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# A Link Between Social Media And Its Effect On Children's Behavior

Social media is everywhere around us but are we truly aware of the consequences it may bring when exposed at a young age? Multiple studies have been conducted showing a link between social media usage and teenagers, however with technology becoming so prevalent in our society new studies have been introduced to find a link between social media and its effect on children's behavior. In recent discussions, a controversial issue has been to what extent social media affects children's behavior. In a matter of five years, social media usage amongst children and teenagers has increased dramatically. (O'Keeffe et al., 2011). O'Keeffe et al., (2011) states that social media influences outside behavior. As social media becomes more popular, many people express their thoughts and ideas of effects carried with it, from positive outcomes to some negative ones people have discussed in what ways social media influences children's behavior. In discussions of the impact of social media in children and its correlation with behavior, a controversial issue is whether it has negative or positive effects. While some argue that social media and technology provides positivity and growth, others contend that children exposed to social media at a young age are more prone to suffering from mental health issues as well as behavioral issues. These are all contributing factors to the early onset of mental health issues, therefore affecting children's behavior in their everyday life.

Children come across social media multiple times a day. To get a quick understanding of what social media means Boyd and Ellison (2007) describes it as:

a web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.

Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Youtube are just some of the dominating social media platforms in which children are enthusiastic about. In a study conducted from 2001 to 2006, 8,707 children participated, revealing that 47 percent of them spend two or more hours on social media per day (Mazurek et al., 2012). When acknowledging these numbers, it makes you think about how many children are being affected by the negative effects of social media.

With all of these social media platforms, social influencers come with it. Girls are shown unrealistic body expectations at a young age as well as negative behaviors portrayed by these social media stars. It is not uncommon to see young girls comparing themselves to fully developed women that they see on social media. When it comes to young boys, their social media role models are different than those of girls. These role models portray vulgar behaviors such as drinking and smoking. For example the Youtube stars Nelk have a massive fan base, mostly revolving around young boys. This channel consists of disrespectful pranks, consuming alcohol and doing drugs. With children being influenced so easily, it is clear that looking up to social media stars will influence rebellious behaviors in their day to day life activities. Regardless of gender, it is clear that both young boys and young girls are deeply affected by what they see on social media.

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Cyberbullying is one of the most mainstream negative factors that the majority of people know about. Children do not know about it until they are personally a victim. O'Keeffe et al. (2011), describes cyberbullying as sharing false, personal and embarrassing information about another person. "Cyberbullying is quite common, can occur to any young person online, and can cause profound psychosocial outcomes including depression, anxiety, severe isolation, and, tragically, suicide" (O'Keeffe, Gween Schurgin et al. 2011). In the introduction to "Social media, screen time, and young people's mental health," The Lancet (2019) provided a specific case in which a fourteen year old girl from the United Kingdom took her life, this caused massive outrage to the debate whether social media is to blame. Although some people believe social media had nothing to do with her death, The Lancet insists that social media played a significant role in her death. This is only one case, statistics show that one in three children will fall victim of cyberthreats. The Harbor Country Examiner shows that one in five children will not report these threats to someone of authority. It is proven that bullying causes children to feel isolated, anxious, and withdrawn from the world around them. Not only does this affect their behavior at home, but it also affects their school performance. Children who are cyberbullied report being less attentive at school and even less present at school. Cyberbullying should be taken as a big deal and should be taken proper manner. No matter the country or the language barrier anyone child can be affected by it.

To every negative aspect a positive aspect is analyzed as well. Therefore I also researched about the positive factors that help with children's behavior. I found a vast majority of sources that analyzed and compared each other. Mazurek et al., 2012 contradict themselves,. On one hand they argue the negative effects such as obesity and poor academic performance as well as loneliness. On the other hand they discuss the positive effects suggesting that it helps build online communication and meeting people with similar ideas. Another factor is that it helps children be more creative since social media contains images and videos of all sorts. O'Keeffe, et al., (2011), also contributes, stating that social media helps children in participating in charity events and other giving foundations. Many researchers and authors have strong beliefs with social media and its negative effect on children but meanwhile they also state that there are many factors that help children.

With the vast challenges that social media brings, the famous social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter have analyzed possible solutions to avoid cyberbullying, sexting and other negative factors that affect children's behavior. Despite being a sensitive topic, in their recent work Milosevic et al., (2018) report how companies were created to reduce the risks of social media and its effect, creating policies. "Cyberbullying policies" were introduced with the help of TOS or Terms of Service and Global Positioning System to minimize harassment, cyber-bullying and abuse. (Milosevic et al., 2018). Milosevic, et al, (2018) states: "Some of these policies are aimed at intervention , in some cases by allowing users to lock or report someone who they think is bullying them on the platform, or in others by flagging abusive content. The company can then decide if it wants to block such user, remove the abusive content, or take some action." The essence of these policies are to help with children because at such an innocent time in their lives they are captured rapidly by many things and people's grotesque words and actions. With the help of artificial intelligence these policies can be identified faster without the need of an employee searching for trigger signs. In America, action has been taken therefore anti-bullying laws were made to reduce the risks and long term negative effects. Furthermore the laws state that schools should talk about cyberbullying and its effects. (Milosevic et al., 2018). Ultimately I believe that with technology evolving, the numbers of risks of cyber bullying and harassment will increase but, I have strong beliefs that they will be

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easily detected in a matter of seconds even before someone lay eyes on it.

It is clear that children's behavior is at risk, if all these effects have been going on for years can you imagine what else can happen in the future? Technology and other factors will increase the risks and more problems will affect children and their behavior as time advances. Parents should be more aware of the risks and factors associated with social media use in children and the content that they are exposed to. Gladly, social media platforms have stepped up and have been giving the best in order to minimize the negative effects. Cyberbullying, negative role models are just some of the influences that affect children and their behavior. The older we get, we should be more active, teach children to differentiate between good and bad. As a group we should be good role models in order to avoid more traumatic events from happening.

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