
**Assessment Of social media And Child Development: A Discourse on The
Positive and Negative Effects**

Konye Cynthia IKEMS, Ph.D
Department of Broadcasting
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies
University of Port Harcourt
Choba, Rivers State, Nigeria

And

Arit Okonobong ATAKPA, Ph.D
Department of Early Childhood Education,
Akwa Ibom State College of Education,
Afaha Nsit

ABSTRACT

The study assessed positive and negative effects of social media on child development. Social media is a dynamic and transformative concept that has revolutionized the way people communicate, connect, and share information in the digital age. It has both helpful and harmful effects on the social and emotional development of children. On the positive side, it provides opportunities for socialization, helping children connect with friends and family, fostering relationships, and allowing for emotional expression. However, it also exposes children to cyberbullying, unrealistic beauty standards, and the fear of missing out, which can lead to negative emotional outcomes such as anxiety and low self-esteem. The study concluded that the excessive and unmonitored use of social media can have detrimental effects on children's mental and emotional well-being, including increased levels of anxiety, depression, and feelings of inadequacy. Furthermore, it can contribute to issues like cyberbullying, privacy concerns, and a distorted sense of reality due to curated online personas. While it can offer access to educational content and diverse information sources, excessive screen time and potential distractions can hinder attention spans and academic performance of children.

KEYWORD: Social Media And Child Development

Introduction

The introduction of digital technology into children's daily life interferes with numerous developmental milestones that kids should reach. Their daily activities are made simpler and more effective by technology. Television, the internet, video games, iPods, iPads, and other entertainment technology have developed so quickly that families are essentially ignorant of the enormous influence and lifestyle changes in their families (Rowan, 2013). Even young children are now able to utilize goods of technical complexity due to the sophistication and simplicity of operation of technology. In the process of learning numerous things, technology brings ease and diversity. Technology that allows for sound and visual stimuli at the same time makes children able to learn many



things at a time. Especially since the advent of multifunctional smartphones with more affordable prices has resulted in more people being able to have them, even in certain families, gadgets may have been owned by schoolchildren ranging from elementary to middle and high school, including those who are still under five (Alia Tesa & Irwansyah, 2018).

Social media can have both positive and negative effects on the social and emotional development of children. On the positive side, it provides opportunities for socialization, helping children connect with friends and family, fostering relationships, and allowing for emotional expression. However, it also exposes children to cyberbullying, unrealistic beauty standards, and the fear of missing out, which can lead to negative emotional outcomes such as anxiety and low self-esteem. The impact of social media on the cognitive development of children is multifaceted. While it can offer access to educational content and diverse information sources, excessive screen time and potential distractions can hinder attention spans and academic performance (Kowalski et al. 2014). It's crucial to strike a balance between utilizing social media for learning and ensuring children do not become overwhelmed by its distractions.

Children's use of social media and their physical development are mostly impacted by screen time and sedentary behavior. A sedentary lifestyle, which can result in health problems including obesity, can be facilitated by prolonged usage of social media. Furthermore, late-night use might interfere with sleep cycles, which has an impact on both physical health and cognitive performance (Lenhart, 2015). Supporting children's physical development requires promoting physical exercise and sound sleep practices while judiciously regulating screen time. Social media may have an impact on how kids behave. It gives people the confidence to take part in action and advocacy, which helps to advance good social change (Perloff, 2014). However, exposure to harmful content or interactions can lead to risky behaviors. To assess this impact, it's crucial to consider how children navigate the online world and whether they possess the digital literacy skills needed to make informed decisions.

Concept of social media

Social media is a digital communication platform that enables individuals and organizations to create, share, and interact with content and connect with others online. It has become an integral part of modern society, impacting various aspects of our personal and professional lives (Boyd & Ellison 2017). Social media refers to websites and applications that allow users to create and share content, as well as engage in social networking. It encompasses platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube. Users can connect with friends, family, colleagues, and strangers to build personal and professional relationships. The way individuals connect, exchange information, and express themselves has changed thanks to social media, which has an effect on social, political, and cultural dynamics (Castells, 2015). Social media refers to a group of interactive



Internet apps that make it easier for individuals or groups to create, curate, and share user-generated content. Social media platforms come in a wide range of examples. They consist of Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Friendster, Wikipedia, dating websites, Craigslist, recipe sharing websites (like all-recipes.com), dating websites, and Craigslist. The aforementioned traits are present throughout all social media sites, although each is different in a variety of ways. Particularly, the designs, structures, conventions, and user bases of platforms frequently vary.

Social media is a dynamic and transformative concept that has revolutionized the way people communicate, connect, and share information in the digital age. At its core, social media refers to online platforms and applications that enable users to create, share, and interact with content. These platforms encompass a wide range of mediums, including text, images, videos, and more, and they serve as virtual communities where individuals, groups, and organizations can engage with one another (Barassi & Treré 2012). Social media has become an integral part of modern society, impacting various aspects of our lives, from personal relationships to business marketing and political discourse. The potential of social media to enable real-time involvement and conversation on a global scale is one of its distinguishing features. Users may communicate with friends, relatives, and acquaintances no matter where they are in the world, which promotes a sense of connection. Social networking sites have also made it easier for anybody with an internet connection to share their ideas, creativity, and knowledge with a potentially huge audience. The democratization of information may empower underrepresented voices while simultaneously amplifying false information and echo chambers. This development has both good and bad ramifications.

Social media, in its current form, has a significant influence over human behavior patterns and many aspects of daily life. As a result, social media serves a very broad purpose. The following are some of the features of social media:

- Social media is a medium designed to expand human social interaction using the internet and web technology.
- Social media successfully transforms the practice of communication in the direction of broadcast media from one media institution to many audiences (one to many) into the practice of dialogical communication between many audiences (many to many).
- Social media supports the democratization of knowledge and information. Reforming humans from users of the message content to the creator of the message itself social media has characteristics that cannot be separated from the various characteristics of social media that are widely used today.



Concept of child development

From birth through puberty, physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development of children takes place in a dynamic and complex process. Both genetic predispositions and environmental circumstances have a significant impact on it. The sensorimotor stage (0–2 years), the preoperational stage (2–7 years), the concrete operational stage (7–11 years), and the formal operational stage (11 years and above), are the four phases of cognitive development that children move through. These phases show how a child's capacity for thought, reasoning, and problem-solving develops as their cognitive abilities mature.

The 0-to-3-year age range is when children develop the fastest. The process of a child's growth and development will thereafter go on indefinitely. Man must always keep an eye on the development throughout this time to make sure that it proceeds in accordance with the child's developmental phases. This ongoing observation is also necessary to identify any potential disruptions in a child's development as soon as possible. The sooner problems or barriers to a kid's development are identified, the simpler it will be to address them and ensure that the youngster has the best possible growth and development. There are generally three key elements that affect a child's development:

- Genetic factors such as gender, race (ethnicity), and congenital factors that are pathological (certain diseases).
- Living environment such as weather and sanitation factors.
- Factors for the intake of nutrients consumed by children every day.

The main parameters of child growth and development generally refer to four aspects of early childhood development (Dhiva A. A, 2015):

- ❖ *Aspects of physical development:* This aspect includes weight gain, height, and gross motor and fine motor skills.
- ❖ *Aspects of cognitive development:* Aspects of cognitive development of children can be divided into four stages; sensorimotor (0-24 months), preoperational (2-7 years), concrete operations (7-11 years), formal operations (aged 11 years and over).
- ❖ *Aspects of language development:* This aspect relates to the child's ability to respond to sound, speak, communicate, follow orders, and so on. Children's language skills grow and develop rapidly during the preschool period. Through language skills can also be detected delays in other systems, such as cognitive abilities, sensorimotor, psychological, emotional, and the environment around the child.
- ❖ *Aspects of socio-emotional development:* This aspect refers to the development of children's ability to interact and socialize with their environment. In addition, this aspect is related to the child's independent abilities such as eating alone, cleaning up toys after playing, and separating from parents.

Types of social media



Social media platforms come in various forms, each serving different purposes and catering to specific audiences.

- **Social Networking Sites**

Facebook: A general-purpose social networking platform for connecting with friends, family, and colleagues.

LinkedIn: Focused on professional networking, job searching, and career development.

Twitter: A microblogging platform for sharing short text updates (tweets) and multimedia content.

- **Visual Content Sharing**

Instagram: Primarily used for sharing photos and short videos, often with creative filters and captions.

Pinterest: A platform for discovering and sharing visual inspiration, such as images, infographics, and DIY ideas.

Snapchat: Known for its ephemeral messaging and short-lived multimedia content.

- **Video Sharing**

YouTube: The largest video-sharing platform, where users can upload and watch a wide variety of videos.

TikTok: A short-form video platform known for its viral trends and challenges.

Vimeo: Focused on high-quality and creative video content, often used by filmmakers and artists.

- **Microblogging**

Tumblr: A microblogging and social networking platform that allows users to post multimedia content and short text updates.

Medium: A platform for long-form written content, where users can publish articles and stories.

- **Discussion Forums**

Reddit: A collection of community-driven discussion boards (subreddits) covering a wide range of topics.

Quora: A platform for asking questions and getting answers from a community of experts and enthusiasts.

- **Messaging Apps**



WhatsApp: A popular messaging app for sending text messages, voice messages, and making voice and video calls.

Telegram: Known for its security features and large group chats.

Signal: A privacy-focused messaging app with end-to-end encryption.

- **Professional and Business Networks**

Xing: A professional networking platform similar to LinkedIn, primarily used in German-speaking countries.

AngelList: Focused on connecting startups with investors and job seekers in the tech industry.

- **Dating Apps**

Tinder: A widely used dating app where users swipe left or right to indicate their interest in potential matches.

Bumble: A dating app that gives women the power to initiate conversations.

- **Niche Communities**

Goodreads: A platform for book enthusiasts to track their reading, discover new books, and join book clubs.

Strava: Geared towards athletes, allowing them to track and share their fitness activities.

DeviantArt: An online community for artists to showcase their work.



Children all across the world use social media extensively and they play a significant role in children's daily life. Many kids begin using social media at a young age, which raises questions about whether these platforms are suitable for kids their age and what impact using them could have on their development at a crucial juncture. Children that use social media may run into a variety of hazards, some of which are discussed in this report. Research indicates that dangers commonly cluster together, worsening with usage and rendering some more vulnerable than others. In practice, such risks might not always be so clearly distinguished.

According to research, children frequently come across harmful content such as cyberhate, information about eating disorders, sexual content, and misinformation. A large portion of this content is influenced by algorithm-based recommendation systems that support the way that content is presented to users on social media platforms. Children may also experience unwelcome communication from adults who are not on their friends list or social network, who may pose serious risks by making extortion and exploitation threats. While studies reveals that children are not always aware of the hazards they may encounter or have the abilities to discern the dangers posed by strangers approaching them, children frequently exhibit confidence in their own capacity to handle such risks when forming new relationships online. Children face particular risks at a formative stage of their development through persistent experiences of bullying in social media environments. Experiences of cyberbullying are commonplace and remain among the most reported topics to helplines. Online bullying is a complex phenomenon that brings together many of the risks considered in the study, including harassment, sharing images without consent, and increased vulnerability to harmful content. The combination of risks may also be especially impactful for certain children at key formative stages. Research shows that support needs to be targeted at the most vulnerable and that support from family and peers, as well as school-based programs that support social-emotional learning, mentoring, and education on online safety, can play a positive role. Further aspects of the risks considered include the many wide-ranging challenges that children face as a result of the commercialized environment of social media. Children encounter issues such as unfair practices, clickbait strategies, and hidden marketing practices that contravene their rights and are not in their best interests. Research shows that children are often ill-prepared with low levels of awareness of commercial practices and lack the critical skills to disaggregate marketing content in the context of their experience of social media.

Positive effect of social media on child development



Social media can have some positive effects on child development when used responsibly and in moderation. It's important for parents and caregivers to guide and monitor a child's social media usage to ensure these benefits are maximized. Here are some potential positive effects:

- **Enhanced Communication Skills:** Social media platforms encourage children to communicate with peers and family members, which can help improve their written communication skills (Rideout, Foehr & Roberts 2010). They learn how to express themselves, share ideas, and engage in meaningful conversations.
- **Global Awareness:** Through social media, children can connect with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. This exposure can foster global awareness, empathy, and a broader understanding of different perspectives and lifestyles.
- **Creativity and Self-Expression:** Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube allow children to showcase their creativity and talents. They can create and share art, music, videos, and stories, which can boost their self-esteem and encourage self-expression.
- **Educational Resources:** Many educational institutions and professionals use social media to share valuable resources and information. Children can access educational content, research materials, and tutorials, which can support their learning and interests (Chen et al., 2017).
- **Community Building:** Social media can help children find and connect with like-minded individuals who share their hobbies, interests, or challenges. This sense of belonging to a community can be particularly beneficial for children who feel isolated or different from their peers.
- **Digital Literacy:** Using social media can help children become more digitally literate, as they learn about online etiquette, privacy, and security. These skills are essential in today's digital world.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Older children and teenagers can use social media to network with peers and professionals in their areas of interest. This can lead to mentorship opportunities, internships, and future career prospects.
- **Awareness and Activism:** Social media can raise awareness about important social issues and inspire children to get involved in activism and volunteering. It can empower them to make positive changes in their communities and the world.
- **Supportive Communities:** Children facing challenges, such as health issues or bullying, can find support and advice through online communities. This can provide emotional support and coping strategies.
- **Parent-Child Communication:** For families where parents and children use social media together or discuss online experiences, it can create opportunities for open and constructive discussions about online safety, ethics, and values.



Negative effect of social media on child development

Social media has become an integral part of many children's lives, and while it offers various benefits, there are also negative effects on child development. Here are some of the negative impacts of social media on child development.

- **Child pornography:** is considered to be any depiction of a minor or an individual who appears to be a minor who is engaged in sexual or sexually related conduct. This includes pictures, videos, and computer-generated content. Even altering an image or video so that it appears to be a minor can be considered child pornography (Suraj, 2014).
- **Child grooming:** One of the most distressing aspects of the social media is the growing evidence that paedophiles may use fake accounts on the social media to make friendships with young children and teenagers (Litwiller, & Brausch, 2013). They pretend to be of the same age to win children's confidence. They can then gain vital personal information like their schools and the places where they hang out. They can then use that information to bully and make sexual contact with their victims or exposing them to explicit imagery or content. It could lead to moral, emotional disorder and social problems.
- **Mental Health Issues:** Social media can contribute to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness among children and adolescents. Excessive use and exposure to cyberbullying or negative online interactions can have detrimental effects on their mental well-being (Primack, et al. 2017)
- **Sleep Disturbances:** The use of social media late at night can disrupt sleep patterns in children. The blue light emitted by screens interferes with the production of melatonin, a hormone that regulates sleep. This can lead to sleep deprivation, impacting cognitive and emotional development (Levenson, et, al. 2016).
- **Decreased Physical Activity:** Excessive time spent on social media may reduce the time children spend on physical activities, which is essential for their physical development. This sedentary behavior can contribute to health problems like obesity.
- **Impact on Academic Performance:** Excessive social media use can be a distraction from schoolwork and academic responsibilities, leading to lower academic performance. Constant notifications and the urge to check social media can impede concentration and study habits.
- **Risk of Cyberbullying:** Children are susceptible to cyberbullying on social media platforms, which can have serious emotional and psychological consequences. Being harassed or targeted online can lead to feelings of shame, isolation, and even thoughts of self-harm (Hinduja & Patchin 2010).



- **Negative Body Image and Self-Esteem:** Exposure to unrealistic beauty standards and filtered images on social media can lead to body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem in children, particularly in adolescents who are highly impressionable (Perloff, 2014).
- **Privacy Concerns:** Children may not fully understand the implications of sharing personal information on social media, putting their privacy and safety at risk. This lack of awareness can have long-term consequences in terms of online security.

Conclusion



The study concludes that the excessive and unmonitored use of social media can have detrimental effects on children's mental and emotional well-being, including increased levels of anxiety, depression, and feelings of inadequacy. Furthermore, it can contribute to issues like cyberbullying, privacy concerns, and a distorted sense of reality due to curated online personas. While it can offer access to educational content and diverse information sources, excessive screen time and potential distractions can hinder attention spans and academic performance of children. It's crucial to strike a balance between utilizing social media for learning and ensuring children do not become overwhelmed by its distractions.

Recommendation

1. Protective apps and software, along with appropriate restrictions, need to be applied to social networking sites that children access most often and laws need to be in place to protect victims from further harm by the legal system through ineffective or harmful approaches.
2. Parental guidance and involvement play a significant role in mitigating the potential negative effects of social media on child development.
3. Incorporating digital literacy education into school curricula and home environments is essential. Children need to learn critical thinking, digital citizenship, and media literacy skills to navigate the online world responsibly.



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