

The Impact of Social Media Technology Development on Minors

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Abstract

The rapid development of social media technology has significantly influenced various aspects of society, particularly among minors. This research aims to explore the impact of social media technology on minors, focusing on both the positive and negative consequences. As minors increasingly engage with social media platforms, they experience changes in social behaviors, self-esteem, and mental health. The research identifies various effects, such as enhanced connectivity and access to information, alongside risks like cyberbullying, addiction, and exposure to inappropriate content. Through surveys and interviews, this study investigates the extent of social media's influence on minors and offers recommendations for parents, educators, and policymakers to mitigate potential harm. The findings emphasize the need for balanced and responsible use of social media to foster healthy online interactions among minors.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, minors, mental health, social media, technology development

Introduction

The advent and widespread use of social media technology has drastically transformed the way individuals, particularly minors, interact with the world. In today's digital era, platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and Snapchat have become integral parts of daily life, providing opportunities for communication, entertainment, and social connection (Asikin, Fadilah, et al., 2024). While social media offers numerous benefits, such as fostering creativity, providing access to information, and enabling social networking, it also presents challenges, especially for younger users who are more impressionable and vulnerable to its negative effects (Asikin, Azzahra, et al., 2024).

Minors, defined as individuals under the age of 18, make up a significant portion of the global social media user base (Parry et al., 2018). According to recent reports, a majority of minors have access to smartphones and use social media regularly. The ubiquity of social media among minors raises important questions about its impact on their emotional, cognitive, and social development (Barger et al., 2016). Concerns about cyberbullying, body image issues, addiction, and privacy violations are

among the most pressing issues that have emerged from the increasing integration of social media into minors' lives (Li et al., 2021).

Social media technology has been linked to both positive and negative effects on minors. On one hand, it provides platforms for self-expression, identity exploration, and the development of online communities. On the other hand, it can contribute to anxiety, depression, social isolation, and a distorted sense of reality. The effects of social media on minors are often complex and multifaceted, varying across different platforms, user demographics, and the level of parental involvement (Yahia et al., 2018).

This research aims to explore the impact of social media technology on minors, examining both the positive and negative effects. It seeks to understand how minors engage with social media, the challenges they face, and the potential long-term consequences on their well-being. By examining the influence of social media on minors, this study hopes to provide insights into how to promote healthy usage and mitigate risks associated with its misuse.

The research will focus on the following key areas: 1) The benefits and opportunities presented by social media for minors. 2) The risks and negative consequences associated with social media usage, such as cyberbullying and mental health issues. 3) The role of parents, schools, and policymakers in managing the impact of social media on minors. 4) Recommendations for promoting safe, responsible, and beneficial use of social media among minors.

Method Research

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques to explore the impact of social media technology on minors aged 12 to 18. Data collection involved structured surveys to analyze usage patterns, time spent, perceived benefits, and negative effects such as cyberbullying and addiction. In-depth interviews with minors, parents, and teachers provided qualitative insights into behavioral, emotional, and academic impacts, as well as concerns about privacy, safety, and mental health.

Additionally, case studies examined real-life instances of social media's positive and negative effects, including cyberbullying, online learning, and social trends. Quantitative survey data were analyzed statistically to uncover trends and correlations, while qualitative insights from interviews and case studies were thematically analyzed to identify recurring issues. This triangulated approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of social media's influence on minors, offering valuable strategies for mitigating its negative impacts and fostering responsible usage.

Result and Discussion

The results of the study reveal both positive and negative impacts of social media technology on minors, highlighting the complex nature of its influence on their emotional,

cognitive, and social development. Through data collection and analysis, several key findings have emerged:

Positive Impacts of Social Media on Minors

Enhanced Communication and Social Interaction Social media provides minors with platforms for staying in touch with friends and family, particularly those who are geographically distant. Platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Snapchat allow for real-time interaction, which helps maintain relationships and supports emotional well-being. Many minors report feeling more connected to their peers through these platforms, offering them a sense of belonging (Gbandi & Iyamu, 2022).

Access to Educational Content and Resources Social media can serve as an educational tool for minors. YouTube, for example, provides a wealth of instructional videos on various topics, from science experiments to art tutorials. Educational groups on platforms like Facebook or Twitter enable minors to participate in academic discussions and gain knowledge outside of the classroom (Herlina et al., 2022).

Opportunities for Self-Expression and Creativity Social media platforms provide minors with a space for self-expression and creativity (Mawarni & Muzammil, 2023). The ability to share photos, videos, and written content allows minors to develop their personal identities and experiment with different forms of creativity. Additionally, social media fosters the growth of digital literacy and technical skills, which are valuable in today's tech-driven society.

Negative Impacts of Social Media on Minors

Mental Health Concerns One of the most significant negative outcomes associated with social media usage among minors is the impact on mental health. Many minors experience anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem as a result of exposure to unrealistic beauty standards, cyberbullying, and the pressure to maintain a certain online persona. Studies show that prolonged exposure to social media can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy, particularly among teenage girls, who are more likely to engage in social comparison.

Cyberbullying and Online Harassment Cyberbullying is a prevalent issue among minors on social media platforms. Many minors report being harassed, bullied, or subjected to negative comments online, leading to emotional distress, social withdrawal, and, in some cases, self-harm. The anonymity afforded by social media platforms has exacerbated this issue, allowing individuals to target others without facing immediate consequences.

Addiction and Excessive Screen Time Social media addiction is a growing concern among minors, as many spend excessive amounts of time on these platforms. This addiction can lead to decreased physical activity, disrupted sleep patterns, and neglect of responsibilities such as homework and household chores. The constant need for validation through likes and comments can contribute to compulsive checking and overuse of social media.

Privacy Risks and Online Safety Another significant concern is the privacy and safety of minors online. Many minors are unaware of the risks associated with sharing personal information on social media platforms, such as the possibility of identity theft, data breaches, or being targeted by online predators. Despite age restrictions on platforms like Facebook and Instagram, many minors are still able to bypass these limitations and gain access to potentially harmful content.

Role of Parents and Educators

A key finding from the study is the importance of parental involvement and educational initiatives in mitigating the negative effects of social media on minors. Parents who actively monitor their children's social media usage and engage in open discussions about online safety are more likely to help their children navigate social media in a healthy way. Schools and educators also play a crucial role in educating minors about the potential risks of social media and promoting digital literacy skills.

Long-Term Implications

The long-term effects of social media on minors remain an area of ongoing concern. While some minors may be able to use social media in a balanced and productive way, others may develop lasting issues related to mental health, social anxiety, and online addiction. The study suggests that early education on responsible social media usage and the establishment of healthy boundaries can help mitigate these long-term risks.

In summary, the results of the study underscore the need for a balanced approach to social media usage among minors. While social media offers several benefits, it also poses significant risks to their mental health, privacy, and overall well-being. Addressing these challenges requires collaboration between parents, educators, and policymakers to ensure that minors can safely and responsibly engage with social media technology.

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the dual nature of social media's impact on minors. On the one hand, social media offers significant benefits, including enhanced communication, educational opportunities, and a platform for creativity and self-expression. However, the negative consequences, particularly on mental health, privacy, and safety, are critical issues that require attention. In this section, we will discuss the implications of these results in greater detail, considering how social media affects the development of minors and the steps that can be taken to mitigate its negative effects.

Social Media as a Tool for Social Connectivity

Social media's role in fostering communication and social connectivity among minors is one of its most widely recognized benefits. It allows minors to maintain relationships with peers and family, particularly those who are distant geographically. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp provide instantaneous communication, which helps minors stay socially engaged, especially in a world where

in-person interactions can be limited. This virtual connectivity can contribute to a sense of community and belonging, which is vital for social development during adolescence.

However, while social media supports relationships, it is important to recognize that these interactions are not always face-to-face and can lack the depth and authenticity of in-person communication. As highlighted in the study, social media interactions are often filtered, presenting an idealized version of reality. This can lead to superficial connections, which might not provide the same emotional fulfillment as real-world relationships, potentially causing loneliness or feelings of isolation in some minors despite being "connected" online.

Educational Benefits and Digital Literacy

The positive educational impact of social media is another key takeaway from the research. Platforms like YouTube, online forums, and educational groups on Facebook or Twitter allow minors to access a wealth of learning resources and knowledge beyond traditional classroom settings. This can be particularly advantageous for those seeking additional support in their academic pursuits or those interested in niche subjects that may not be covered in formal education.

However, while social media provides access to educational content, it is important for minors to develop critical thinking skills to evaluate the reliability and credibility of online sources. Given the prevalence of misinformation on social media platforms, educators and parents should focus on fostering digital literacy to help minors distinguish between accurate and misleading information (Fariandi & Ariani, 2023). Schools could also integrate digital literacy into their curriculum to better equip students to navigate the complexities of the online world.

Mental Health and the Impact of Social Media

The negative effects of social media on minors' mental health are perhaps the most concerning findings of this study. Prolonged exposure to social media has been linked to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, particularly due to the pressure to conform to unrealistic beauty standards and the fear of missing out (FOMO). Social comparison theory suggests that minors may compare themselves to influencers or peers online, which can negatively impact their body image and self-worth.

Cyberbullying exacerbates these mental health issues, as online harassment can lead to severe emotional distress. The anonymity provided by social media platforms can embolden bullies to target minors without fear of repercussion, making the online space more hostile. These findings emphasize the need for online platforms to implement stronger anti-bullying measures and provide resources for minors to seek help if they encounter harassment.

Moreover, the addictive nature of social media contributes to negative mental health outcomes. The constant need for validation through likes and comments can create a cycle of dependency, leading to a decrease in face-to-face interactions and an increase

in online engagement. This overuse can also lead to poor sleep hygiene, as minors often stay up late browsing social media, further exacerbating mental health problems.

Privacy Risks and Online Safety

Another critical issue that emerged from the research is the privacy risks associated with social media use among minors. Despite age restrictions, minors frequently access social media platforms, often without a full understanding of the potential dangers, such as identity theft, online predators, and the sharing of personal information. While parents and guardians play a key role in guiding minors about privacy settings and online safety, many minors may not follow these precautions or may be unaware of the risks.

Additionally, the data collection practices of social media companies raise concerns about minors' privacy. With the vast amount of personal information shared on these platforms, minors are vulnerable to exploitation, data breaches, or targeted advertising based on their online behavior. This underscores the need for more robust regulations to protect minors' privacy online, as well as for parents to actively monitor their children's online activity.

Parental and Educational Interventions

The study highlights the importance of parental and educational involvement in mitigating the negative effects of social media on minors. Parents who are actively engaged in their children's online lives, setting clear boundaries for social media use, and encouraging open communication about online experiences can help minors navigate the challenges posed by social media. Tools such as parental control apps and monitoring software can help ensure that minors engage with social media in a safe manner.

Furthermore, educators have a critical role in fostering digital literacy and promoting healthy social media habits among minors. Schools can provide workshops or integrate lessons on the risks of social media, how to identify cyberbullying, and the importance of maintaining privacy online. By educating minors about the responsible use of social media, educators can empower them to make informed decisions and minimize the potential harms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the dual impact of social media technology on minors, offering both opportunities for enhanced communication, education, and self-expression while posing significant risks to mental health, privacy, and safety. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts among parents, educators, policymakers, and social media platforms to create a safer online environment. By promoting digital literacy, setting clear usage boundaries, and implementing robust privacy protections, stakeholders can ensure that minors benefit from social media's positive aspects while minimizing its potential harms. The findings underscore the importance of fostering

balanced and responsible social media usage to support the well-being and development of minors in an increasingly digital world.

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