

#OBSESSED

Society's obsession with celebrity pop culture and the ongoing use of social media

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Whether you like it or not, I'm sure you have heard or seen at least one thing in the past week about a celebrity. It could be relationship gossip, a new Kardashian baby, or another movie star canceled for saying they don't take showers every day. Whatever it may be, current media cycles continuously create conversations centered around every instance of celebrities' lives.

Stepping into fame with high hopes of wealth and success also comes with the risk of your entire life being out in the open. As social media presence has become a constant part of our society, we as a collective group of 'average' people have become obsessed.

Checking Twitter or Tik Tok for the latest news about my favorite artists and influencers has become a part of my daily routine. While I couldn't care less about who Jennifer Lopez is currently dating, I could tell you right now that she broke the internet with the rekindling of her relationship with Ben Affleck. On the other hand, I could tell you every single detail about Taylor Swift's dating life because as a fan, I stay in the know. This is when it gets scary. My constant knowledge of pop culture references and celebrity updates tends to overpower my knowledge on information that I may actually need to know.

After just exposing myself for always being on social media, I can say that this problem does not only affect me. According to financeonline.com, "A more recent estimate showed that there were **4.2 billion social media users at the start of 2021**. The number of social media users has grown 31.4 percent

from 2018's 3.196 billion. It records a 332.99 percent growth from the 0.97 billion users in 2010." A Letterly article states that the average person spends 145 minutes on social media every day. More specifically, people aged 16-24 spend about three hours every day on social media. In those three hours, young social media users can easily get sucked into the lives and heavily influenced by people who have a platform.

Senior Mina Sanchez-Andrews is an active user of social media and she spends an estimated amount of five hours of social media use every day. Celebrities such as Jack Harlow, Paul Wesley, and Gina Rodriguez are just a few of the many celebrities that Sanchez-Andrews keeps up with. Just by following a celebrity on social media, she says their actions affect our daily lives.

"Jack Harlow is very attractive and a good artist. Paul Wesley and Gina Rodriguez are some of my favorite actors. They all influence my daily life because I watch their shows, listen to their music, and follow their feed on social media. Some celebrities that I follow give me inspiration on a lot of my skin care products and fashion choices," Sanchez-Andrews said.

Social media use also shifts from generation to generation. Millennial and social studies teacher Madison Greif's outlook on social media is a bit different. While Sanchez-Andrews uses social media as a way to keep up with her favorite celebrities, Greif isn't as active on social media.

"There are many celebrities that I like but I do not follow on social media. I don't often check up on what my friends and family are posting so

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I am definitely not adding any celebrities to fill up my newsfeed. The last time I posted [on social media] was in 2020 and I am following one celebrity, Leonardo DiCaprio,” Greif said.

Even though Greif’s only celebrity follow was gifted to famous actor Leonardo DiCaprio, she is still influenced by his social media presence.

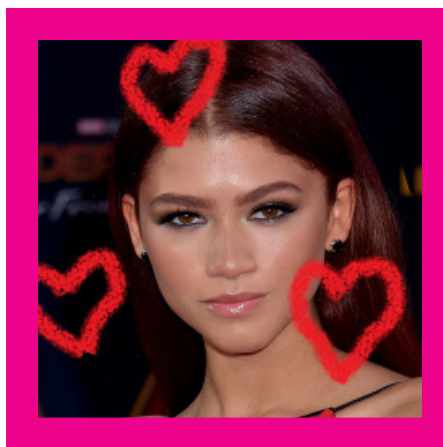
“Leonardo is an incredibly talented actor and I like the work he is doing to protect our environment and fight climate change,” Greif said.

Celebrity influence is not just about fashion trends and makeup lines but also social change. Celebrities have the power of having a platform to spread their opinions and passions with fans that follow them. DiCaprio’s work on climate change is just one example of the good celebrities are doing with their media presence. That being said, celebrity influence on social media can also be harmful to the mental health of their followers.

“Celebrities and influencers tend to only post the positives of their life and show off a glamour lifestyle. They are portraying an impossible standard for people to live up to. Studies have proven some social media platforms have negative effects on our psychological health. There is nothing wrong with following or supporting celebrities on social media, however, I believe we need limit our time on social media and focus on our lives and friends more,” Greif said.

In a world that relies heavily on technology and social media, it can be easy to get sucked into the negativity and obsession of celebrity media. It is important, now more than ever, to take a moment away from the buzz of pop culture.

“Social media can increase dopamine – our brain’s reward and pleasure chemical levels in our brain that can cause us to become addicted. It also plays with our emotions by making us feel happy to be part of a group or excluded if we are left out. We all have reactions to what we see and do online. Just focusing on social psychology to explain how social media influences our pop culture, humans are designed to be part of a group and need to have a sense of belonging. We all want to be part of a community and we shape our identity and habits based on what community we are part of, online and offline. I will warn though, psychology has proven that spending most of our life online does tend to make us feel lonelier and more isolated. Make sure to spend time offline with your friends,” Greif said.



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