

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS' AI ALGORITHMS ON HUMAN VALUES

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***Abstract:** TDriven by sophisticated artificial intelligence algorithms, social media channels have grown pervasive in the digital era and are changing not only the fabric of communication but also the fundamental core of human values. This paper explores the complex interaction between AI-driven social media systems and their significant influence on ethical frameworks, personal psychology, and societal norms. Through an analysis of the seductive power of technology, the phenomena of mimetic desire, and the hazy lines separating actual from idealized identities, I expose the subtle ways in which artificial intelligence algorithms control user involvement, create echo chambers, and propagate prejudices. The paper also covers the psychological foundations of social comparison and the attention economy, stressing the negative consequences on mental health and the declining real human connection. In response to these difficulties, the study suggests a forward-looking view stressing the need to include ethical issues and human-centered design ideas in artificial intelligence research. Practical solutions, including mindfulness practices and regulatory frameworks, are explored as means to safeguard human autonomy and promote a healthier digital ecosystem. My goal is to start a discussion on creating a symbiotic relationship between humans and technology such that social media enhances rather than degrades human values.*

***Keywords:** social media, AI algorithms, human values, mimetic desire, ethical AI, human-centered design*

1. Introduction

In our pervasive digital era, social media and the intricate algorithms that drive it have profoundly transformed the ways people connect and the norms that govern society. User experiences are meticulously curated by the engines of these platforms, controlled by powerful

artificial intelligence (AI). These engines influence behaviors and shape perceptions in subtle yet significant ways. This study examines the role of AI in social media, illuminating the myriad ways it affects human values by drawing from public testimonies, such as Tristan

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Harris's 2019 Senate evidence (Harris, 2019), and recent research, including Aizenberg and Hoven's (2020) findings. Our goal is to present a comprehensive review that paves the way for a more in-depth investigation into the ethical, psychological, and societal repercussions of this contemporary phenomenon.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how AI-driven platforms not only personalize and enhance user engagement but also raise ethical concerns surrounding autonomy, privacy, and the integrity of human interaction. While AI in social media can foster unparalleled connectivity and content relevance, it may also perpetuate biases, manipulate emotions, and undermine the fabric of genuine human connection. We delve into this dual-edged sword, grounding our investigation on a critical assessment of the algorithms that determine what we see, who we interact with, and ultimately how we interpret the world around us.

The main thesis asserts that although social media platforms, supported by sophisticated AI algorithms, offer significant benefits in terms of connectivity and content personalization, they also present profound challenges to human values. These challenges encompass ethical dilemmas, impacts on mental health, and societal consequences (Harris, 2019; Aizenberg & Hoven, 2020). The

framework of this study is designed to first dissect the methods by which AI algorithms influence interactions on social media platforms, then proceed to investigate the ethical implications of these algorithms, and finally, conclude with discussions on strategies for mitigating the effects of AI and potential future paths. Our methodology involves a critical review of existing literature, case studies, public testimonies, and theoretical analyses to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

2. Literature Review

Our inquiry draws from several notable scholarly discourses and public testimonies directly pertaining to our topic. The first aspect focuses on the ethical and social ramifications of AI in social media. This discussion ranges from the manipulative design strategies of social media platforms, as critiqued by Harris (2019), to the imperative of embedding human rights within AI frameworks posited by Aizenberg and Hoven (2020), and culminating in the advocacy for ethical AI usage by Rallabandi et al. (2023). In the realm of social media, the ethical and social implications of AI are profound. Tristan Harris's 2019 testimony to the US Senate sheds light on how platforms strategically embed psychological manipulations to captivate users, often at the expense of their well-being. Echoing these concerns, Aizenberg and Hoven (2020) advocate for integrating

human rights into AI's design fabric to safeguard ethical integrity. Furthermore, Rallabandi et al. (2023) emphasize the paramount importance of ethical AI usage in social media, advocating for frameworks that ensure AI respects moral standards and user autonomy.

In their investigation of gender bias and stereotyping in social media algorithms, Fosch-Villaronga et al. (2021) explore how these algorithms can unintentionally reinforce societal biases and stereotypes, particularly regarding gender. Their findings highlight the ways in which algorithmic decisions in content curation and user interaction might reinforce established gender roles and stereotypes, influencing user experiences and shaping social perceptions. This analysis underscores the critical need for social media platforms to adopt more inclusive and egalitarian algorithmic designs.

In the context of AI's role in content personalization and user engagement, Grandinetti (2021) provides insights into how platforms like Facebook and TikTok utilize sophisticated AI mechanisms to tailor user interactions and content consumption, significantly influencing how users engage with these platforms. Meanwhile, Wang (2023) delves into the dual impact of AI in social media marketing, highlighting the efficiencies it brings to content distribution and targeting, while also raising concerns about the potential for user manipulation where AI-driven

content recommendations could lead to unintended ethical implications.

Research on the psychological and mental health implications of social media sheds light on the intricate relationship between AI-integrated platforms and user well-being. Shah and Bilal (2022) provide a comprehensive investigation of how AI systems within social media can exacerbate mental health difficulties, outlining the detrimental effects of algorithm-driven material on users' psychological states. Additionally, Satpathy and Patnaik (2021) explore the broader influence of AI on social media interactions, emphasizing the profound impact these algorithms can have on human behavior and mental health, and the necessity for a nuanced understanding of the role technology plays in shaping psychological outcomes.

The dynamics of human connection have been drastically transformed by the incorporation of AI into communication platforms. Hohenstein et al. (2021) investigate how AI-driven communication tools are altering language use and interpersonal interactions, highlighting a transformative shift in human connections. Concurrently, concerns around prejudice and fairness within AI algorithms have garnered attention. Ntoutsis et al. (2020) contribute to this discourse by conducting an introductory survey that investigates biases inherent in data-driven AI systems, advocating

for mechanisms that ensure algorithmic decision-making is fair and transparent.

Furthermore, the concept of mimetic desire, as articulated by René Girard (1996) and further explored by Palaver (2013), takes on new dimensions in the age of social media. Jolly (2023) discusses how mimetic desire functions as a marketing tactic, often employed subconsciously, influencing consumer behavior. Bardus et al. (2020) examine the use of social media to increase the impact of health research, noting how mimetic desire can amplify health messages but also potentially spread misinformation.

3. The Seduction of Social Media

Social media channels have remarkably become digital agoras where the sharing of ideas and opinions happens at an unheard-of speed. This fast spread is not only the outcome of technology advancement but also a deliberately coordinated feature of social media that connects with the very core of the human mind. These platforms' natural appeal is in their capacity to transform the act of sharing and knowledge acquisition from a passive activity into a highly active and nearly competitive worldwide quest.

3.1 The Allure of Rapid Opinion Dissemination

Social media's ability to quickly spread ideas attracts people into a setting where information exchange is democratized. Anyone with an internet connection may instantly share their

opinions to a worldwide audience using sites including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. This immediacy has major effects on the spread and development of ideas, hence producing a dynamic terrain where knowledge moves at an unheard-of speed. This quick spreading meets the basic human demand for immediate fulfillment. Leveraging underlying psychological demands for validation and social recognition, the instantaneous feedback in the form of likes, comments, and shares acts as a strong incentive (Grandinetti, 201). Engagement on these platforms' competitive character adds even more their enticing attraction. Snapchat streaks, Instagram likes, and YouTube recommendations are intentional tools meant to take advantage of human inclinations toward rivalry and comparison, therefore motivating users to produce material likely to draw notice and generate interaction (Jolly, 2023).

Moreover, the algorithmic structure supporting social media sites magnifies this competitive dynamic. Content anticipated to produce high degrees of engagement is prioritized by algorithms, therefore establishing a feedback loop that benefits people who effectively attract general attention. Often at the price of depth and sincerity, this promotes actions best suited for visibility and involvement. This fast spread of opinions has significant effects on both the larger cultural and socioeconomic scene as well as personal

behavior.

3.2.

3.2 Hijacking Human Attention

Referring to the competitive environment where human attention is treated as a limited and valuable commodity, the idea of the “attention economy” has grown ever more pertinent in the digital era. Often at the expense of our cognitive resources and the quality of our social contacts, social media platforms have proven effective at grabbing and keeping user attention (Harris, 2019). These platforms use the reward system of the brain, whereby likes, comments, or shares set off dopamine release connected with pleasure and reward (Gindrat et al., 2015; Zhou et al., 2019). This starts a feedback loop that motivates consumers to act in ways leading to more fulfilling experiences. The expectation of these benefits is a strong incentive; the erratic nature of social media contacts increases their addictive effect. Constant participation has major cognitive consequences. Constant demand for attention and intermittent incentives cause fragmented attention, thereby impairing our capacity to focus on one activity and so deteriorating general cognitive performance (Firth et al., 2019). Moreover, the architecture of social media promotes multitasking, therefore draining cognitive resources and influencing our capacity to create deep, meaningful interactions (Turner & Lefevre, 2017; Keles et al., 2020).

3.3.

3.3 The Impact of Seductive

Technology on Engagement

Design components and algorithms especially created to enthrall users—that is, seductive technology—encouragement of continuous platform connection and engagement (Grandinetti, 2021). These technologies change our contact with the digital environment by using basic human psychological inclinations. Fundamentally, seductive technology is based on knowledge of human psychology—especially the processes of reward and reinforcement. Social media channels provide settings that activate the reward regions in the brain, so strengthening the need to keep engaged. Features like the “pull-to-refresh” function ensure users remain involved in an ongoing search for the next piece of interesting content since they appeal to human inclination to seek out fresh stimuli.

This interaction is improved even further by the algorithms that provide customized material for every user. Platforms offer a highly addictive environment because users are constantly exposed to information that speaks to their interests and prejudices by analyzing enormous volumes of data to forecast and present content matching with individual tastes. Although tempting technology presents significant difficulties to user well-being even when it allows greater degrees of communication and information accessibility. Anxiety, inadequacy, and social comparison (Martinez-Pecino

& Garcia-Gavilan, 2019; Twenge et al., 2018) might result from the nonce onslaught of alerts and pressure to keep an active online presence. Digital platforms' addictive nature can divert real-world interactions and activities, therefore reducing presence and awareness in daily life.

4. Mimetic Desire and Social Influence

4.1 The Amplification of Mimetic Desire

René Girard's (1996) idea of mimetic desire holds that our needs are reflected from people we surround rather being intrinsically our own. Exposing us to an infinite assortment of lifestyles, achievements, and personal milestones each presenting an idealized vision of life that seems both attractive and possible, social media platforms act as strong accelerators for mimetic desire. This surroundings magnifies mimetic desire because of constant exposure to the wants and achievements of others, therefore encouraging a cycle of comparison and imitation that molds both personal and group goals (Palaver, 2013; Jolly, 2023). The algorithms provide us materials reflecting the aspirations and achievements of others, therefore fostering a feedback loop whereby the more we interact with such material, the more we are shown and our own mimetic needs are reinforced.

Historically, the models for our needs were rather scarce and found in our close surroundings. Social media today

presents millions of such models, each impacting our mental and emotional well-being. Constant exposure to idealized life could cause emotions of inadequacy, jealousy, and discontent with our own life (Martinez-Pecino & Garcia-Gavilan, 2019). Constant comparison to others could lower self-esteem and aggravate mental health problems including anxiety and sadness (Twenge et al., 2018).

4.2 Cultural and Psychological Ramifications

Social media's effect on human desire has great psychological and societal consequences. As so many people copy similar patterns of success and happiness, the amplification of mimetic desire helps to homogenize desires. This sometimes results in the valorization of some lifestyles over others and a reduction of cultural variety (Wang, 2023; Fosch-Villaronga et al., 2021). Psychologically, constant comparison to idealized versions of others can skew self-perception and cause a mismatch between one's own needs and those embraced from social media celebrities and colleagues. This can lead to a circle of discontent whereby the fulfillment of mimetic aspirations falls short, hence driving the search of fresh desires in an endless loop of imitation and comparison (Bardus et al., 2020). Moreover, the way social media sites are designed sometimes promotes multitasking, which might drain our cognitive capacity even more. Changing

between several kinds of material and activities forces the brain to constantly reposition itself, which causes cognitive tiredness and lowers the quality of our job and social contacts.

According to the hedonic treadmill idea, people often return to a steady level of happiness in spite of significant either positive or negative occurrences. Social media keeps people in a constant state of desire by always offering fresh standards for success and happiness, therefore upsetting this equilibrium (de Lima et al., 2018). As the discrepancy between one's reality and the idealized representations on social media seems insurmountable, unmet wants can have psychological effects leading to feelings of inadequacy, envy, and even sadness (Richards et al., 2015).

4.3 The Blurring of Real and Ideal

User experiences are shaped in great part by artificial intelligence algorithms, which may blur the lines separating reality from the ideal. Deep rooted in the framework of social media platforms, this phenomena has major consequences for personal identification, cultural standards, and the shared view of reality (Rallabandi et al., 2023). Content curation driven by artificial intelligence can improve particular lifestyles, behaviors, and attitudes, therefore creating new society standards that might not fit different ethical and cultural norms. People and groups whose experiences and points of view do not fit the limited conceptions

of success and happiness pushed by social media algorithms may thus be excluded or marginalized.

5. Manipulation and Persuasion

5.1 Emotional Manipulation and Behavioral Influence

Artificial intelligence algorithms applied in social media have resulted in advanced techniques of persuasion and manipulation, therefore affecting personal behavior and society dynamics. These algorithms are purposefully created with particular goals, usually in line with the financial interests of the platforms they employ (TED Audio Collective, 2022). The truth is that they are far from being objective. Artificial intelligence systems can affect activities to until unheard-of degrees and influence emotions. By means of extensive user data analysis, these systems could predict personal preferences and vulnerabilities, therefore personalizing information to boost interaction and produce emotional reactions. Supporting specific emotional states and behavior patterns, users' feeds are more likely to feature items that trigger strong emotions (Ntoutsis et al., 2020).

5.2 Echo Chambers and Filter Bubbles

The personalization of content leads to the creation of echo chambers and filter bubbles, where users are only exposed to a narrow stream of information that reinforces their existing beliefs and attitudes. This isolation can solidify opinions and reduce opportunities for

constructive dialogue, which is essential for a healthy democratic society (Ntoutsis et al., 2020).

5.3 Algorithmic Bias and Discrimination

Given the fact that artificial intelligence (AI) drives social media, algorithmic bias raises serious issues. The data used to teach artificial intelligence systems may represent current ideas and stereotypes in society, therefore fostering prejudices. Biased algorithms have the ability to both reinforce and aggravate discrimination, according to Fosch-Villaronga et al. (2021), therefore leading to unequal treatment of people based on their race, gender, or other attribute.

5.4 Commercial and Political Ramifications

AI algorithms' persuasive ability has wide ramifications in the political as well as the commercial spheres. AI-driven content suggestions and tailored advertising can affect customer behavior in the commercial sector, therefore impacting buying decisions and brand impressions (Milan et al., 2023). Politically, artificial intelligence systems can change public opinion and inspire political activity, therefore affecting the results of elections (Wang, 2023; Fosch-Villaronga et al., 2021).

5.5 Unintended Ethical Implications

The manipulation of user behavior and emotions raises questions about individual autonomy and consent. Users might not know how much

artificial intelligence impacts their online experiences, which raises ethical questions regarding the impact of AI. Significant social consequences resulting from the dissemination of false information and the amplification of negative content by artificial intelligence algorithms could erode confidence in institutions and information sources (Shah & Bilal, 2022).

6. Conclusion: Future Directions and Recommendations

Analyzing the intricate relationships of social media, artificial intelligence algorithms, and human values reveals how driven by advanced artificial intelligence, the appealing features of social media platforms capture our attention and shape our behavior. Even if these platforms provide unparalleled connectedness and information availability, they adversely influence our mental health and the social fabric of our society. Therefore, a combined effort to promote a symbiotic coexistence between technology and people is vital. Appreciating social media's capacity to shape our brains, actions, and the greater society, we both personally and as a culture actively and purposefully engage with it. By means of the recommended strategies below, we can establish a closer relationship with social media that enhances our well-being and supports human basic values. Through proactive and deliberate social media interaction, we may ensure that it offers a means for society and personal

growth rather than conflict.

Developing plans that enable people to recover their attention and encourage better connections with social media will help to counteract the negative consequences of the attention economy. This involves establishing limits for social media use, such as scheduled times for checking platforms, turning off non-essential notifications, and participating in activities that support presence and consciousness (Big Think, 2024). Furthermore, it is imperative to advocate for the design of technology that respects and not abuses human attention and promotes well-being (Center for Humane Technology, 2023).

Ethical AI and Human Values

Ethical issues must first take front stage as we negotiate the course of artificial intelligence on social media. It is vital that artificial intelligence systems be built to honor privacy, advance justice, and improve user well-being (Aizenberg & Hoven, 2020). Dealing with algorithmic prejudice means designing transparent, responsible algorithms with means to find and fix flaws.

Mitigating Strategies for AI-driven Manipulation

To address the challenges posed by AI-driven manipulation and persuasion, several strategies can be considered:

- **Transparency and Accountability:** Social media platforms should provide transparency about how their algorithms work and be

held accountable for the content they promote.

- **Diverse Data and Inclusive Design:** Training AI systems on diverse datasets and designing with inclusivity have the potential to reduce algorithmic bias.

- **Regulatory Oversight:** Governments and regulatory bodies need to establish guidelines and standards for ethical AI use, particularly in areas impacting public discourse and democracy.

- **User Empowerment:** Providing users with more control over their data and content exposure can help counteract manipulation and promote autonomy.

Real-World Engagement and Mindfulness Practices

One useful way to lessen the bad consequences of social media is to promote actual dialogues and contacts. Encouragement of face-to-face interactions and community involvement increases social ties and lessens dependency on digital media for social gratification. Mindfulness techniques including meditation and deep-breathing exercises help to improve self-awareness and emotional control, thereby facilitating more deliberate interaction with social media (Lambert et al., 2022).

Regulation and Governance

And lastly, guaranteeing ethical use depends critically on control and governance of artificial intelligence

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in social media. Policymakers and business leaders must work together to create rules and criteria safeguarding consumers and advancing responsible artificial intelligence growth. This

covers rules on content moderation, data privacy, and advertising techniques as well as efforts to inform consumers on artificial intelligence algorithms and their rights in the digital sphere.

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