

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUNG GENERATIONS : A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Social media is a quickly evolving platform that allows kids and young adults to communicate, express themselves, and share content in any format. Mobile phones and e-media have become part of our everyday life. Youngsters now get early access to internet resources and contemporary devices. It is the source of a contemporary socio cultural pattern that has transformed our society's entire social and behavioral landscape as well as how people relate to one another. Social media is a double-edged sword: although it offers many advantages, it can have a harmful impact on kids. A multitude of online platforms facilitate communication by means of social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Instagram, youtube and various blog formats, which are readily available to them and influence people in multiple ways: psychologically, cognitively, and socially. Children are affected differently by social media based on their personalities, gender, the nature of their family and social surroundings, and their life experiences. Online harassment, melancholy, anxiety, rising narcissism, sexting, and excessive exposure to unsuitable content are all issues that society and lawmakers must address. This paper will investigate the different beneficial and bad effects on children, as well as how the latter might be improved, while also exploring legal safeguards.

Keywords: Impact, Social Media, Children, television, video games, smartphone.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has recently become a part of many children's daily lives, with the number of people using social media platforms and applications growing at an exponential rate each year. Social media refers to websites and programmes that allow users to generate ideas, share information, and engage in social networking. Interacting with others on social networks like Instagram, reviewing blogs on the internet created by a favorite creator, viewing reels, or visiting the virtual space in an online game are all examples of web-based activities. The utilization of E-media can be practiced as a standalone activity or as a joint Endeavour with collaborators (for instance, playing a game on the internet with other gamers). Social media may play a vital part in connecting and interacting with children's social networks. While social media includes more

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than just social networking, it is crucial to note that a number of websites have an age limit on when prospective members can join. For example, Facebook and Snapchat require minors to be thirteen years old before joining, which is in accordance with the minor's Online Privacy Protection Act. These sites use restrictions such as age limitations to safeguard children from internet risks. In actuality, though, teenage people are joining and communicating on social networking sites. As a result, those under the age of thirteen; the term "child" is sometimes used to refer to both children and adolescents may be utilizing various sorts of social media without fully comprehending the repercussions. The study of children's roles and social media is yet relatively unexplored. Social media also has an essential role in connecting children, and in the research that was studied, the term "child" is frequently used to refer to both children and teenagers. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) outlines the rights of children worldwide, including the right to survival, the right to develop fully, the right to be protected from violence, abuse, and exploitation, the right to participate fully in family, cultural, and social life, and the right to privacy, among other things. According to a new study on the impact of Smartphone and internet use conducted by national commission for protection of child rights based on a survey of over 3400 school-aged children, 42.9% admitted to having a social networking account. Highlighting how easily children can create the social account. According to the report, 37.8% and 24.3% of 10-year-old youngsters had Facebook and Instagram profiles, respectively. According to the report, this is "seemingly in contravention" of the criteria established by many social networking platforms.

Since there is no exact direct connection among how much time we spend on certain activities and how much they affect us, data suggests that the mass media has a significant impact on the lives of many youngsters. This section will go over some of the well-researched effects. Because the emphasis will be on mass media material, other online concerns that do not pertain to mass media' (for instance, cybercrime and online platforms) will not be explored. It is vital to highlight that the new designation of nowadays children as "digital natives" implies that youngsters who have grown up in electronic spaces are highly skilled and knowledgeable users of technology and mass media. The study does not support this. While a lot kids today are more able and proficient with digital media than previous generations, levels of media literacy remain low, unsafe online practices are common, and many children have not managed to incorporate the use of media into their everyday activities in a nutritious and well-rounded manner.

THEORIES OF THE WAY MEDIA IMPACTS CHILDREN

Before delving into specific difficulties, it is necessary to understand how and why media might affect children. There are several well-validated theories that are relevant.

1. Theories Of Learning

Learning theories address how humans learn information and behavior. Importantly, research demonstrates that humans learn just as effectively from virtual experiences as they do from 'real world' events. There are several hypotheses about human learning, all of which are highly complex when examined in depth. The fundamental ideas of three learning theories are

extremely significant. These three learning theories are: instrumental learning, observational learning, and associative learning.

a. Associative Learning

'Associative learning,' as it is known. Much of the human brain's core purpose is to generate representations of things (things we experience, know, feel, and remember) and to connect those representations. These relationships are established based on what people encounter. When two items are encountered concurrently, their representations become 'wired together' in the brain's neural network. When those two items are encountered frequently together, the bond between them becomes considerably stronger. When this occurs, activating one representation automatically activates the other. For example, when individuals see something the colour of blood, they may automatically think of blood, because the notions of blood and its hue are frequently tightly related. This method is similar to associative learning (also known as 'classical conditioning'), which was demonstrated by Pavlov's dogs, who were taught to associate food with the sound of a metronome and eventually began to salivate whenever they heard a metronome, even when there was no food present. Associative learning occurs when media presents specific things together a number of times and the user comes to associate those things. This is a crucial underpinning for advertising, for example, because advertisers frequently want consumers to identify a particular product with an admired person, a favourable emotion, or a desired goal in order to improve the attraction of that product.

b. Instrumental Learning

Instrumental learning (also known as 'operant conditioning' or 'instrumental conditioning') includes a person learning whether doing something will result in desirable or aversive results. Simply put, behaviors that result in rewards and positive results are more likely to be repeated; behaviors that result in penalties or negative outcomes are less likely to be repeated. Thus, one of the most important effects of media is the degree to which something portrayed in media, or the media itself, is thought of or experienced as gratifying.

c. Observational Learning

Observational learning (also known as 'social learning') argues that even in the absence of associative or instrumental learning, humans seek to copy models (Bandura, 1977). This process occurs for both virtual and real world' models, and it is most likely when the model is admired, rewarded for their behaviour, heroic, high status, relatable, or similar to the person watching. This type of learning is very important in many forms of media because many mass media figures/characters are admired or heroic and appear to be rewarded for their actions with success, the admiration of others, and a variety of other positive outcomes.

SOCIAL MEDIA'S POSITIVE EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

While social media is typically discussed in a negative perspective when it comes to its impact on children, there are also very strong positive points in its support. Children can be connected to online global groups based on shared interests through social media. These could include support networks for young people with disabilities or medical illnesses, teenagers who are same-sex

attracted, or children from specific cultural backgrounds, for example. There may be sites for commenting on and sharing content about certain interests such as games, TV shows, music, or hobbies.

The following are some of the benefits of social media for children:

1. Time spent online on social media sites is vital for the younger generation to learn the technical skills they will need to navigate the future. It enables kids to be capable citizens in a digital age, allowing them to actively participate in society and master the social skills of that generation. They will also learn to live with an extensive online network of friends and acquaintances.
2. Social media is being used positively by the youth in ways that were not previously considered. It is more than simply a socializing tool; children and teenagers have discovered a new method to express them artistically, connect, and learn with a larger audience. Students use it to organize study groups in which they can conveniently and quickly share thoughts and learning material.
3. Social networking has also altered how children learn. It has introduced a more peer-based learning style in which kids are encouraged to learn from their classmates. They are constantly communicating and providing feedback to one another, which helps to refine their learning process. They are also more eager to learn from one another than from adults.
4. Social media is not just a tool for communication, but it is also an important aspect of the life of teenagers and young people. It allows them to keep connected with their peers from sports teams, activity clubs, and schools while also networking with others who share their interests.
5. Social networking has been shown to make people more empathic, courteous, and relationship-oriented. They communicate their emotions by commenting on or like photos, videos, or status updates shared by their pals. They also wish more people on their birthdays than ever before.
6. Children build long-term friendships with others by remaining in touch with them online, even when they are unable to meet in person.
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10. Social media helps young people to network with people from all over the world, exposing them to cultures and ideas they might not have encountered otherwise. It allows them to gain a larger view on life and people in general.

NEGATIVE IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S

Media use, like many other elements of human experience (food, relationships, outdoor activities, prescription medicine use, to name a few), has risks as well as advantages. It is clear that media have considerable potential to positively impact child and adolescent consumers, and to do so in a multitude of ways. Space precludes an exhaustive list in this entry, but many other benefits exist that have not been discussed. It is also not possible to provide an exhaustive list of negative impacts related to media use, although some key areas of concern are discussed next. In line with many aspects of human experience (e.g., eating, relationships, outdoor activities, use of prescription medications to name a few) there are risks to media use alongside the benefits.

It is critical, in our opinion, to place such dangers in context. Media content issues, for example, are less likely to be troublesome if a parent can discuss and contextualize the content with their child, or if improved behaviors and/or attitudes are consistently exhibited and reinforced within the home. Nonetheless, it is critical for parents, policymakers, and professionals who work with children and adolescents to be aware of the various negative effects that media can potentially have on children and adolescents in order to assist them in getting the most out of media while avoiding the pitfalls.

It should be emphasized that some of these effects are debatable, particularly worries about violent video games and video games in general. However these issues are discussed in detail below:

1. Addiction and Overuse

The children's are these days addicted to the mobile phones, YouTube videos, reels and lot more however these use of these entertaining apps make them addicted and effects there metal health as that can be seen in various instance which keep coming on news and media platforms. For instance like a 10th class student planned and killed his mother as did not permit him to use phone to play PUBG game. Spending over time in these Apps and games make them addicted and they overuse there time in these activities.

According to the research, video game addiction problems occur on a spectrum, with 1-3% of teenagers in most of the studied communities fulfilling criteria for a clinical IGD or GD diagnosis, and 5-10% of adolescents gaming at dangerous or problematic levels of usage. While those with a sub-clinical problem are usually affected in at least one important area of their lives, such as academics, sleep, relationships, or mental health, those with clinical diagnoses can have substantial numerous problems. Long-term school refusal and low grades, chronic sleep problems, loss of relationships, cessation of important activities, anxiety and depression, aggression and violence (to the point of court orders) when parents try to limit screen use, a constant preoccupation with video

games, obesity, and a growing sense of having no personal worth or prospects offline are examples (Warburton, 2021). Screen disorders are extremely dangerous at the extreme end of the spectrum and necessitate extensive therapeutic intervention. While it is important to remember that the majority of children and adolescents do not experience such significant negative consequences from their levels of screen use, it is also important to be aware that (a) in many countries, the average adolescent's recreational screen media consumption is far above what would be considered moderate, and (b) that some children and adolescents develop serious problems.

2. Child Sexual Abuse and Sexting

The definition of sexual abuse is stated in the Children and Young Persons Act Section 2 Subsection (3) (c): "a child or young person is sexually abused if he has participated, whether as a participant or an observer, in any sexual activity for the purposes of any pornographic, obscene or indecent material, photograph, recording, film, videotape or performance, or for the purpose of sexual exploitation by any person for that person's or another person's benefit." Sexting is the sending or transmitting of sexually explicit images or films of the sender or someone known to the sender through cell phone.

It has become standard practice among young people as cell phones are distributed to adolescents at younger and younger ages. Sexting is the most severe form of sexual abuse. Sexting is the sending of naked, semi-naked, or sexually graphic images.

Therefore, while legal between consenting adults, it is a hazardous activity because one must trust that the other would not share the even if the connection evolves. Sexting is believed to be practiced by one-fifth of all teenagers, and the risks can be larger than for adults. The Criminal Code of Canada forbids the sexualization of children under the age of 18 and criminalizes the distribution of such material. While this is presumably intended to keep youngsters safe, minors can also be prosecuted for sharing sexual photographs of them.

3. Cyber bullying

"The process of using the internet, cell phones, or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person through hostile behaviour such as sending text messages and posting ugly comments on the internet," according to the definition of cyber bullying.

Cyber bullying is one of the risks associated with social networking. Cyber bullying is another issue that can cause victims to experience melancholy and anxiety. Numerous young people have committed suicide as a result of cyber bullying in numerous nations. It is bad enough that children are subjected to unpleasant comments from strangers, and many are victimized by strangers. Online sexual predators entice many young online users. Cyber bullying (the use of electronic communication to intimidate someone, usually by sending frightening or threatening messages) is ubiquitous online, and it can inflict mental anguish and even lead to suicide. 49.5% of kids reported being bullied online, while 33.7% admitted to being bullied online. According to a 2012 survey, at least 800,000 adolescents were

harassed on Facebook. Middle school students who encountered cyber bullying were nearly twice as likely to attempt suicide. The Canadian case of Rehtaeh Parsons, who died as a result of a suicide attempt in 2013 after a sexually explicit photo of her became public, is a terrible illustration of the impacts of cyberbullying. Online sexual predators number in the thousands.

4. Misinformation

The internet is a genuinely vast collection of knowledge, yet most of it is erroneous, skewed/biased, unhelpful, out of context, or sourced from questionable sources. What children and adolescents read, see, and hear can mislead and even frighten them.

5. Medical Issues

Physical play, physical exercise, and outdoor activities are essential for children's healthy development, including cognitive development. Children who replace this time with screen time face a variety of issues, including poor gross motor development, difficulties with focus and cognitive development, physiological issues such as poor posture, repetitive strain injuries and eye degeneration, obesity, and health problems associated with inactivity.

6. Social Isolation

Humans require face-to-face interaction, which includes being touched, smelling other people's pheromones, and observing body language up close. Without this touch, essential hormones like as oxytocin are not released, the immune system is impaired, and people develop inflammatory and autoimmune disorders such as lupus. People who do not have such interaction are more prone to sickness, mental deterioration, narrower arteries, and have higher death rates.

Despite the communication and technological revolution, loneliness rates have more than doubled since the 1980s, with younger generations experiencing the highest levels of loneliness. According to Cigna's large-scale research, "loneliness has the same impact on mortality as smoking cigarettes per day" and depression etc.

7. Safety Issues

Many applications and online media sites collect user information. This includes, among other things, personal information, what individuals do online, where people are, their contacts, images and videos, and records of gameplay behaviour. Furthermore, gadgets' cameras and microphones may be utilised to view what individuals are doing and listen to what they say. This raises a number of privacy and safety concerns for children and teenagers. It makes older children more vulnerable to identity theft and fraud, provides information that increases the likelihood of being targeted by predators, makes it easier for unscrupulous companies to advertise to children and adolescents knowing their personal vulnerabilities, and creates a digital footprint that may impact their future lives and prospects.

8. Obesity

The children's nowadays have completely forgotten the old games like stones, bow and arrow etc. where physical running and activities were required. Therefore diseases like overweight, fat etc. occurs which is termed as obesity.

CONCLUSION

There is no intrinsic good or bad in media. It is simply a tool with enormous potential to benefit children and teenagers, but also with the ability to generate a variety of negative consequences. Working with children and adolescents to develop a healthy media diet is one crucial method to maximize benefits while limiting hazards. Early and extensive instruction on healthy media usage, preferably embedded into school curricula, is also essential in our opinion to enable the next generation of 'digital natives' become really aware and skillful consumers of the digital world.

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