**Social Media’s Impact on the Young Mind**

KayLenn Law

Culinary Arts, Culinary Institute of Michigan- Baker College

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Dr. Naketa Jones

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**Introduction**

Why are there still children on social media? There are many reasons; social media companies promote their apps to children, the media damages their brains and causes them to get addicted and lastly, some of them have age restrictions and others do not which makes it easy for children to get on the apps. Overall, children should not be on social media and there should be an enforcement on the ages allowed on the apps.

**Social Media and It’s Effects**

Social Media Companies

Social Media companies hold some of the blame as to why children and young people are on their apps. “There are no financial or legal repercussions for the companies that fail to confirm the ages of their users and every incentive financially for them to look the other way as underage kids create accounts (Christine Rosen, 2024, pg. 407).” Social media companies do this purposely to capture the young minds as their audience. The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) came into effect in 2000 and set the age limit at 13. This was four years before Facebook was created. It was meant to require “verifiable parental consent” for those younger than 13 and restrict how companies could use children’s data. COPPA wanted to set the age limit at 16 but they were denied both from technology companies concerned about profits and from civil-liberties groups. These groups feared that, according to a *Wall Steet Journal* story about COPPA, “requiring teens to obtain parental permission might curtail their ability to access information about birth control and abortion.” Ultimately, these companies left the cyber security of these children up to the parents of the children. “… people concerned about these platforms’

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impact on children have heard a consistent message: It’s up to you, as parents, to control your children’s use of these tools. Teach them media literacy! Monitor screen time! Delay getting them a smartphone! (Rosen, 2024, pg. 408)”

The Damage Social Media Can Cause

Social media causes damage to the young mind. Children are thrown into the world of strong political, social and economic conversations that the young mind cannot comprehend. There is a thing called “Snapchat dysmorphia,” which means that people become unhappy with the way they look, and they alter their photos to look more like the heavily filtered ones they see online. This proves that social media can cause damage to the mind by showing that not everything is how you see it online. There was also a trend called the “devious licks challenge” that would encourage children to cause damage to school property. This also proves that children are easily influenced by the things they see people do online. Internal Research by Instagram found that one-third of girls that used Instagram said that it “made them feel worse” and they found themselves “unable to stop using it.” Children don’t have any impulse control. They can’t tell themselves to stop using the apps if they become harmful to their well-being. Social media causes damage to the young mind by exposing them to harmful content.

“In 2019, 13 percent of adolescents reported having a major depressive episode, a 60 percent increase from 2007. Emergency room visits by children and adolescents in that period also rose sharply for anxiety, mood disorders and self-harm. And for people ages 10 to 24, suicide rates, stable from 2000 to 2007, leaped nearly 60 percent by 2018, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (Rosen, 2024, pg. 413).”

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Age Restriction Laws

Some social media apps have age restrictions, but the age is too low. In Germany, Ireland and Switzerland the age limit is set at 16 with more requirements for verification and stricter rules in place. The original age limit was made to protect children from targeted advertisements and the collection of their data. But in today’s world, the harm is not in the collection of their data. It is their daily use of the platforms themselves and the lost opportunity of being engaged in other social activities. Some people feel that social media should be limited to adults, considering that we do not allow young people to drive, smoke or drink and that it is not a safe place for children. “Children have gotten used to being harassed and threatened online in a way that is alarming to previous generations, (Rosen, 2024, pg. 410).” Instead of these apps updating their age restrictions, they will shift their blame onto the parents of the children. Some say that it would be impossible to enforce an age limit on the apps considering how many children are already on them, while others believe that even adults cannot use these apps responsibly. So how should we trust that parents will be able to guide their children in the right direction?

**Writer’s Thoughts**

Social Media Companies Are to Blame

I strongly believe that social media companies are to blame for why children are so addicted to their phones. I know that when I was growing up, social media was not as advertised to younger audiences as it is now. I remember the TV shows that were made for teens would use fake social media apps in their shows which could be seen as advertisement to a younger audience. YouTubers were seen on Nickelodeon shows and Disney shows and that also helped

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advertise YouTube to children. I know it did for myself, and I became more prone to social media advertisements through the app. If social media companies could stay away from networking companies catering towards children, then there probably would not be as many children on the apps.

Social Media’s Damage

I agree that the media does damage the young mind, and I experienced this throughout my upbringing. I became addicted to a few of the apps, and it took a toll on my mental health. It took many years to work myself out of these qualities, and I spent years in denial that I was relying on these apps for validation in many ways. It also did not help with my decision-making. I was making a lot of bad decisions that put me in danger because I was so hooked on these apps. I tried to date guys that were way too old for me. I was also talking to people in other states and sharing way too much personal information with them. Both addictive qualities and bad decision-making are qualities that myself and the rest of my family already struggle with. Therefore, social media amplified these qualities and expanded my knowledge of other things that were harmful to my well-being.

Age Restrictions Will Not Help

I disagree that Social Media age restrictions will help keep children off social media. In my opinion, children are already hooked on the apps, and it would be very difficult to remove them completely. What could be done instead of age restrictions is giving children a safe space on the apps. They could also require ID verification for all users over 18 years-old to ensure that no minors are on their apps. The way that I look at the situation is that no matter how many

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restrictions are placed on the apps, they still will not be used for their intended purpose. The best way to keep children safe is for social media apps to work with the parents and create a safe space for children to express themselves without the fear of them being exposed to harmful content. We are in a day and age where social media is a way of life, and it does not seem to be going away anytime soon. So instead of pushing children away from it, we should learn to embrace it and learn how to keep children safe in the process.

**Final Thoughts**

I feel that as much damage as social media has done, there is no moderating access to the apps because children will work around it to get what they want. So why isn’t it moderated to be a safer place for children to express themselves instead? Social media companies could hire representatives to verify the identity of every account on their apps. Not only to validate that current age requirements are met, but also to ensure that real people are making these accounts. This will help ensure the safety of all users. We all had ways that we wanted to express our interests as kids, why should today’s generation of children not get to do that? I feel that even though it may be different than what we are used to, we should learn to embrace the new normal for the younger generation. Social media companies also play their part in giving children access to new apps catered towards children by promoting them through services that has a young audience. The apps also have a large impact on children’s minds and teach them things that are wrong, so these new apps could be monitored by staff to ensure that factual information is being provided. In conclusion, I am very grateful that I was in a generation that got to experience life before social media took the world by storm.

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**Works Cited**

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