

## IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CHILDREN

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**ABSTRACT**

Digital age has impacted every aspect of our life and it has become an integral part of our lives. This is especially true for children spending considerable amount of time on computers and mobile phones. In current era of facebook, instagram, snapchat etc. it is nearly impossible for children to imagine their life without these social media platforms. In today's tech driven world, many parents use screens to keep their young children busy and distracted while they can juggle their work. With advancement in technology and easy accessibility of internet, uncountable benefits and opportunities are offered to all ages including children. However it also accompanied with numerous challenges and its related Impact on children's well-being, development, and safety.

**INTRODUCTION**

The two highly critical phases of brain development, one is first year of life, during which brain doubles in size. The second begins at the outset of puberty and lasts until early adulthood (i.e., from approximately 10 to 25 years old). This latter period is highly relevant, as it is when a child go through significant physical, emotional and psychological changes. It is considered a critical period because the brain is still developing, and the adolescents are forming their identities, social skills and values. During this period they are exposed to relatively unfettered access to electronic devices and unsupervised use of social media and other online platforms. While many apps and shows are marketed as being educational and developmentally appropriate for young children, studies have shown that even the best of them cannot compete with real life activities and human interaction which is crucial for early stages of brain development.

**How do screens affect early childhood development?**

Spending time with electronic devices like mobiles, ipad, laptops and television, all of which are highly addictive not only they keep young children busy but also give parents some time to juggle their needs. But on what expense?

Excessive screen time captivate children's attention and may interfere with a child's ability to observe and experience the typical day to day activities they need to engage with in order to learn about the world. Children tend to ignore the ongoing activities happening around them by their focused attention on electronic devices which could be detrimental for their physical as well as mental health. This will not just affect their ability to learn new things, but also how they interact with others

and language development. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time for children under 2 year of age and one hour per day for older children.

**Impact of social media on young children:**

With rise in technology and easy access of internet, children are exposed to potential risk as well as benefits. If we talk about beneficial impact of social media, it is platform for creativity, learning and connections. These platforms help children to be creative with their thoughts, digital arts, music videos and other talents. It is also helpful for children to keep up with friendship, learn about current events, learn new skills. When used responsibly and in moderation it can benefits child by enhancing learning and improving socialization and communication.

Social media can also pose various mental, physical and emotional risks children's life because of their limited capacity for self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure. These risks include low self-esteem, cyber bullying, and online harassment, behavioral problems like suicidal idealization or in-appropriate content.

**Behavioral changes:**

Behavioral changes have been reported in children spending too much time on social media, which include increased irritability, anxiety and elevated stress levels. Some children also show classical sign of depression which could be as a result of social isolation and excessive use.

**Cyberbullying:**

Cyberbullying is the other big danger that could pose a credible threat to youth. Cyberbullying includes sending,

posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Cyberbullying often leaves children and teenagers with lowered self-esteem, less interest in academics and fall in grades. Cyberbullying can lead to mental health issues like anxiety, stress, depression and suicidal thoughts.

**Physical health:**

Children who spend a lot of time on digital technology are at risk of becoming sedentary, which can lead to a variety of physical health problems. They establish habit of spending long hours sitting and staring at screens. Lack of physical activity can contribute to various health issues, such as obesity and cardiovascular problems.

**Addiction and Time management:**

Social media addiction can interfere with time management, which can impact their academic and personal lives.

**Sleep deprivation:**

Too much screen time can also interfere with children's sleep patterns and lead to sleep deprivation, which can impact their overall health and wellbeing.

**Eating habits:**

Thoughtless eating while watching online content can contribute to various health issues marketing of unhealthy foods on social media platforms can influence dietary choices and contribute to unhealthy eating habits.

**What can we do?**

Parents can start by limiting their own consumption first. It's up to parents to set a good example of what healthy computer usage looks like. Avoid excessive scrolling or checking phone constantly in front of them. It is important that parents monitor children's online activities and encouraging them to use social media in moderation. Parents should set healthy guidelines for computer usage and to encourage children to engage in non-digital activities that promote physical activities, healthy sleep patterns and improve social skills. It's important to set limits on how much time children can spend on social media. Offer alternative sources of entertainment, such as books, board games, art projects, or sports, to reduce their reliance on social media for amusement. It is important that parents should have open conversations with children regarding responsible use of social media. Discuss the pros and cons, potential dangers, and the importance of balance in their online and offline lives. Children learn from observing their parents, by demonstrating a healthy and balanced relationship with technology and social media, we can help them develop responsible and mindful online habits and fostering a balanced approach to technology use.