Your Name

Instructor Name

Date

Social Media and its bad Influence

Modern life spins around the elements of technology due to which it has become an indispensable part of our society. Specifically, discussing social media platforms, people regardless of their age use this platform daily. Generally, the perception of an ideal life or ideal body can be seen on every social media. Due to this, people, especially adolescents’ start comparing their lives with celebrities and influencers without realizing that all the things shown on social media are not entirely true. The obsession with celebrities and influencers' lifestyle and unable to achieve that lifestyle is making people prone to several mental disorders. Due to the spread of the technology, social media sites can be accessed by many people and therefore it serves as an ideal platform to spread any information. This opportunity can lead many people to spread misinformation to society as well. The misinformation can be of any type. It could be related to any specific organization, or any person or an event, etc. The misinformation has a huge impact on destroying an individual’s or an organization's reputation. It can also cause chaos among people. This false information can have adverse effects on people's mental health making them prone to various mental disorders. This research paper will explore the correlation between mental disorder and misinformation that is spread through several social media websites.

A mental disorder is a psychiatric disorder that results in extreme distress or in many cases may cause impairments of the personal-functioning of an individual. The most common mental disorder is depression, anxiety, substance abuse, attention deficit disorder, and an eating disorder. According to the statistics of 2017, over 46 million people are living with mental illness in the US. Additionally, according to a study conducted by the CDC, 50% of Americans are diagnosed with a mental illness at some point in their lives (*Data and Publications - Mental Health - CDC*). This increase in mental disorders is alarming. Although, mental illnesses were common in the past as well, yet due to the rise of technology, the rates of people being mentally ill are increasing day by day. It is undeniably true that the lack of physical contact and physical activities due to spending more time on social media is making us crazy. However, the spread of false information and constant bullying is another reason that makes people at higher risk of having a mental disorder.

In the context of social media, depression and anxiety are the most common mental disorders among people who spend a lot of time scrolling through various social media sites. Many studies have revealed that more time is associated with an increased risk of people getting depressed. Although, social media sites can be very useful as these sites can be used for educational purposes, job hunting, and entertainment. However, the increasing trend of posting false news on social media is gaining popularity day by day. People use this platform to sabotage an individual or an organization. This affects not only an organization’s reputation but can also affect the business. Moreover, the constant bullying that is the after-effect of false news is making people more and more depressed. The body image that is portrayed on social media is making teens and even adults more anxious about their body making them prone to anxiety disorders and also depression. The adverse effects of misinformation on social media can result in people having multiple mental disorders.

In recent years, people have replaced their real-life with life on social media by spending more time on social media. The research conducted by (Boers 856) also revealed that spending more screen time results in an increased risk of people getting depressed. While specifically talking about the misinformation spread on social media, it has been observed that the stigma associated with the mental illness causes huge distress to the people who already have a mental illness. For instance, only a few people who have schizophrenia experience hallucinations while most of them do not experience any other impairment. Additionally, a myth that people with depression are also suicidal is spreading fast. This false information results in chaos among people and they start becoming more anxious about their mental health.

To find the association between false information that is spread using social media platforms and mental disorders, several studies have been conducted. It has been observed that young adults that spend more time on social media are predominantly at higher risk of having mental health issues. A study conducted by the author reveals that each social media site affects an individual differently. According to the author, internet in general influences social relationships and community participation (Kumar). The false information that is spread about an individual can not only influence his or her mental health but can have a negative impact on the people associated with him or help. The false information can not only destroy one’s reputation but can also make a person subjected to the bullying or more specifically cyberbullying. This constant bullying and humiliation increase the risk of a person developing severe mental disorders.

While discussing the role of news channels pages on social media, they can virtually reach any person’s mind and manipulate them easily. Typically, people with low information discernment are more likely to believe in false news and will not try to search for the authenticity of the information. A research conducted by the American Psychological Association revealed that almost 66% of the Americans are worried about the country’s future and therefore will constantly follow every news regarding the political events of a country (*What Is Mental Illness?*). The misinformation regarding any political mishap or unstable economy can cause severe distress and anxiety among these people. An experiment by (Vosoughi 1146) showed that out of 47 million twitter users, approximately more than 15% are bots. These bots can serve as an ideal medium of spreading misinformation among people. For instance, the pizza gate controversy that was spread during the presidential elections of the US in 2017 linked the members of the Democratic Party to the human trafficking and sex ring groups. This rumor resulted in increased anxiety and panic attacks to the people who were supporting this party. Moreover, the people who were against the party were also concerned about the future of the country and therefore they also became extremely depressed after the spread of a controversy (Kragh 812,813).

The false news is not limited to political news but it has paved its way in the field of medicine as well. The news regarding false medical miracles or the discovery of any disease cure is spreading widely. This increases hope for the people who are suffering from particular diseases but knowing the reality of the fake news that may feel disappointed and hopeless and they may also be prone to various mental disorders. Additionally, the false perception regarding several mental diseases and the inaccurate portrayal of the symptoms of a specific mental disease shown in various documentaries that are posted on social media can result in extreme distress among people who are already suffering from a mental disorder (Kumar). For instance, the children with autism are shown in documentaries that are either violent or have severe behavioral issues when in reality, none of this is true. Although, due to extreme distress, they become irritable yet still depicting them being violent towards others can even worsen their symptoms. Further, this depiction can be traumatizing for the parents of children that have autism as they might think that all the symptoms shown in a documentary are true. Due to this they become depressed and can also develop various mental disorders.

While discussing the role of misinformation on social media and mental illness, one thing that is often neglected is the increased harassment that is a major cause of mental illness among teens and adults. It has been observed that the trend of photoshopping pictures is increasing day by day. Several people and especially beauty influencers use the power of Photoshop to look flawless (Donovan 581). It is human nature to strive for perfection and therefore after seeing flawless images of people on social media teens are trying hard to attain that perception. However, when they are unable to fulfill their expectations, they are prone to develop several disorders. This false information associated with beauty is the reason that many teens have low self-esteem and have multiple mental illnesses. The photoshopping is not only limited to face but people are using Photoshop techniques to promote certain body image. An increase in the spreading of false information regarding the ideal body type is making people more and more depressed. Specifically, teens start to compare their bodies with the fake images shown on social media sites. So, if they cannot achieve the ideal body type, they tend to feel depressed which can further lead them to various mental disorders. Many people know reality yet some people still believe this false perception of body image that negatively impacts mental health.

While discussing Photoshop techniques, an increase in online harassment has been witnessed. Many people use pictures of other people and Photoshop them on inappropriate images. The altered images are sent to every social media platform to sabotage one’s reputation. As people believe what they see rather than confirming the source. So, after seeing the altered pictures, the public will start bullying and discriminating against the victim. This causes huge distress to the victim making them prone to several mental disorders. In many cases, blackmailers threat the victims by saying that they will expose the Photoshopped pictures on social media if the victim does not cater to the blackmailers' demands (Donovan 581). This trend of leaking pictures online that are false is making people more prone to develop, mental disorders. Many victims after constantly struggling with depression have also committed or tried to commit suicides as well.

Keeping all the above-mentioned points and research evidence, it is undesirability true that there is a correlation between the misinformation that is spread on social media and mental disorders. It is, therefore, necessary to put a limit on the use of social media. Moreover, people should stop relying on social media sites to gain any information as the information that is spread on social media can be fake. Additionally, people must not believe in everything that is shown on social media rather they should search for credible sources where the information is true. Furthermore, there is a need for government interventions to implement several policies that may reduce the spread of false information as misinformation can cause various mental disorders among people. It is necessary to spread awareness among people and especially teens to focus more on real-life relationships rather than spending more time online as this will not only improve their relationships but will foster their mental health as well.

**Works Cited**

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