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Social Media Influences Eating Disorders

**Introduction**

 Technology is taking every field by storm. Whichever sector we see today, is making use of the latest technology in one way or another. Technology is revolutionizing our lives and modifying our lifestyles on a huge level.

 One of the most important components or part of today's latest technology is the internet. Internet had changed our lives to a great extent and people in today’s age are not living the same life that they were once living before the invention of the internet. Initially, the facility of the internet was available only on the personal computers and official computers, but now, it has become a household item and is easily available in the palm of a person in the form of a smartphone. Today, people mostly use the internet for the sake of remaining connected to each other. Users mostly make use of the internet to keep themselves aware of the happenings going on in other people’s lives. The applications or websites that facilitate this process of viewing other people’s lives or sharing what is happening in your life are known as social media apps or social media, in short.

 Where this social media has brought a lot of facilitation in our lives, it has also brought various downsides. One of the major issues that are being faced by today's researchers and scientists is that issue of eating disorders. The following piece of writing will discuss the issue of eating disorders in detail and whether it is linked anywhere to social media or not.

**Discussion**

The world of social media consists of a number of apps and websites where a person can easily share and show what is happening in their lives. People use these platforms to show their travel adventures, their cooking adventures in the kitchen, their new car, new house or even their daily routine activities. People post their pictures on social media what they are currently doing, where they are currently going and even what they are eating.

The social media holds a big allegation that is forcing people to live an unrealistic life and making people depressed. People are falling prey more and more to inferiority complex as they see others living their lives happily and compare their own life and living style to them. This makes them more sad and depressed. People try to imitate the lifestyles of the individuals as showcased in

 One of the most prominent issues that have come in the notice of psychological researchers and experts is a rise in eating disorders. Researchers have found out that people are getting more fascinated by the bodies and figures of people, especially celebrities, over the social media and dream to become like them. People like to search for the perfect body shapes over the internet and compare their bodies to them. In an effort to get those perfect body types as depicted over social media, people cut off their diet and essential food requirements. This trend has been mostly observed among the people of young age and teenagers.

 It has been proven through various pieces of research that a human brain does not fully develop until the age of 25, so there is a big chance of developing negative stereotypes, Teenager and young people develop the perceptions that only the type of bodies or body shapes shown over the internet are a reality.

 One of the major factors behind the development of these stereotypes is the ultimate desire of being accepted in society. People have a deep desire to be accepted and appreciated by the people in their close circle, especially their peers and they find it an attractive way to gain the maximum appreciation and likes from their social media friends. They have developed thinking that if they also grow a body like those celebrities or the social media figures, they will be more included and accepted by their society.

As already established that an individual has not developed a mature and sophisticated thought process in the early stages of their life so every glittering object seems like gold to them. Same is the case for the posts displayed on social media. The youngsters think that the skinny bodies shown over social media are the ultimate goal. They develop a perception that the people only having weak or skinny bodies are liked and accepted by society. They idealize those figures or body shapes and imagine themselves in the same frame. So in order to achieve their self-idealized body shape or body type, they go to any lengths, even sometimes commit crazy actions, which puts their own health at risk. These actions crash dieting or following hardcore gym routine.

 Claire Mysko, the head of youth outreach for National Eating Disorder Association of NEDA, states regarding this situation. "'We live in a culture where eating disorders thrive because of the messages we're exposed to and Social Media heightens that exposure". The perception that only skinny body type is beautiful is extremely dangerous takes the lives of many individuals, every year. These victims consist of people from all age groups, including young and old, male and female, white or black. Along with a high rate of deaths occurring every year, a number of people develop various sorts of weaknesses and even disabilities and deformities in their bodies due to the actions taken as a result of this thinking.

 I would like to relate the example of my personal life with this issue. I used to be very conscious about my looks in my teens. I started getting worried about my looks and my body when I was just a student in the seventh class. This feeling of inferiority complex and anxiety began when one of my friends commented on one of my posts on social media, calling me “fat”. The moment I saw this comment, a state of worry started taking over me and I started making efforts to “reduce” this. The comment made me feel that I’m some kind of weird person in this society and no one will like me now. It made me feel like I am an alien among my own friends and family. Started hardcore dieting and became very skinny. I remember my own mother buying large sizes of e United Dairy Farmer’s milkshakes after every practice session I had. It only stopped when I stepped back from social media. Only then I realized that my perceptions did not define me and I was totally ok with my body. I was perfect the way I was.

 Not only one type of social media platform is responsible for igniting this kind of behavior. As per multiple studies, youngsters, mostly between the ages of 12 to 25 are inspired most by the content posted over the internet. Some popular social media platforms are Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat and Instagram. Twitter is one of the most effective ways to share information or share someone's personal expressions in a short and precise way. The young generation finds it easy to express themselves in a limited way without expanding the message too much. There are various trends over Twitter that are seen to be top trending or have been highly searched over a certain period of time. It has highly been found that young people, especially teenagers, search for specific terms like "thinspiration, thinspo, and proana". These terms have been found out to encourage the youngsters to be skinny rather than healthy. As per research, out of 2584 tweets done by youngsters, over a certain period of time, shared a common concern, that was of their body shape. Only 599 tweets were found out to be devoid of any such issue like body shape, beauty or anxiety (Rehg).

Another very popular way of sharing information over the internet is via a video message. A video can convey a message in a very detailed manner even if it’s a short one. The social media platform that is used extensively to display videos for the purpose of expression of different messages is YouTube. The most common video portal and the most watched social media plateform has alos been alleged to show such videos that promote such perception and ideas. “An analysis of the video-sharing social media site YouTube found that one-third of anorexia-related videos could be classified as “pro-anorexia,”. Moreover, these videos instill the thoughts in the young generation that their own self is not beautiful and they should not be satisfied with their bodies. The videos have been found to be made and posted just to gather more and more likes instead of inspiring other people's lives.

 It’s not like that the social media is just a negative thing and can only be used for showing off the various aspects of daily life, it can also b used in may positive and constructive ways (Caron). Many people are using social media to bring reforms in society and distinguish between good and bad. Many institutions, organizations, non-profit bodies, and even individuals, working in their independent capacities, are striving to eliminate the evil and spread more and more love. They continuously try to fight against the forces of racism, discrimination, violence, injustice and many more anywhere in the world, where ever it is taking place.

 Social media is also used as a medium to create awareness or raise knowledge about any specific issue or any ongoing hot debate. Its sole purpose is not only to used to display and show off different body types and shapes which will make the users depressed and will push them towards inferiority complex. The effectiveness of anything depends on its usage; in the same way, the effectiveness of social media also depends on how it is used. The argument that the intention of showing these body shapes and frameworks is not only to push the people towards complex but to inspire them and make appropriate measure in their lifestyle without harming themselves, to attain a healthy and balanced body.

**Conclusion**

Social media is undoubtedly one of the greatest and most significant ways of communication, it is also creating some troubles for its users, especially young users. The users, especially ranging from the ages between 12 to 25 years have developed various stereotypes that only certain type of body shapes or figures are acceptable in the society and others are a big no. This has given rise to a number of eating disorders among the people, irrespective of their age or gender.

Although researchers have repeatedly tried to raise awareness regarding this concept that the stuff posted on media by the users isn’t fully themselves; it’s just a fake identity or a foul that the person on social media has adopted to show themselves happy and content, it will take time for the people to realize the truth.

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