

How Social Media Increases Achievement and Conformity Values: A Paradigm Shift In Our Societies

Abstract

Past research explored the beneficial and harmful effects of social media on individuals, but no study has investigated how social media might change our society at a deeper level.

Understanding the effects of social media on basic individual values is essential because our values largely govern our social exchanges in society. We suggest that social media could be an important catalyst for a shift in two basic individual values, achievement, and conformity, transforming the very fabric of our societies. We argue that these two values are fueled by the fundamental mechanics of social media. Using data from the European Social Survey (N \cong 80000), our findings suggest that greater social media exposure results in an increase in values of achievement and conformity. We replicated these findings in a consumer survey (N=1000) and further revealed that social media use increases achievement and conformity through increased anxiety and the need for approval. Overall, our findings suggest that social media contributes to the emergence of a societal culture that places a strong emphasis on achievement-seeking and conformity.

Keywords: Social media, Individual values, Value change, Paradigm shift, Societal change.