Social Media – Impact on human behavior and society

Description

Difference between Social media & Social networks:

Many students are confusing Social media with Social networks because these terms are used interchangeably. And hence a few students are talking about social networks when the GD topic is about social media. There is a difference between both, though they are not mutually exclusive.

The social network connects people. For example, a trekking group on Facebook brings people of the same interest together. It'll be a network of people who in turn build mutual connections.

Whereas social media is used to share content. For example, YouTube can be considered as social media, because through YouTube, people share their views, information and ideas. Blogs are also considered as social media because it generates the content and shares it with followers. Social media beats Traditional media (TV, newspapers etc.) in engaging with followers.

Social media and social networks are not mutually exclusive. The social network facilitates the development of social media and vice versa. For example – Facebook, a social network also acts as a social media, because people share content on Facebook with their network. And a blog, which shares content can also able to build a network of people that are interested in their content. For example – A blog for new moms share content and can create a network of new moms as well.

The positive impact of Social media on human behaviour:

- Social media gave access to varied opinions and thoughts of people of different cultures and different regions. This has the power to make people broad-minded, challenge stereotyped views on particular communities and develop mutual respect among people of different backgrounds.
- People are expanding knowledge through social media.
- Most of the social media content creators encourage people to pursue the career they love, to take care of themselves, and learn new skills

etc. This creates a positive impact on human behaviour.

The positive impact of Social media on society:

- Traditional media (Print media, Television etc.) was the only medium until recently to reach people. Not everyone could share their views and information with people. Most of the traditional media channels are in the hands of big businesses. Social media enriched democracy and equality by enabling everyone to send out their content to a larger audience.
- Social media gives voice to minorities and vulnerable sections. For example, more and more women are voicing their opinions through social media, who were otherwise not encouraged to speak up due to cultural norms. Another example is that differently-abled people are sharing content to encourage people who have the same problems, and are voicing their thoughts to government and society.
- People are collaborating for good. Tweeting by hashtags, they are pushing governments to do their duties. Social media has a stake in improving society. For example, social media played a great role in Arab Spring.

The negative impact of Social media on human behaviour:

- Many people became celebrities through social media. This is encouraging many others to become celebrities. In the process, some are turning into self-obsessed and narcissistic.
- Social media is also encouraging violent behaviour for many. Before the internet era, people could not harass others easily. But now, anyone can easily harass and threaten others by hiding their identity. Most of the social media content creators face cyberbullying, threats and trolling. People, who are used to harass others online tend to develop more violent behaviour.
- Some people, especially teens suffer from anxiety and depression when they face cyber-bullying. Lack of awareness on netiquette is causing some people to cause cyberbullying.
- Some youngsters are suffering from low self-esteem levels because of watching many people showing off their talents through social media.
- Social media has the power to instil anger in people in particular people and communities. This anger is carrying forward to real life.
- There is plenty of content on social media on makeup and beauty products. There are so many makeup channels on YouTube. With high-quality videos and images, people are promoting products to improve their outward appearance. This is causing people, especially girls to give too much importance to beauty.
- Fake news is causing panic among people. This is in turn leading to hatred and clashes between communities.

The negative impact of Social media on society:

- It is also promoting gossiping and causing damage to the reputation of people.
- Social media is the major reason for making content viral. However, not all viral content is trustworthy. There are many incidents of fake news going viral. Recently a few people are lynched by a mob in separate incidents. This happened because they believed fake news that said child traffickers are roaming in their area. Innocent people were murdered as the

villagers thought they came to their area to kidnap children.
- Powerful people are using social media as a tool to impose their ideologies on people. For example, now political parties are creating lots of content on social media to influence and manipulate the views of people on governments and political parties.
- Trolling is one of the major negative consequences of social media. This politically motivated tolling is also very common.
- Militant groups are also using social media to influence and manipulate youngsters to join their groups.
- Big businesses have the advantage of dominating others in their field. They spend a huge amount to create high-quality content in their favour. They can also drive more engagement through advertisements.
- Materialism is being encouraged a lot through social media.
- Social media is being used as a tool for data mining.

Conclusion:

Though there are some negative effects, social media can be considered a boon to society. However serious steps should be taken to mitigate the negative influences of social media like fake news, trolling etc. Cyber protection cells and Artificial intelligence together can solve these problems to a great extent. Along with that, ethical values should be imbibed in schools and colleges. Awareness programs help people to know about the good and bad sides of social media.

Your Turn…

What is your opinion on this topic? What are your thoughts on social media? Join the Group Discussion by adding your views in the comment section below. Subscribe to our blog to read answers to trending GD topics.