



## Media Multiphrenia, Social Media, Life and Living: The Double Life Of Social Media And Its Effects On Personality



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The Internet, particularly social media offers greater connectivity throughout the Globe. We now have computers at home, at work and in school, colleges and university. In addition to the desktop and laptops, there are the tablets, cell phones and other electronic gadgets that preoccupy us lured by the blue light glow. Indeed, we are now more linked and connected and ostensibly so, more bound by the reality and virtual reality of our World. As a result, we build a following on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Myspace, WhatsApp and TikTok, and obtain followers, friends, relatives, colleagues and admirers. Subsequently, we create and, in some instances, re-create ourselves in order to endear others to us. With time, our online personae and

personality can be, and in several instances are but different bodies and personalities.



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Virtual reality is highly prevalent in the entertainment industry, especially in movies and videos, education, sports and business. The virtual life on social media has greatly affected and changed our lives including our perception of people, homes, jobs, careers, finances, leisure and entertainment. Therefore, at this point in life, there is an urgent need to find a clear balance in our lives, including learning to find a suitable balance in order to fix our lives and how we interact with ourselves, others and the World. Obviously, the Internet and social media have greatly penetrated our lives. Indeed, we are saturated to the point of multi-media phrenic.

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Media multiphonic is a fragmentation of the self that depicts a person that is both obsessed by the media and at the same time pulled in so many other directions. The concept of multiphrenia originated in Kenneth Gergen's 1991 *The Saturated Self* (Gergen, 2001 [1991]). Gergen proposes that the emerging technological developments expose the individual to multiple opinions, values, and ways of life. As a result, the person is drawn into an increasing array of relationships, projects, and commitments. This socially saturated condition immerses the person into a World of social acceptability while they remain fragmented and decentred in

values, ideas, opinions, and motives. Media multiphrenia is a syndrome that generally refers to almost splitting the individual into a multiplicity of self-investments in which they have the self (individual within social) and the media (social within individual and others).

The media frenzy appears to almost tear us apart. On the one hand, the ordinary person wants to fix their basic needs, food, clothing, shelter, family, children, car, house and home. On the other hand, there is the media frenzy that is pulling us, a bit haphazardly of course, in all directions because we want to be 'on' social media. This is because we want to be seen and

hence our presence felt by others. Thus, we take photographs while dressed in our very best attire, driving the latest car, taking a ride on the express train, relaxing on holiday at the beach, and other exciting photos. In other words, the media is where we post our updates including who we are, our greatest achievements, latest accomplishments, and prettiest pictures and we tell all of our best news. But, what about our fears, panic, confusion, frustrations, and anxieties? Therefore, in essence, our presence on social media is in many ways a virtual reality that is shiny and bright and splendid while inside, we might be frustrated, disappointed and at other times on the verge of collapse.

The virtual reality of social media has become a part and parcel of our lives. This includes the dating scene, tales of fame, love, loss, and sometimes heartbreak. But what is often overlooked by many of us is how the surreal World of social media affects us including those who are dating, others in a relationship including marriages, family and many others intending to engage in both short-term and long-term partnerships. We need to be more real and in touch with our World.

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It has been established that high social media usage may result in increased cases of poor mental health in general including depression. It is therefore recommended that one takes constant breaks from social media platforms in order to improve well-being, avoid saturation, and loneliness and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. Time spent on using different platforms and online can be diverted to other hobbies such as prayer and meditation, taking a walk and exercising, linking with nature, reading the Bible or Qur'an, listening to a sermon, visiting a

family member or friend, gardening and feeding a pet. Such activities are also highly associated with different and positive psychological outcomes.

### **On the Verge of Collapse: The Straw that Broke the Camel's back ....**

It must be accepted that a lot of social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram and YouTube are powerful tools that have the potential to link and build both the individual and

family, communities and nations. Indeed, during the COVID-19 epidemic, social media networks were immensely useful in connecting individuals, relatives and families in great ways. As a result, many people in far-flung places isolated or locked out by the stringent measures were connected in a myriad of ways, thus greatly reducing would-have-been psychological torture and torment. Social media in turn connected relatives and friends, leveraged careers and unleashed a collective sense of reality, offered emotional support and gave a purpose for living.

## **Most Popular Social Media Platforms in USA and the Western World**

1. **YouTube**
2. **Facebook**
3. **Instagram**
4. **Pinterest**
5. **LinkedIn**
6. **Snapchat**
7. **Twitter**
8. **WhatsApp**
9. **TikTok**
10. **Reddit**



With time, social media can create a personality that is happy and contented with life. However, virtual life is only but a half-light of a person since it may render them lonely and isolated and thus they end up living and feeling utterly alone. This has an obvious impact on our social and psychological lives in that we are more digitized, tracked and tied up in media metrics. All this time, our real selves

are split between the reality of our lives and the virtual World, a virtual World of online avalanches that includes emails, online updates, profile pictures, status updates and uploads. This virtual life is so shiny and bright and prosperous. We all step in with the best foot and put in our smiles, prettiest pictures, and hugs and we inform people of our flourishing lives and relationships. However, we must accept

that life comprises of ups and downs, just the way we find some people filled with joy and love and happiness, while others are filled with anger, contempt and hatred. Therefore, our lives can turn around albeit negatively in the event of a sudden change in circumstances if we were to fully settle, and perhaps longer than necessary, in a comfortable zone in this alteration of social media networking sites.

Virtual life is so shiny and bright and prosperous. We display all smiles, prettiest pictures, and hugs and we inform people of our flourishing lives and great relationships. However, we must accept the reality of our lives so that social media does not take us completely away from the reality of our lives and circumstances.

People are inclined to post their precious moment online such as prettiest photos or vacations, tales of love and dating, and anniversaries but not so enthusiastically heartbreaks. This includes showing off, and at other times exaggerating how wonderful

their lives are, sometimes amidst highly difficult or exonerating circumstances. This is for the clear and deliberate benefit of impressing the World as well as people on social media. There is a fine line between branding yourself well by straightening up your life and the two-faced personality

in which one misrepresents self and their experiences. The two-faced personality occurs when the two aspects do not match up to who you really are and that's when it comes back to haunt the person since their World is not surreal.

## Most Popular Business Social Media Platforms

Most of the data on social media and other platforms is based on people stating that they make use of a particular platform. Certain platforms are more popular with business and marketing. They include the following:

1. Facebook
2. Instagram
3. LinkedIn
4. YouTube
5. Twitter
6. TikTok
7. Snapchat



Social media has immense benefits to our lives, both at a personal level and for many people including work and careers. Additionally, social media has its purpose and personality and virtual reality can and does distort our sense of self and sense of other people. In this article of the special

edition of *The Counseling Magazine*, it is important to highlight from a psychological perspective the danger of slipping too far into the virtual World to the extent that we lose a sense of real life, including the real self. This includes ourselves, our families and the community at large. Instead,

we need to refocus on our abilities and potential. In its place, we must accept that social media is a World created by people both consciously and unconsciously. Therefore, we must be aware that in the real World, life is in many ways different and has several challenges.

Social media has its obvious advantages and somewhat disadvantages. This is because it is a tool, and like any other tool, it can be used in good or bad ways. Though social media is, to a great extent how to be always-on, there is the virtual reality of must-be-perfect which has greatly changed our personality, as well as our relationships.

Social media is part of the growing younger generation who need to comprehend what it is, and how it can be different from the real World. Indeed, the fact that social media can create so many things, events, situations and all can make someone be deceived that what they encounter on social

media is all real. Such a misconception is both dangerous and deceptive and is an obvious shortcoming when it comes to social media and its orientation among young people. Instead, people must see the connection between what is 'real' and the 'happy' World, that is, we must be vigilant

and at the appropriate time, unplug and disconnect from the virtual to the real World. This implies the ability to connect with ourselves and others, and the reality of our lives.

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