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### Privacy in the Digital Age

Technology has undoubtedly led to numerous benefits to human beings. To a significant extent, the digital age has improved the quality of life for humans. However, the digital age also represents several drawbacks in the lives of people. One of the biggest drawbacks that it has caused is infringing on people's privacy. The numerous platforms that enable sharing of information are not only an outlet and door to the rest of the world but a potential threat to people's privacy. Most of the privacy issues occur due to difficulty in regulation of the data that is allowed on digital sharing platforms. Unlike the olden days, information nowadays has the ability to travel across the world in seconds. The potential to reach millions of people in seconds has led to tow negative impacts. The most negative impacts that the digital age has presented are violation of privacy and cyber bullying and shaming. The two have affected lives across the globe in significant ways with reports of suicides and loss of jobs. The following paper explores the impact the digital age has had on privacy and its effects. It will also explore the personal responsibilities required for safe and appropriate use of digital platforms.

Privacy is fundamental human right. The right to privacy ensures that people live their lives in a way that they find suitable to them. Apart from comfort, privacy ensures that people remain free of judgment while conducting their lives as they see fit. For this reason, infringement of privacy is treated as crime against fellow human beings. One popular case on privacy

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violation in the digital era is the case of Tyler Clementi. Tyler was a high school student whom is thought to have committed suicide. Tyler, a superb violin player committed suicide from frustration, embarrassment and depression (Foderaro, The New York Times). The incident started when his roommate decided to take a video of him having intimacy with a fellow boy. In this case, Tyler had asked to be given some privacy as most campus students ask of their roommates whenever they have company. Tyler's roommate Ravi went ahead to film Tyler intimately entertaining a male guest in his room. The instance of his roommate having homosexual relations fascinated Ravi and he decided to video record and post the video on social media. The post went viral in the school and led to Tyler's frustrations and eventual suicide. Tyler had gotten frustrated and jumped into the Hudson River at 9pm in the night (Foderaro, The New York Times). Being an extremely private person, it is not hard to understand why Tyler decided to commit suicide. He had obviously not had enough time to mature and discover himself as a man but the judgment he got from the world led to his early demise. The case of Tyler led to a criminal investigation that saw Ravi and another lady named Molly put through prosecution.

In essence, the case of Tyler Clementi like many other around the world shows the impact of privacy violation to unsuspecting human beings. Tyler obviously felt judged by the people he could not even put faces to and led to his eventual frustration. Further, the incident shows the impact of irresponsibility in interacting on social platforms. The ease of posting without considering civil conduct is a major problem in the digital age. The next case about Sacco shows how irresponsible posting could lead to unprecedented cyber bullying and shaming.

Justine Sacco was travelling to South Africa when a joke she made on twitter led to her receiving a bashing from the social media community. In all honesty, Justine vows that the tweet

had been innocent and she could not understand the fire it had ignited. Ms. Sacco on her transit had posted saying, “Going to Africa. Hope I don’t get AIDS. Just kidding. I’m white!”(Ronson, The New York Times) The tweet led to an uproar that lasted several weeks on the internet. The racial inclination carried by the tweet could not be explained away. Further, there was no way for Justine to convince the public that the tweet had been a mere joke about Africa. To make matters worse, Justine held a Public Relations job at the time. The dangerous tweet led to her dismissal and in a very significant way, the trickle-down effect was that she could not get any employment for some time after the incident. The remarks Justine got from her tweet frustrated her to a state of depression. Justine case is not unique. Although they happen on different scales, cases of cyber bullying are being witnessed everyday across the world. The anonymity that screens give people make them bold enough to spread slur and abuse to people they do not even understand. Like Justine Sacco’s case, most of the bullying starts with statements that have been taken out of context. Bullying also happens when people post embarrassing pictures of people that are taken without their knowledge like the privacy violation case of Tyler Clementi. The ease of bullying the anonymity provided by the internet provides is phenomenal.

The effects of bullying, privacy violation and shaming have significant lasting effects as seen in the above cases. However, there are a number of things that can be done, both personally and on an institutional level to reduce the negativity born of the digital age. One of the solutions on an institutional level is regulation of posts. Mechanisms should be set up to ensure that the material posted on different platforms is safe and harmless to the subjects. One of the procedures to be applied is banning of third party posts (Lyon 85). People should only be allowed to post media that affects them directly. In this way, people will post media that is responsible and less damaging to themselves or other people. The regulation leads to the second solution that is to

advocate for personal responsibility when dealing with the internet. Like any forms of etiquette observed in different settings, workplaces, schools and organizations should start programs that teach social media etiquette (Lyon 90). In this way, the information purveying the internet will be responsible and less harmful to third parties and to the posters themselves.

In conclusion, the digital age like any new phenomena presents several dilemmas as well as lessons. One of the dilemmas is on the importance of the digital age to the advancement of human lives. On the one hand is improvement of human life and increased efficiency while on the other is privacy violations, bullying and identity thefts. The most important thing to remember is that the digital age presents tools. The tools should, as far as possible be used to their maximum positive applications without violating human rights to privacy in any way.

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