**Effects of Social Media on Children**

**Source: Kiddiepedia**

Social Media has both benefits and risks when children use it. Although there are restrictions on the membership in most social media platforms, which only allows 13 years old or older to be a member, there are some issues which persist regarding the experimental use of children.

Below we discuss the pros and cons of social media and the effects it can have on children:

1. **It encourages socialization and communication which permits the following:**
* Opportunities to participate in community activities like raising money for charity, volunteering for local events which may include political and philanthropic events.
* Development of individual and collective creativity through sharing of artistic and musical ideas.
* Development of ideas through the creation of blogs, podcasts, videos, and gaming sites.
* Increasing online connections by means of shared interests and by including others from more diverse backgrounds.
* Fostering one’s individual identity and unique social skills.
1. **Enhanced learning opportunities**

With social media, children have more opportunity to collaborate on school work. Some schools were able to make use of blogs as ways to develop children skills in English, writing and creative expression. The vast information from various websites on the internet also serves as a source of information for their research topics.

1. **Accessing Health Information**

Social media has also enabled children to access health information anonymously. It gave children access to websites which talk about health issues and problems. These sites may provide information on relevant topics to children like sexually transmitted infections, stress reduction, and signs of depression.  Given the right guidance from parents and guardians, children will get the medical information from online sites that cater to health concerns. Children are able to access websites that develop supportive networks for people having the same conditions as theirs. It was found out in studies that, instant messaging, texting, have produced improvements in healthcare such as adherence to medication, a better understanding of diseases, and fewer missed doctor appointments. Social media fosters better opportunities to learn more about health issues and communication with doctors. Inaccuracies with searches can be remedied by parental guidance.

**Risks that may arise in the use of social media include:**

1. **Cyberbullying and online harassment**

Cyberbullying is the act of using social media to communicate false, embarrassing or maybe even hostile information about another person. It is a most common risk for teens who use the internet and is considered a peer-to-peer risk. It can occur to any young person online and can cause psychosocial problems like depression, anxiety, severe isolation and even suicide.

1. **Facebook Depression**

Facebook depression happens when children spend a lot of time with this social media. These teens or pre-teens are at the risk of social isolation and sometimes turn to risky internet sites.  This problem can go beyond to substance abuse, unsafe sexual practices, or aggressive and self-destructive behaviours.

1. **Cyberstalking**

Cyberstalking is when someone online stalks you for their own purposes or to cause harm by publicly using the information against you online. It’s a form of stalking but online. Stalkers may use email, instant messages, phone calls and other communication devices to harass or make inappropriate contact.

1. **Identity Theft**

This happens to young children who expose information about themselves online thinking that it’s okay to do so, but in fact, it is dangerous. Usually, this is a type of fraud that gains someone else’s identity to steal money or other benefits.

As parents, we should be aware of our child’s use of social media. We will not be able to stop them from using it, but we can help them out on the proper use of it. Be open on speaking to them on the dangers and consequences of social media. But first, we need to be informed and educated on social media, knowing what and how these applications work will help us understand why are the children so fond of them. There should also be an age limit on the use of social media and before that age comes let them be informed about it and set some rules for them. Discuss how much time they need to spend on it and school work would need to be done first. Prioritize school work, then only can they be allowed on the computer or on their smartphones using social media.