***“Social Media does more harm than good”***

**Introduction**

Good afternoon madame adjudicator. My name is Sophie O’Riordan and I am here today to strongly propose the motion “Social Media does more harm than good”. I will be explaining to you all the negative impact of social media on our lives. I know what you’re all thinking, that social media is practically harmless. All you’re doing on it is keeping in contact with friends, or showing off what a wonderful life you’re leading. However, there’s a lot more to social media than that, and I am about to expose the consequences of using social media and how it does more harm than good.

Before I prove my point that social media is in fact more harmful than you may be aware of, I would just like to ask a question to you.

*How many of you have a Facebook account? A snapchat account? A twitter account? An instagram account or tumblr account?*

1. Real friends or just acquaintances?

Now I assume you all have friends or followers on these accounts, ranging from 50 to over 400 friends. And sure it feels great to say, ‘I have 310 friends on facebook, and you only have 100’. But how many of these people are actually your friends?

The idea of ‘friends‘ was once very simple. If you knew someone, hung out with them regularly, and liked their company then they were a friend. On social media, however whether you talk to them, or have any interest in them whatsoever, they’re still listed as friends.

This has a significant negative impact on people, especially teenagers today. It becomes a ruthless competition. Who can get the most friends, or the most likes. I’ve heard of apps with the sole purpose of creating an illusion of having hundreds of friends in your social media accounts. People begin to value numbers on a screen, rather than real friendships. It generates jealousy too, and can break up relationships. In a world of Trump and fake news, maybe the real crisis is fake friends. Furthermore, social media has the power to cut us off from the world around us, we become closed minded and we live in our own little bubble. Although these social media platforms make communication easier with those far away, they can have the opposite impact on our relationships with the people we live with. For example last Saturday I was at my cousin’s communion, and half of the people there were on their phones half the time. Sound familiar? The valuable time spent with family is wasted on social media.

**2) Productivity Killer**

We use Social Media, mainly for pleasure and leisure and to fill spare time.

*How many do you use social media at least once a day*?

A study by the University of Maryland revealed that 18% of users cannot go more than a "few hours" without checking Facebook and nearly two-thirds feel compelled to check at least once a day.

Social Media is quite obviously harmful as it can prevent students from studying or workers from doing their jobs. When you’re in your room studying for Junior Cert, Leaving Cert, or University, and hear your phone go ‘bing’ you can’t help yourself but check what it is. You’re curious, that’s human nature. More than half the time you feel the need to reply to the message, and before you know it the five minutes you meant to spend ends up being your whole afternoon.

If you have a whole afternoon to spare then great, no harm done. But what about those working or studying? The distraction is harmful to productivity, and isn’t going to do society any good in the long term. These are precious hours that you could have spent playing sports, building up real relationships or spent time with your family.

**3) Professional Pitfall**

For some individuals, personal use of social media has led to very negative professional outcomes. Approximately one in five managers and supervisors have indicated that they have fired employees because of something posted on a social media. An even greater percentage have dismissed workers for using the internet for "non-work-related activity" on company time. Social media can get you fired or stop you from being hired.

**4) Grammar**

Social media doesn’t even have the benefit of improving communication, as the grammar and spellings in our messages are completely wrong. Children today don't spell as well as previous generations and, on the whole, the social media is making writing worse. Some 40% of teachers surveyed feel that technology has degraded students' spelling and grammar. Along with many other things social media is responsible for the deterioration of the English language.

**5) Privacy**

The risks associated with using social media are well-documented. Another prominent point I would like to make is that one of the biggest concerns has to do with privacy and safety. This is perhaps the biggest impact for the worse that social media is having on society. The very concept of privacy seems to be eroding, and at a fantastic pace. We have immersed ourselves in an extension of society in which privacy is not treated with the high regard it is offline.

It isn’t just social media sites that are to blame for this, but Facebook has led the way in showing how powerful a tool it can be in making people to happily give up personal information. Most of us list our full name and birthday, reveal who our family members are, our hobbies and interests, and even what we like and dislike. And we’re doing so willingly.

Most people here would not walk around with a sign attached to their front revealing everything about them to the world. Yet we do just that on social networking sites. A dream for advertisers and marketers, but a nightmare for the rest of us.

Nearly four in five ex-burglars have indicated that thieves watch social media to look for potential opportunities. This is because 57% of people post something about their travel plans, like a photo from the airport or "checking in" at the hotel, effectively telling would-be burglars when they should break in.

Many terrorist organizations recruit members and raise funding through social media.

**7) Cyberbullying**

To finalise my point I would just like to remind you how social media is mainly to blame for cyberbullying. This sentence alone should be enough to prove to you that social media does more harm than good.

Cyber-bullying is an enormous problem. According to a survey, 70% of students reported having witnessed "frequent bullying online" and over 40% have been victims of online bullying themselves. Cyberbullying victims are 5 times more likely to consider committing suicide. Can it be any more clear than social media is harmful and has ruined already too many lives.

**Conclusion**

Do you still think social networking sites are, at worst nothing to worry about, at best wholly positive influences on humanity? If so then I’ll be amazed.

Will any of this make me delete my Facebook and Instagram accounts? No, but it does make me a little more cautious about how and how often I use them.

I invite you to consider what I have said and decide for yourself whether social media does more harm than good.

Thank you for your attention, and time.

*By: Sophie O’Riordan 4D*