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Children and Social Media

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Introduction

Social media is increasingly becoming a part of everyday life for many children, with user numbers of social media platforms and applications increasing exponentially each year. Social media refers to websites and applications where users can create ideas, share information, or participate in social networking. Social media activities can include interacting with others on sites like Facebook, reading online blogs written by a favorite author, watching YouTube clips, or exploring a virtual world in an online game such as *Final Fantasy*. Social media use can be done as a discrete activity that individuals pursue on their own (e.g., reading a Facebook timeline) or a collaborative activity done with other people (e.g., playing an online game with other players). Social media can also play an important role in helping children create and interact with social networks. While social media is broader than just social networking, it is important to note that many social networking sites (SNS) impose an age restriction on when a potential user can join the site. For instance, Facebook and Snapchat require children to be thirteen years old before they can join. While age restrictions are imposed by these sites to protect children from online threats in accordance with the Children's Online Protection Act, in reality, underage users are joining and interacting within social networking sites. TikTok's "younger user" section allows children under the age of thirteen to sign up and then imposes limitations on both their access to content and their interaction with other users. Therefore, preteens or children may be using various types of social media without a full understanding of the consequences that this activity may entail. A key consideration when compiling the bibliography in this article is the research examining children (those aged under thirteen) and social media is still relatively under-researched as researchers have focused their attentions primarily on adolescents and social media. Some studies have included children in their sample, but oftentimes they are combined with an adolescent sample, regardless of the different developmental stages these two groups are in. Nevertheless, there are important issues that still need to be addressed regarding the risks of children using social media (e.g., cyberbullying) as well as concerns about children's developmental readiness to be active online. This is particularly pertinent when considering how more traditional screen media (i.e., television) can now be integrated with the Internet and social media on mobile devices. Additionally, it should also be remembered that the role of the parent needs to be considered. Parents are often the ones supplying children with smartphones and tablets in order for children to access various types of social media.

General Overview

Each work chosen contributes to the topic of children and social media. It should, however, be noted that in the reviewed literature, the term "child," may often be used to refer to children as well as adolescents, with some works regarding any individuals under the legal age a child, including Calvert 2015 (cited under Book Chapters); Mazurek and Wenstrup 2013 and O'Keeffe, et al. 2011 (both cited under Journal Articles); Livingstone, et al. 2011; Mascheroni, et al. 2014; Rideout, et al. 2010; and Swist, et al. 2015 (all cited under Reports). Works that focus specifically on children under thirteen years old include Barbovschi, et al. 2015 and Blackwell, et al. 2014 (both cited under Journal Articles) and Holloway, et al. 2013 (cited under Reports). Wide-scale research reports (e.g., Livingstone, et al. 2011, cited under Reports) are considered seminal works and have been extensively cited in other studies that focus on this topic of children and social media. Reports focus on three main geographic regions: Europe and research conducted by the EU Kids Online (e.g., Mascheroni and Cuman 2014), United States of America and the Kaiser Family Foundation (e.g., Rideout, et al. 2010), and

Australia (e.g., Swist, et al. 2015; all three also cited under Reports). These reports may also contain international comparisons as well as important demographic information.

[back to top](#)

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