

Does Social Media Deepen Social Divisions or Promote Inclusivity?

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Promoting Inclusivity or divisions

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Does social media deepen social divisions or promote inclusivity?

Essay:

"Social media can be a powerful tool for unity and inclusivity, but if left unchecked, it can deepen divisions, amplifying our differences rather than bridging them."

Social media has revolutionized the way people communicate and share information globally. Similarly, it provides a platform for individuals to connect, collaborate, and express their opinions freely. Despite its positive aspects, social media has been criticized for promoting unrealistic beauty standards; therefore, social media platforms have the potential to promote inclusivity, they often deepen social divisions due to their design, algorithms, and the way information is shared and consumed. Furthermore, inclusivity such as it facilitates

global communities, support for social movement and bridging geographical and social gaps. On the other hand, it has also deepen social divisions like echo chambers and filter bubbles, misinformation and polarization, and cyberbullying and online harassment. However, these issues can be solved by taking various practical measures. Therefore, the stakeholders should enforce algorithmic reforms, content moderation and policy changes, and promoting digital literacy. Moreover, keeping in view the both positive and negative aspects of social media; therefore it is vital to take some regulatory measures - such as algorithmic reforms, policy change, and promoting digital literacy in order to make the platform safe, productive, and interactive.

Amidst the busy schedules in life, social media has revolutionized the medium of communication as a source of

connectivity. Similarly, people are flooded with social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp. Moreover, it provides platforms for marginalized communities to express their voices and share experiences. Presently, this platform highlighting the issues of underdeveloped nations. Most importantly, international movements - such as 'BlackLivesMatter' and 'MeToo Movements'. Hence, it is analysed that social media has played an important role in facilitating global communities.

Moreover, it has become a powerful tool for supporting and driving social movements around the world. Similarly, it provides a platform for organizing, mobilizing, and rising awareness about critical social issues. According to a 'Pew Research Center' report, 64% of social media users in the US.

believe that social media has helped to raise awareness about social justice issues. The 'Arab Spring (2010-11)' showed how social media platforms like Facebook were used to rally people for democratic change. In short, social media provides a platform for global movements.

Coming forward, desks like Reddit, and LinkedIn enable people to create communities based on shared interests or passions. Similarly, it creates a space where individuals can connect with others who have similar interests, learn from one another, and support each other. 2023 study by "We Are Social" found that 4.9 billion people were active internet users, and 79% of them were on social media platforms, showing its wide reach and potential for inclusivity.

In addition to this, through social media individuals from diverse social, racial, and cultural backgrounds

can interact and learn from each other. Similarly, it also serves as a platform that connects different generations. Hence, it bridges geographical and social gaps. For instance, YouTube and TikTok provide spaces for social cohesion.

In the preceding section, the arguments for social media promoting inclusivity were discussed. Now in the subsequent paragraphs the arguments for social media deepening social divisions will be explained.

Among many other positive aspects of social media, it also plays a vital role in deepening social divisions. Similarly, echo chambers and filter bubbles can harm a person's reputation and render a person from hero to zero. As a result, users are less likely to encounter content that ^{dit}contrasts their views,

creating a 'bubble' of information that reinforces their existing opinions.

A 2019 study by 'Pew Research Center' found that 64% of U.S. adults said they believed social media platforms often reinforce political polarization. e.g., Facebook's algorithm

Nonetheless, defamation and trolling on social media can be the cause of mental suffering. Because of sharing a post that many do not find interesting, unleashing constant criticism, biased comments, and violation of privacy collectively put a person into the negative light within the society. Similarly, the spread of 'fake news', misinformation, and hate speech on social media platforms exacerbate divisions and promote conflicts. A 2018 study by 'New York University' found that false information spreads 70% faster than factual information on

on social media, particularly in political contexts. e.g., 2020 U.S. Presidential Election is the best example of misinformation and polarization.

However, the influence of social media on identity politics can also have the opposite effect, fragmenting political discourse and creating divisions between the groups. A 2020 Survey by Harvard University found that 35% of Americans said social media made them feel more politically divided than before. In short, social media played a significant role in identity politics.

In the same fashion, cyberbullying and online harassment use digital platforms, such as social media, messaging apps, or websites, to intentionally harm others. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying has no physical boundaries. The primary intent of

Cyberbullying is to damage the victims' reputation, self-esteem, or emotional well-being. A 2019 report by 'Anti-Defamation League' showed that 40% of US-adults have experienced online harassment, with 30% of teens reporting cyberbullying. Hence negative role of social media is one of the major factor behind deepening social divisions.

Here it has become important to discuss the impacts of social media on different demographics. Hence, the following section throws light on the negative impacts of social media.

To start with, the biggest impact of social media on youth and young people. Moreover, the world has witnessed emotional and sexual harassment through social media platforms.

As a result of this, many foreign governments have banned usage of smart phones under 12 age. As 2022 'Pew Research' study found that 95% of teens have access to smartphones, and 45% of them say they are online "almost constantly." Hence digital platform is the biggest impact on young generations.

Apart from online harassment, rise of political polarization also played a crucial role in destabilizing political system of all countries which brings political instability, interference in electoral process, and weak governance. Therefore, political polarization is) The 72% of U.S. adults said they believed social media had a significant impact on political polarization (Pew, 2020.)

Therefore, political polarization is one of the bad impact of social media.

After discussing the impacts, the following section is designed to through light on the efforts to mitigate divisions and promote inclusivity.

To start with, controlling social media high need of time to counter the curse. The fact is not invisible to the world that social media has become a source of propaganda by spreading fake news. Sadly, the media is being utilized to spread misinformation, polarization, and cyberbullying.

In short, social media can be made the best digital platform if the algorithmic reforms are introduced.

Moreover, there is (need) need to modernize privacy policies, user contents safety, and measures against cybersecurity.

Furthermore, controlling social media, content moderation, and policy changes are required to counter the threat. For instance, Twitter introduced new guidelines to combat 'hate speech', with some success in reducing abuse, though challenges remain. Hence, introducing content moderation and policy changes is crucial and need of the hour.

Additionally, promoting digital literacy is high need of time to counter the curse.

Therefore, introducing and advocating media ethics, liberty, and user privacy rights should be protected through promoting through digital literacy and awareness to the masses.

Basically, to protect and secure people from social evils, it is the responsibility of the stakehold

and app's owners. In short, harms of social media can be countered through digital literacy.

In summation, while social media has the potential to foster inclusivity by connecting people and supporting social movements; unfortunately, its current use often exacerbates social divisions due to its design, algorithmic biases, and the spread of misinformation.

To fully realize the positive potential of social media, significant efforts are needed to reform platforms, educate users, and promote a culture of inclusivity and critical engagement. As social media continues to evolve, it is crucial to balance its potential for connection and unity with the dangers of fragmentation and divisiveness.