Committee: Young Delegates Forum

Issue: Peer pressure through social media: the image and the truth behind it

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INTRODUCTION

At this day and age, the phenomenon of peer pressure has evolved, and it is now a major part of teenagers' lives. It signifies that young people are urged to act in a certain way, similar to everybody else in order to fit in their social circles. This can complicate the evolution of their personalities, their habits and the way they act and think. Furthermore, it is a fact that, nowadays, considering the evolution of technology and its place in our everyday life, it is more than obvious that we get influenced by social media. Without a doubt, we could say that young people are the ones that get more influenced by us all.

Taking all that into consideration we realize that since peer pressure exists it is more than expected to be expressed through social media platforms towards young people. But what effect will it have on them?

Peer pressure through social media can be harmful in many ways, affecting their mental health, their evolution, their personality, and the way they act and think.

Solutions on how to handle this phenomenon need to be found in order to help young people live as they wish, and not as they're told to. This study guide will provide you with information about the topic, however, you need to do research of your own to combine facts with your country's policy.

Should you have any questions considering the issue or the conference in general don't hesitate to contact us via email (ivigaliotou@gmail.com, sofiakoumianaki@gmail.com,kalliopivareli2007@gmail.com)

Looking forward to meeting you all!

Kind regards,

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DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Peer Pressure

Social pressure or peer pressure is the phenomenon of direct influence on the individual by peers, colleagues, etc., which results in a change in attitudes, values and behaviors.

Social Media

Social media is a collective term for websites and applications that focus on communication, community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration.[1]

FOMO

''Fear of missing out, more commonly known as FOMO, is a form of social anxiety (although not a social anxiety disorder). It involves a pervasive apprehension that others might be engaging in rewarding activities that you could miss out on.''[2]

Cyberbullying

''The activity of using messages on social media, emails, text messages, etc. to frighten or upset somebody''[3]

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

''Frequent worry about everyday things that is so bad a person cannot live a normal life''[4]

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[1]Lutkevich, Ben, and Ivy Wigmore. "Social Media." *WhatIs.Com*, 3 Sept. 2021, www.techtarget.com/whatis/definition/social-media.

[2] Peterson, Ashley L. "What Is... Fomo (Fear of Missing out)." *Mental Health @ Home*, 11 June 2022, https://mentalhealthathome.org/2021/08/06/what-is-fomo/#:~:text=Fear%20of%20missing%20out%2C%20more%20commonly%20known%20as,concept%20of%20FOMO%20isn%E2%80%99t%20a%20brand%20new%20thing.

[3] "Cyberbullying." *Cyberbullying Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com*, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/cyberbullying?q=cyberbullying

[4] "Generalized Anxiety Disorder." *Cambridge Dictionary*, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/generalized-anxiety-disorder.

Major Depressive Disorder(MDD)

Also known as Depression or Clinical Depression is 'a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest'[5]

Internet Relay Chat

''IRC, more formally referred to as Internet Relay Chat, provides a means by which one user can type a message in real time to one or more Internet users, and almost instantaneously, the message appears on the monitors of all the other users who are monitoring the transmission.''[6]

Influencer

''A person who is paid by a company to show and describe its products and services on social media, encouraging other people to buy them, someone who affects or changes the way that other people behave''[7]

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Technology is always evolving and fashioning new inventive ways for people to connect with each other. One of the most common uses of new technologies, specifically among teenagers, is social media. Multiple studies have found a strong link between heavy use of social media and an increased risk for depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm, and even suicidal thoughts. Many negative experiences can be promoted by social media such as inadequacy about one's life or appearance, FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out), isolation, depression, anxiety, cyber-bullying, self-absorption etc.

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[5] "Depression (Major Depressive Disorder)." *Mayo Clinic*, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 3 Feb. 2018, https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/symptoms-causes/syc-20356007.

[6] Simpson, Carol. "Internet Relay Chat. Eric Digest." *Internet Relay Chat. ERIC Digest.*, ERIC Clearinghouse on Information and Technology Syracuse NY., 31 Dec. 1998, https://www.ericdigests.org/1999-3/chat.htm#:~:text=IRC%2C%20more%20formally%20referred%20to%20as%20Internet%20Relay,type%20messages%20that%20all%20the%20others%20may%20read.

[7] "Influencer." *Cambridge Dictionary*, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/influencer.

Evolution Of Social Media

Since the start of public Internet use in 1991, people have found innovative ways to use this technology. As technology has evolved and become readily available, teen Internet use has risen sharply. To understand the increase in teen technology use, statistics can be used to paint a clear picture of the new youth culture.
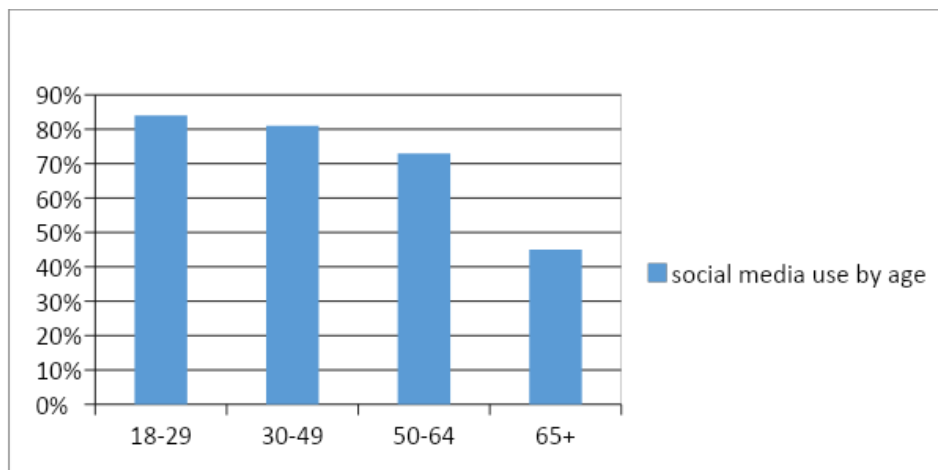

Figure 1: statistic showing the use of social media by age[8]

The 20th Century saw the start of extremely rapid technological transformation. After the first computers were built in the 1940s, scientists and engineers started working on ways to connect those computers to form networks, which would later give rise to the Internet. In the 1960s, the first versions of the Internet, including CompuServe, were created. During this time, early versions of email were also created. In 1979, UseNet introduced a virtual newsletter that allowed users to connect. By the 1970s, networking technology had advanced. Home computers were increasingly prevalent and social media were getting more advanced by the 1980s.

[8]Auxier, Brooke, and Monica Anderson. "Social Media Use in 2021." *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*, 11 May 2022,www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/04/07/social-media-use-in-2021.

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IRCs, or Internet relay conversations, became widely utilized in the 1990s after being introduced in 1988. Six Degrees, the first well-known social media platform, was established in 1997. Users had the option to add their profiles and add friends. The first blogging platforms rose to prominence in 1999, sparking a social media phenomenon that endures today. Blogging's inception led to the meteoric rise in popularity of social media. In the early 2000s, websites like MySpace and LinkedIn became well-known, and Photobucket and Flickr made it easier to share photos online. Since the launch of YouTube in 2005, individuals have been able to share content and interact across huge distances in a completely new way. By 2006, individuals from all across the world could access Facebook and Twitter. These websites continue to be among the most widely used social networks online. As a result, new websites like Tumblr, Spotify, Foursquare, and Pinterest started to appear to cover particular social networking voids. Social networking websites today come in a huge variety, and many of them can be linked together to enable cross-posting. As a result, users can communicate with the greatest number of people without compromising the intimacy of one-on-one interactions. The future of social networking is something we can only speculate about, but it seems certain that it will continue to exist in some capacity for as long as people are alive.

Peer Pressure and Social Media

Adolescent peer pressure is a problem regardless of social media use; however, when combined, social media and peer pressure can be particularly harmful. With 59% of teens reporting that they have been victims of online bullying[9], also referred to as cyberbullying, the potential for teens to feel pressure from social media is clear.

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[9] Anderson, Monica. "A Majority of Teens Have Experienced Some Form of Cyberbullying." *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*, 14 Aug. 2020, www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/09/27/a-majority-of-teens-have-experienced-some-form-of-cyberbullying.

Forms of peer pressure

Peer pressure comes in many different forms, and it can affect people of all ages. Since peer pressure entails conveying a message of some kind, the manner in which it is sent can vary. People may experience peer pressure that is highly overt and obvious, at other times it may merely be a strong emotion, at times it may sound enjoyable, at other times it may sound frightening or even unlawful. First of all, some forms of peer pressure entail one person or a group requesting another person to engage in a particular action. Because there is strength in numbers, pressure is felt considerably more strongly in a group situation. Unspoken peer pressure is a form of peer pressure that involves an individual being exposed to specific actions, trends, or decisions of others. Teenagers can be pressured into harmful behaviors through these, including drug usage, posting online of private photos, and following trends without their consent.

Peer pressure can be achieved by texts leading to cyber-bullying and trends such as smoking or doing drugs at a young age because friends and peers are doing it and teenagers do not want to feel left out from the group.

The effects that peer pressure can cause

Studies have found that up to 75% of teens have felt pressure to drink alcohol and use drugs after seeing their friends post these activities online. Negative peer pressure is often related to influencing bullying behaviors, drinking alcohol, drug use and negative body image, all of which are harmful to a child's or young person's wellbeing. Such behaviors can decrease self-confidence, self-worth and distance people from family members and friends.

Lack of self-confidence

Just as some influences can be positive, some influences can be negative too. Peer pressure can take a normally self-confident child and make him/her someone who is

not sure about themselves and has low self-esteem. Low self-esteem and a lack of confidence in turn might impact a child's general well-being.

Low academic performance

For teenagers, it is important they be accepted by their peer group. This means that their peer group's approval gets placed above that of their parents and teachers. This in turn has a direct effect on their academics. Sometimes their academics are affected because despite being capable of performing well, they choose not to because in the eyes of their peers it makes them look 'uncool'. Sometimes their academics are affected because in an effort to fit in with their peer group, they place more emphasis on being social instead of their academic performance.

Adoption of dangerous habits

The more extreme forms of peer pressure propagate bad habits such as alcohol consumption, smoking, and drug abuse. Technically, teenagers know that these are not good habits to cultivate but they excuse it with the brash confidence of youth as well as with the need to feel accepted. At this point of time, long term consequences don't really occur to them.

Shame

Commonly, the student body is composed of students who come from various economic backgrounds. Sometimes these economic backgrounds are vastly disparate and for many children, this becomes a bone of contention. If they come from poor economic backgrounds or come from a family which might not give them money to spend extravagantly, children end up feeling bad or ashamed about themselves and their family, because in the eyes of their peers, they are somehow 'lesser' or 'weird' individuals.

Alienation

It is common for teenagers to think that nobody understands them and that the whole world is against them. However, in a few cases, the influence of peer pressure is such that it draws teenagers completely away from family and friends who mean well. They shut themselves off and fall into bad company.

Self harm and Suicidal intent

Sometimes the impact of peer pressure on teenagers is so bad that they can hardly stand to be in their own skin, are distanced from family and friends and become depressed and anxious. In such instances, teenagers could attempt self-harm or even dream of committing suicide, engage in suicidal thoughts and even ultimately engage in suicide.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

The UK

The UK has recently introduced new measures in the use of social media aiming to protect children and it has made a global impact on other countries as well. As a result, over 23 countries and many children agree on the placement of the regulations. Furthermore the age limit that a person can give their own consent for creating a social media profile comes to 13 years old.

The US

In part because of a movement toward comprehensive data-protection laws, companies targeting children could face greater requirements to protect their data mainly in the U.S. but also in other countries as well.

Ireland

The age limit at which children can give their own consent in order to form a social media profile is increased in Ireland, with a minimum age of 16 years old. The same is true for other European countries, such as the Netherlands.

France

On October 19, 2020, French president Emmanuel Macron promulgated a new law on the commercial use of images of children under 16 years old on online platforms. Anyone that would post an image of somebody else without their consent, including parents posting their kids can face up to a year in prison and a fine of 45.000€.

EU

EU laws are crucial and there are several measures that protect minors online such as eCommerse Directive, General Data Protection Regulation, the Directive of combating sexual abuse, exploitation of children and child pornography and the Audiovisual Services Directive.

The American Academy of Child

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry is a non-profit organisation established in 1953. It is trying to promote the significance of mentally healthy children and adolescents. This academy has uploaded a very informative article in order to help parents protect their children from peer pressure and deal with this problem.

CHILDRENet

CHILDRENet is a UK-based organisation that aims to make the Internet a safe place for kids and teenagers with their own cooperation. It was founded in 1995 and it has already made a positive impact considering the safety of the web.

Organisation For Social Media Safety

The organisation for social media safety is an organisation that was founded by a victim of the dangers of the internet in 2016. This organization's mission is to make the Internet safer without us having the fear of it influencing our lives in a bad way.

They protect us from many online dangers such as: Cyberbullying, Hate speech, Sexual Harassment, Human Trafficking, Propaganda and Depression/ Suicide.

Internet Matters

Internet Matters is an organisation that was launched in 2014 and it mainly supports parents. In this organisation, parents and professionals work together in order to keep children safe online. It provides a guide for parents especially for protecting kids that are 14+ with a full checklist of helpful advice.

Google

Google is an American multinational technology company that also owns YouTube which is an American online video sharing platform. Google search and Youtube are the two most visited platforms online. Google has also provided a campaign called "Be internet awesome" that teaches kids the fundamentals of digital citizenship and safety so they can be confident exploring the online world.

Meta

Meta is an American multinational technology conglomerate based in California. The company owns Facebook, Instagram, Whats App and other products and services.

TikTok

TikTok is a short-form video hosting platform owned by the Chinese company ByteDance and it is one of the most popular ones nowadays.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
February 2004	Facebook is founded.
February 2005	Youtube is founded.
9th October 2006	Google buys Youtube.

6th October 2010	Instagram is founded.
September 2016	Tiktok is founded.
2019	The Council of the European Union approves new copyright laws on the Internet.

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Many cybercriminals use their hacking skills to steal information and damage computer systems. To improve the protection of its Information Communications Technology resources, the United Nations encourages individuals and organizations to assist with its efforts by disclosing vulnerabilities in the UN publicly accessible information system. The United Nations Information Security Hall of Fame acknowledges these "white hat hackers" that have helped the Organization in improving the security of its systems, data, and ICT resources by reporting security issues.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

The subjectivity as well as the sensitivity of the specific issue allow the lack of significant previous efforts to solve this problem. Psychological problems that are particularly likely to arise from peer pressure through social media must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Publication of Annual Reports

The publication of an annual report, published by the collaboration of UNICEF and the UN Office of Information and Communications Technology (UNICT) that will set out and analyze the impact that social media has made over the year, including the number of users in different age groups, and the impact on them. This report will also include guidelines that have been set for the protection of young people on social media, and also instructions on how to use social media in a safe manner.

Creation of a Collaborative Fund

This Fund will be responsible for the financial aid of suicide prevention hotlines, mental health resources and it will provide educational institutions and governments with resources, infographics, and educational presentations for the safe use of the internet, the proper use of social media and cyber security.

Promotion of Educational Legal Frameworks

Urging governments to create, restore and/or promote legal frameworks that will protect, inform and educate children and teenagers for the safe and protected use of the internet and social media is extremely important. Also, equally important is providing educational institutions with resources that will guide them toward informing and helping pupils that have been subject to cyberbullying or peer pressure through social media.

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