Social media companies, not users, are at fault for social media addiction

Social media has had a common presence in our lives, and while it can be fun to occasionally scroll through apps like Instagram or Twitter, it can also be dangerous. According to addictioncenter.com, five to ten percent of Americans fit the criteria for social media addiction. With social media becoming so popular, it’s no surprise that people are becoming addicted to it. However, it’s not our fault that we’ve become addicted.

According to hult.edu, social media developers design their apps using habit-forming methods to keep users coming back for more. One of these methods is called the Attitude, Trigger, Action, Reward and Investment (ATARI) model. Developers examine all these categories to integrate their apps into the daily lives of users.

“Kids are just so [involved] with their phones, and old people that I’ve talked to will just talk and talk and talk,” junior Hailey Robinson said. “They’re not distracted by anything. They’re focused on you. Kids always seem so jittery when you talk to them. They’re glancing around. Their hands are moving out towards their phone.”

Not only is social media designed to keep us hooked, notifications also release dopamine in our brains the same way gambling and drugs do, according to addictioncenter.com.

“It triggers that same center of the brain that would trigger if you do something you enjoy naturally, or take a drug, or something like that that gives you that pleasure,” social studies instructor Otis Seals said. “A lot of times you find under social media addiction people are doing things or activities solely so they can post it online. That’s where it really becomes an addiction.”

Our addiction to social media can’t only be our fault because it was designed to be addicting, and as a young generation, we can’t be held accountable for the actions of corporations.

Although it’s not completely our fault that we’re addicted, there are still several steps we can take to prevent ourselves from becoming too hooked. According to addictioncenter.com, one of the best ways we can prevent ourselves from becoming addicted is to take a break from social media and turn off the notifications for a while.

While we can play a part in preventing addiction, social media developers must also step up. They are intentionally designing their products to keep us coming back for more.

“Everybody’s connected to [social media],” Robinson said. “I think kids don’t know how to talk to other people. I don’t think they know how to interact with other kids their age because they’re so hooked on [social media] and dependent on it, and it sucks. Social media sucks.”

Editorial

The Lance is a school-sponsored publication of Westside High School, Westside Community Schools, 8701 Pacific St., Omaha, NE 68144. The Lance office is located in room 251. Phone: (402) 343-2650. The Lance is an in-house publication.

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The Lance editorial staff also reserves the right to nullify contracts at any time without prior notification. The Lance also refuses ads that promote activities illegal to a majority of the student readership.

Reader response is welcomed in the form of letters to the editor. Letters should be less than 300 words, signed by the author and sent to room 251. Names may be withheld upon special request. Lance editors will decide whether to honor such requests.

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The Lance is a member of the Nebraska High School Press Association, the Columbia Scholastic Press Association, the National Scholastic Press Association and the Quill & Scroll Society.

The Lance staff recognizes that the administration of Westside Community Schools controls the curriculum and, thus, sets the parameters of the production process of school publications. The Lance staff also recognizes its own responsibilities to inform, enlighten and entertain its readers in a way that reflects high standards of journalism, morals and ethics.

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Social media is a prominent force in the lives of high school students. For many, it’s a daily source of news, communication and entertainment. Social media affects the lives and culture of high schoolers across the country. For this issue, The Lance decided to focus its in-depth on the ways social media has both positively and negatively affected our generation. Below are some infographics about social media at Westside High School. These statistics were found through a non-scientific survey conducted by The Lance with 402 responses.
NUDE CULTURE
The dangers of sending intimate photos

Sending nudes, pictures of genitals or a naked body, has become increasingly popular with the rise of social media for teens across the country. Although, here at Westside, many students said they feel as though nudes have become common practice among high schoolers.

Healthy living instructor Brody Schmaderer said Westside students have been caught sending nudes before.

“In the past year, I think we had one or two cases that we caught, but we know research shows there’s much more than that happening,” Schmaderer said. “So, it happens on a regular basis for sure, more than what we catch students doing.”

While sending nudes is not an uncommon occurrence at Westside, a part of this is due to the fact that not every juvenile understands the consequences of sending nudes.

According to the United States Department of Justice’s website, “images of child pornography are not protected under First Amendment rights and are illegal contraband under federal law.” Child pornography is defined as “any visual depiction of sexually explicit contact involving a minor” in Section 2256 of Title 18, in the United States Code.

There are severe consequences for possessing and distributing child pornography. A first-time offender convicted of producing child pornography faces a minimum of fifteen years in prison, whereas someone transporting child pornography faces a minimum of five years in prison. According to the Department of Justice’s website, an offender can be prosecuted under state and federal law.

According to an article on The Nebraska Lawyer’s website, it is unlawful to create or distribute sexual content as a minor under the Child Pornography Prevention Act. In the same article, it says that “minors who take and distribute pictures of themselves are not guilty of the creation and distribution of child pornography,” but if one is to distribute someone else’s photos, they can be charged with a Class III felony.

Joy Suder, a juvenile attorney, has experience working with convicted minors. Suder said the consequences of a Class III felony are severe.

“A Class III felony can be up to four years in prison and then two years of post-release supervision, which means you’re basically on parole, or have a $25,000 fine or both,” Suder said.

Suder said sending nudes is never a smart decision, because it can become dangerous for the person who is either sending or receiving these photos.

“It’s so easy to just click and send things here and there ... Theoretically you won’t see [the photo] again.”
-Senior Ashleigh Madsen
“It’s a horrible idea,” Suder said. “It’s just as dangerous and stupid as smoking crack. One, it’s illegal. Two, it’s not safe for the person whose picture is being sent … And, normally, none of those things are being done with good intentions.”

Westside students said they have varying opinions on whether or not teenagers should send nudes. Sophomore Nyamuon Puol said students should have more consideration for their bodies.

“I mean, it’s just not good,” Puol said. “You should respect your body, and you shouldn’t be sending pictures of yourself to other people.”

According to senior Ethan Shea, many people do not think sending nudes is a big deal.

“It was a bigger thing in middle school, probably because they thought it was cool,” Shea said. “Now, nobody really cares.”

The social media platform Snapchat offers a quick way to send photos back and forth with another person. Additionally, Snapchat photos should disappear after ten seconds. According to senior Ashleigh Madsen, the way that Snapchats disappear after they are opened makes students feel more confident that their pictures won’t be shared.

“I think it makes it way easier to [send nudes] because people aren’t thinking as much,” Madsen said. “It’s so easy to just click and send things here and there. With social media, you can just send it [and] it’s gone … Theoretically, you won’t see it again, but you can take screenshots and people forget that.”

Sophomore Courtney Montez said she shares a similar view as Madsen.

“I know a couple of friends that have done it and have had their photos all over the Internet,” Montez said. “She didn’t even know what was going on, but I know on the inside she really hurt and felt alone.”

Robinson thinks a majority of schoolers send nudes. Everybody sends nudes,” Robinson said. “It’s sending free pictures of your body to people you don’t even know.”

Schmaderer who send nudes the social impact.

“I think that body is yours,” special to you. We kind of takes that away thing. It’s meant for you. That’s lost when it’s sent out via video or text message or whatever it may be.”

84.8% OF RESPONDENTS BELIEVE THAT SNAPCHAT IS THE MOST POPULAR PLATFORM FOR SENDING AND RECEIVING NUDES.

THESE STATISTICS ARE BASED ON A NON-SCIENTIFIC SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE LANCE WITH 291 RESPONSES.
Mike Lucas, superintendent of Westside Community Schools, has more than 1,000 followers on Twitter. His page has almost 17,000 tweets, spanning from motivational messages to videos from every sport imaginable. Since Lucas arrived at Westside, he said he has aimed to use social media to help the district.

“I like to use social media to help tell the story of students and staff,” Lucas said. “I’ve had people I don’t even know stop and tell me that they feel like they know more about what’s going on in the district. They like feeling the enthusiasm, and they just feel more connected.”

A new way Lucas is using social media is his weekly video series, Mondays with Mike. According to Lucas, this series was all the idea of district Director of Communications Brandi Paul. According to Paul, the idea for Mondays with Mike came to her after hearing Lucas speak.

“I heard a presentation from Dr. Lucas last year, and it was clear he is an exceptional, likeable and relatable public speaker,” Paul said. “Dr. Lucas has many strengths, but he has a rare gift for public speaking, and I wanted our community to see that passion, humor and ability firsthand.”

Mondays with Mike is posted on the Westside Community Schools Twitter and discusses a variety of district news.

“Mondays with Mike allows our students, families, teachers and community to hear straight from him about important issues, like our budget and ACT scores, and also see and sense his personality and what has stood out to him week-to-week,” Paul said.

According to Lucas, his use of social media has generally been received positively by the community. It has, however, not always been received positively by his fellow administrators.

“I’ve received criticism throughout my career for being so active on social media,” Lucas said. “It’s normally from other school administrators. They’re like, ‘Does Lucas ever work, or is he just always facebooking, tweeting and … just sitting around eating jelly beans?’ I like to think I do a little work too.”

Not only does Lucas do “a little work” outside of social media, he also said he sees social media as an integral part of his job.

“This is my seventeenth year as a superintendent, and it’s changed a lot since I became a [superintendent] back in 2003,” Lucas said. “You have a lot of facility planning [and] strategic planning, but communications and public relations has really grown exponentially in the last 20 years, and social media allows superintendents to be more visible.”

Not only has social media changed the way superintendents do their jobs, Lucas also said it can make the job better for superintendents.

“I think [social media has] been great for superintendents, because a lot of times we get bogged down in just really serious things … but social media allows superintendents to show a little personality,” Lucas said. “Social media allows me to have a little bit more of a connection with students than what it was like to be a superintendent before social media came through.”

Lucas said he values social media for not just district usage but also supports teenagers using it. However, he warned teens to be careful with their social media usage. He, however, warned teens to be careful with their social media usage.

“The one thing I worry about the most [in social media] are the comparisons,” Lucas said. “I worry about our teenagers scrolling through social media at night and their perception is, ‘Oh my gosh, everybody else is doing so well.’ The reality is, all of us, everybody in the world, feels lonely, feels depressed, feels left out [or] is stressed out at different times, but we don’t typically post all that. We only post things that make us look good.”

Lucas said he is also guilty of not showing everything on social media, but that is also because not everything is meant to be shown in that way. According to Lucas, the most important thing is to remember value outside of social media.

“Don’t let comparisons, likes [or] retweets dictate your happiness,” Lucas said. “Let your own heart [and] your own personal goals dictate your happiness.”
What is a Sinsta?

According to Urban Dictionary, a sinsta is a secret Instagram account where people post scandalous pictures they wouldn’t put on their normal Instagram. Sinsta posts can range from personal secrets to lighthearted inside jokes. This type of account is kept private, so follower and like counts tend to be lower than the average profile. These accounts are usually not meant to be taken too seriously and are a way for teens to share their personal lives with friends on a typically small scale. Some people also refer to these accounts as Finstas, or fake Instagrams. The Lance wanted to explore this popular internet phenomenon.

What type(s) of content do you post on your Sinsta?

- 70.5% complaints/raants
- 66.3% general feelings
- 56.8% embarrassing photos
- 27.4% memes
- 21.1% gossip
- 12.6% explicit content

How often do you post on a Sinsta?

- 19.1% daily
- 41.5% weekly
- 24.5% monthly
- 14.9% never

48.9% of Instagram users have a Sinsta account.

4.76 people

250

Who do you allow to follow your Sinsta?

- 43.1% closest friends
- 26.5% group of friends
- 17.6% acquaintances
- 12.8% other

50% of respondents view Sinstas as positive & harmless.

23% of respondents view Sinstas as negative.

2.7% of respondents are indifferent.

These statistics are based on a non-scientific survey conducted by The Lance with 175 responses.