequences occasionally, so the negative effects that social media has on society cannot be ignored deliberately. Specifically, if it cannot be used wisely, social media will not only do harm to people's mental health, but also have an adverse effect on behaviors.

2. Negative influence on psychology

It is essential to focus on users' mental health because overuse of social media may cause psychological distress and self-concept objectification. Controlled by for-profit company, social media's initial mission to addict users to earn profits, which may bring severe psychological problems. A Facebook investor called Sean Parker said his task is to design Facebook more addictive: Adhere users' feelings and make them feel to keep in tune with the world (Baron, 2019). That is to say, social media is designed to consume as much time as possible to make users come back and back, which corrupts souls for those users who do not have enough self-control. When browsing others' news frequently, people would be lost in thought unconsciously, compare themselves with others and then produce anxiety. Lonely individuals (Oberst, 2016) and introverts (Baron, 2019) are more easily influenced by the external world because they prefer to get help from the virtual world, hoping social media can help them escape from the bad moods. They really want to get friendly comments from the social media, but there is not usually the case that they hardly gain the real useful advice. Once they cannot achieve their expectations, it maybe not only decrease empathy, but also increase a sense of isolation and the risk of later depression, even strengthen suicide ideation (Blachnio et al., 2015;

De Cock et al., 2014; Hong, Huang, Lin and Chiu, 2014; Koc and Gulyagic, 2013, cited in Oberst, 2016; Feinstein et al.,2013, cited in Berryman, 2017). What is worse, they would like to ask for belonging by "Vaguebooking", which often takes place when people lack of opportunities to express themselves. The fear of missing out causes them check social media more often in order to keep the same pace with others' comments (Oberst, 2016). Admittedly, needing to belonging is reasonable, but care more about what others think may cause psychological distress, which is unnecessary and troublesome. Therefore, it is requisite for people who have high expectations on social media to keep a proper distance from it. Another factor that causes mental health crisis is self-concept objectification. If someone suffers from this symptom, he will probably ask social media to testify himself and judge people based on how someone is evaluated by others. Females especially for those who lack of safety, are likely to find public likes in order to gain recognitions, hence a variety of abnormal self-concepts have been built up, such as low self-esteem, gender stereotypes and impossible body standards (Uhls, 2017). This undoubtedly increases the pressure of personal "brand" management and negatively influences the feeling of living a "perfect" life (Blow, 2018). Thus instead of following others blindly and becoming patterned, keeping own ideas firmly and doing what inner needs is of practically valuable. However, this is just the tip of the iceberg in negative effects, in addition to sinking people into poor mental health, the damage of social media to the behaviors also cannot be underestimated.

3. Negative influence on behavior

Owing to over reliance on social media, different groups' behaviors including adults, children, customers would be affected negatively. Adults may form an abnormal timetable and fall into a vicious cycle unavoidably without using wisely. Research shows that excessive use the social media can have a harmful influence on daily schedule (Uhls, 2017). There is an inverse relationship between using time and sleeping time: With the increase of usage time, sleeping time will decrease and sleeping circle will change. It may cause a little unconscious during the daytime, while in the long term a series of issues related fading memory, degraded grades and less involvement in real-life will emerge(Uhls, 2017; Oberst,2016). Thus it is important to develop a healthy schedule to avoid these bad behaviors' happen. Moreover, there seems to be an unwise dependence on social media when users receive support online. Since social media usually puts them into the following situation: When people feel depressed, they may go to the social media to make themselves happy (Blow, 2018). Similarity, if they feel the pressure, they are willing to ask for help online (Baron, 2019). Whereas if it keeps persisting without restraint, it will finally develop into addition and people may fall into a vicious cycle. Research shows that increased anxiety and depression makes people use social media more often, while using more social media intensifies anxiety and depression conversely (Lin et al., 2016, cited in Oberst, 2016). More concretely, if users feel stressed and want to seek companionship or solace, they will back to social media, which largely affects their offline relationships. To avoid the negligence of offline relations, they are more likely to end up spending too much time online, so that they will also have fewer offline relationships (Baron, 2019). Because of both online and offline relationships' decrease, they will feel more stressed that makes them crazy. Once they started this vicious circle, endless pain will drown them and the process basically cannot be stopped. For children who lack of basic judgment, the harm of social media will be doubled, because it may cause incorrect imitation for those children who are exposed to the inappropriate contents but cannot distinguish right from wrong. Some bad advertisers rack their brains to pursue commercial interests without caring about social benefits, so that many bad advertisements about sexual content, alcohol, violence, substance abuse and some other unhealthy products are easily reach children (Uhls, 2017). Once children receive consents through social media's validation of these high risk behaviors, they possibly make poor decisions on basis of what to share on the social media, which must be taken seriously. As

for business, because of social media's double-edged nature, "social proof" often occurs: When the products make lots of interests and attract lots of shares it can strengthen sales, but when the products are not popular and do not have too much sales, customers are reluctant to trust the product on the contrary (Simplilearn, 2019). Consequently, "Social proof" passively influences customers' choice, destroys business credit standing and further undermines market enthusiasm. Due to the fact that social media has countless undesirable impacts on behaviors, taking advantage of it carefully is a wise way for users.

As discussed above, it is clear that social media has more negative effects on society. The uncontrolled use will not only make people suffer a lot in mental health, such as psychological distress and objectify self-concept, but also make an adverse influence on behaviors. More specifically, it not only forms an unhealthy schedule and a vicious cycle for adults, but also misleads children to incorrect behaviors. Furthermore, it destroys commercial credit and strikes against the enthusiasm of market players due to "Social proof". In view of social media's long term development, it is vital to bypass its disadvantages and make best use of the social media. Hopefully, social media will be used wisely and affect society positively in future.

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