

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

Social media platforms were initially designed as tools for communication and networking among young people. Over time, they have evolved into the most favoured channels for information and entertainment worldwide above other channels for people of all ages. Easy access to information, entertainment, and external validation has led to heavy reliance and dependence on social media. It's undeniable that social media wields a significant influence, with both positive and negative effects. More than ever, children have unfettered access to a vast array of online information on the internet through various social media apps and platforms. These apps and platforms can be harnessed positively by individuals, including children, for learning, socializing, interaction, creativity, and productivity.

While there is no consensus on the appropriate age for children and young adults to access social media, it's widely agreed that they should be supervised and protected from the depravities and moral debasements found and interacted with on the internet for as long as possible. As Ersoy opines, it's relatively easy to pique the interest of children and capture their attention, therefore parents and guardians should be concerned and responsibly protective of them (Ersoy 17). Numerous online threats face children and young adults, including exposure to pornographic content, cyberbullying, online harassment, distorted perceptions of reality, promotion of harmful substances, drug abuse, and sexual exploitation, among others.

Despite differing opinions, it's highly recommended that children be supervised until they are mature enough to make responsible decisions. While maturity varies with age, many people generally believe that children can be given more autonomy around the age of fifteen with appropriate guidance, allowing them to grow into independent, decision-making adults.

It is important that children and young adults acquire digital skills to meet the ever-growing demands of the information age they live in. Therefore they cannot be entirely prevented from social media, however, they should be taught media literacy and be familiar with social media platforms and tools that can help them harness the positivity and advantages that social media provides.

Work Cited

Ersoy, Mustafa. "Social Media and Children." *Research Anthology on Usage, Identity, and Impact of Social Media on Society and Culture*, vol. 48, no. 8, June 2022, pp. 25-37.
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