



TroyMUN'26

UNICEF

The Effects of Social Media Usage
and Digital Bullying on Children's
Mental Health

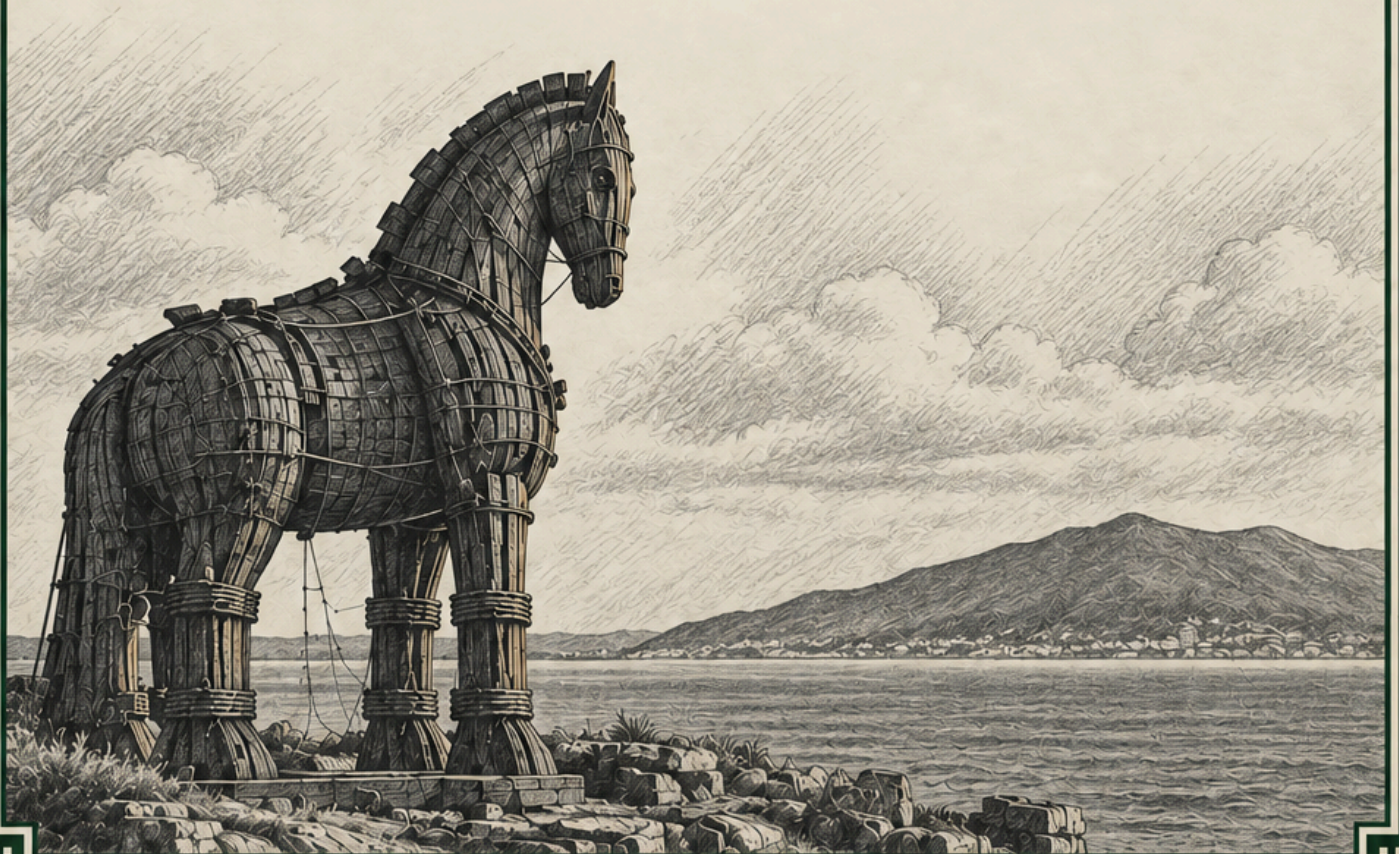


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I. Letter from the Sg

II. Letter from the USG

Distinguished Delegates,

To start with, I would like to welcome you all to the ninth edition of TroyMUN. I am İdil Başer, I have the honor and pleasure to serve as your Under-Secretary-General for this year's UNICEF Committee. I also would like to thank my lovely co-chairs Beren and Nil to help me write this guide for you as well as my Dear Mentor USG Zeynep Kayalaçın to guide us throughout this journey. I believe that during these three days we will be spending together, with my experience and your dedication you will have a both academically enriching, and most importantly enjoyable conference.

I suggest that you read this Study Guide carefully to have enough knowledge on this crucial topic and to be completely prepared for the committee with the provided essential background information, context, and resources to help you. Also I recommend you to go further than the study guide to do more research, develop your ideas, find solutions and share with us when the day comes. If you have any prior questions about the guide or the committee, you can email me and I will try to respond as soon as possible to clear up any questions you may have.

I am looking forward to meeting you all.

Warm regards,

İdil Başer

The Under-Secretary-General responsible for UNICEF

Idilbaser0@gmail.com

III. Introduction to the Committee

UNICEF, the United Nations agency for children, works to protect the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged and those hardest to reach. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we do whatever it takes to help children survive, thrive and fulfil their potential. UNICEF provides and advocates for education, health and nutrition services. Protect children from violence and abuse. Bring clean water and sanitation to those in need. And keep them safe from climate change and disease.



The world's largest provider of vaccines, UNICEF also runs the world's largest humanitarian warehouse. Before, during and after emergencies, we're on the ground with life-saving help and hope. Impartial, non-political and neutral, we focus on reaching every child in need. UNICEF was established in the aftermath of World War II to help children whose lives and futures were at risk – no matter what role their country had played in the war.

Since 1946, their mandate has not wavered. Today UNICEF operates the world's largest humanitarian warehouse and oversees an unparalleled logistics network.

Day in and day out, their staff of over 17,000 work worldwide to protect the rights of children. To keep them safe from harm. To let them grow up healthy and educated, with a fair chance to reach their potential. And we never give up.

UNICEF brings decades of field-tested expertise, dynamic partnerships and a passion for innovation. All UNICEF personnel have a duty to safeguard the communities reached by our

work. This means ensuring no one is placed in harm's way as a result of a programme we support, or an individual with whom we're affiliated. UNICEF conducts independent investigations so that anyone who violates our ethics, rules or regulations is held to account.

IV. Introduction to the Agenda Item

The rapid expansion of social media has fundamentally changed how children communicate, learn, and interact with their peers. While digital platforms can provide opportunities for connection, education, creativity, and self-expression, they can also expose children to significant risks, including cyberbullying, harmful content, social comparison, and excessive or problematic use. The World Health Organization reported that 11% of adolescents surveyed in 2022 showed signs of problematic social media use, highlighting the growing importance of addressing the relationship between digital environments and young people's well-being.

Digital bullying is of particular concern because its effects can extend beyond the traditional school environment. Unlike conventional bullying, cyberbullying can reach children in their homes and follow them across multiple digital platforms. It can contribute to emotional distress, anxiety, sleep problems, social isolation, and other negative effects on children's mental health.

On the other hand, the issue should not be addressed by viewing social media solely as harmful. Social media and other digital platforms can provide children with opportunities for

learning, connection, creativity, and self-expression. The relationship between technology use and mental health is complex and can involve both positive and negative effects depending on how, how often, and for what purpose children use these platforms.

Therefore, the international community must focus on creating safer and more supportive digital environments for children. This includes strengthening measures against cyberbullying, promoting digital literacy and mental health support, encouraging responsible platform design, and ensuring that children's voices and rights remain central to policymaking. As a UNICEF committee, delegates should consider how governments, technology companies, schools, families, and international organizations can work together to protect children while allowing them to benefit from the opportunities provided by the digital world.

A. Social Media Usage of Children in the Digital Age

Children and adolescents are in a critical phase of socio-emotional and brain development, making them more susceptible to the impact of social media. At this young age, the brain undergoes significant changes. This also coincides with an increase in social media use: between the ages of 9 and 16, the average time spent on social media goes up significantly.

Data across several EU countries show that on average 14 to 16-year-olds spend nearly twice as much time online than 9 to 10-year-olds.

Recent studies have shown that the use of technology can have an impact on the brain. Screen time may affect the pre-frontal cortex, which regulates self-control, decision-making, and

impulse regulation. Social media can also affect the amygdala, the region of the brain that processes emotions and anxiety.

Long-term exposure to social media and constant notifications may lead to increased anxiety, and thus even structural changes in the amygdala over time.

Children use social media for a range of reasons including entertainment and relaxation, social interaction, and engagement in news and current affairs.

Research examines associations between social media use and a range of possible impacts on children and young people, although most evidence cannot determine direct causation.

Research has identified several potentially beneficial associations between SMU (social media usage) and:

- community building, friendship and social connection
- identity exploration, affirmation and solidarity
- opportunities for learning, creativity and the development of financial literacy
- providing access to sources of support

This has created unprecedented opportunities for children and young people to communicate, learn, socialize, and play, exposing them to new ideas and more diverse sources of information.

But with these opportunities come serious risks. Cyberbullying and other forms of peer-to-peer violence can affect young people each time they log in to social media or instant messaging platforms. Over a third of young people in 30 countries report being cyberbullied, with 1 in 5 skipping school because of it.

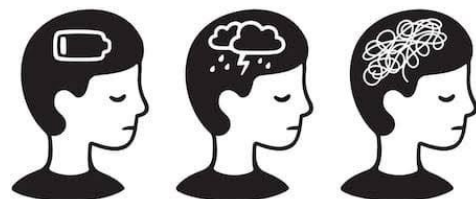
When browsing the Internet, children and young people may be exposed to hate speech and violent content - including messages that incite self-harm and even suicide.

Research also suggests that social media exposure can overstimulate the brain's reward system in ways similar to addiction. This may come from a need to escape from real world problems, reduce loneliness or feel more connected to the outside world. An increase in dopamine signals during scrolling or sharing content that receives attention can cause positive reinforcement that leads young people to return to the source often. The cycle can be especially hard for young people to break.

Naturally, it makes parents and researchers wonder if the internet is a safe place where children should go on freely.

B. Psychological Impacts of Social Media

The prevalence of mental health disorders among youth and adolescents has been rising at an alarming rate over the past few decades, with conditions such as anxiety, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, and body dysmorphic disorder becoming increasingly common. One contributing factor that has received growing attention is the role of social media and technology in shaping adolescent brain development, behavior, and emotional well-being.



While digital platforms provide opportunities for social connection, self-expression, and mental health support, they also introduce significant risks, including compulsive social

media use, cyberbullying, unrealistic beauty standards, and exposure to substance-related content.

Furthermore, the impact of social media on self-esteem has been linked to higher rates of body dysmorphic disorder and a rise in cosmetic procedure considerations, often influenced by digitally altered self-perceptions.

There is no clear evidence that screen time directly harms children's mental health. Although increased screen time can sometimes be associated with a higher risk of exposure to harmful content and abusive experiences. This suggests that the likelihood of encountering online harm is not primarily determined by the amount of time spent online.

1. Self-comparison

With so many posts across feeds, timelines, and social media apps, young people today may start to compare themselves and their lives to what they see on their screens. Social media can often promote an airbrushed ideal of the world, promoting singular ideals of life without flaws, messiness, or emotional struggle. For children still forming their sense of identity it can create a dangerous narrative that they are lacking as individuals in comparison to the 'ideal'.

Sometimes this can help them make sense of the world, be motivated, or get inspired. But other times this can negatively affect their confidence, self-esteem, and body image. With social media, changing beauty standards and constant comparisons, children and teens are increasingly struggling with their body image. They may not even be aware that they are

comparing themselves to others or recognize the negative thoughts that come with it. As body image concerns and body dysmorphia increasingly affect young people, early awareness has become crucial. Some kids and teens may look online to research treatments they don't need, hoping to "fix" a flaw. Social media can have content about unrealistic bodies that leads kids to compare themselves with — and obsess over — other people. Watching or reading upsetting content can cause feelings of depression, helplessness, or anxiety. It is important to be aware of how much time your kids spend online and what they see.

2. Psychological disorders

Many studies have linked social media use with anxiety, depression, self-injury and poor self-esteem in adolescents, with high use being most associated with negative outcomes.

While it's unclear why social media increases depressive symptoms, prior research points to



risks such as cyberbullying and disrupted sleep.

The rising prevalence and incidence of mental health disorders such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety disorders, addiction, and major depressive disorder (MDD) among

youth has become a major public health concern. Beyond these disorders, the addictive nature of social media is emerging as a critical issue, particularly among children and adolescents.

Recent studies indicate that approximately 24.4% of adolescents meet the criteria for social media addiction . This compulsive engagement with digital platforms has been associated with increased symptoms of anxiety, depression, and attention disorders, raising concerns about the long-term consequences of excessive screen time. The ease of access and

algorithm-driven content personalization contribute to a cycle of prolonged use, reinforcing addictive behaviors similar to those seen in substance use disorders.

The overuse of platforms where people share their exaggerated lives has been linked to lower life satisfaction, compulsive behavior, and an increased risk of developing psychiatric symptoms. While social media and technological advancements like artificial intelligence (AI) provide opportunities for creativity and socialization, these findings indicate that its impact on adolescent mental health is multi-faceted, requiring careful consideration of both its benefits and potential harms.

Examples of behaviors often seen in children with depression include:

- Feeling sad, hopeless, or irritable a lot of the time
- Not wanting to do or enjoy doing fun things
- Changes in eating patterns—eating a lot more or a lot less than usual
- Changes in sleep patterns—sleeping a lot more or a lot less than normal
- Changes in energy—being tired and sluggish or tense and restless a lot of the time
- Having a hard time paying attention
- Feeling worthless, useless, or guilty
- Showing self-injury and self-destructive behavior

C. Access to the Global Context

The rise in problematic social media use among adolescents raises significant concerns about potential impacts on young people. Researchers have found that problematic social media

users also reported lower mental and social well-being and higher levels of substance use compared to non-problematic users and non-users. This trend, if continued, could have far-reaching consequences for adolescent development and long-term health outcomes. Moreover, problematic social media use has been associated with less sleep and later bedtimes, potentially impacting adolescents' overall health and academic performance.

1. Digital trade-off and the dual nature of the internet

Untethered access to digital technology brings risks – to children's well-being and their mental and physical health. Evidence of the impact of technology use is mixed, with studies indicating both positive and negative associations between technology use and young people's well-being. Some online activities also have both positive and negative effects simultaneously. However, the most vulnerable young people disproportionately experience negative impacts. The relationship between technology use and mental health is bidirectional: increased screen time potentially exacerbates mental health issues, which in turn may drive further technology use. Additionally, a variety of individual and environmental factors shape young people's digital behaviours and experiences, which change over time.

“It's clear that social media can have both positive and negative consequences on the health and well-being of adolescents,” noted Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe. “That's why digital literacy education is so important. Yet it remains inadequate in many countries, and where it is available, it often fails to keep pace with young people and rapidly evolving technology.

I. Positive aspects of social media usage

Social media can provide benefits for some youth by providing positive community and connection with others who share identities, abilities, and interests. It can provide access to important information and create a space for self-expression. The ability to form and maintain friendships online and develop social connections are among the positive effects of social media use for youth. These relationships can afford opportunities to have positive interactions with more diverse peer groups than are available to them offline and can provide important social support to youth. The buffering effects against stress that online social support from peers may provide can be especially important for youth who are often marginalized, including racial, ethnic, and sexual and gender minorities.

II. Negative aspects of social media use

Extreme, inappropriate, and harmful content continues to be easily and widely accessible by children and adolescents. This can be spread through direct pushes, unwanted content exchanges, and algorithmic designs. In certain tragic cases, childhood deaths have been linked to suicide- and self-harm-related content and risk-taking challenges on social media platforms. This content may be especially risky for children and adolescents who are already experiencing mental health difficulties. Despite social media providing a sense of community

for some, a systematic review of more than two dozen studies found that some social media platforms show live depictions of self-harm acts. Further, these studies found that discussing or showing this content can normalize such behaviors, including through the formation of suicide pacts and posting of self-harm models for others to follow. In addition, social media platforms can be sites for predatory behaviors and interactions with malicious actors who target children

F. threat vectors

1. cyber bullying

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media,



forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing

embarrassment or humiliation

. In recent years, there has been an increase in the rates of cyberbullying parallel to the rise in Internet usage. Particularly among adolescents, the prevalence of cyberbullying and cyber victimization are quite high. Adolescents who cyberbully or cyber victim face serious mental

health problems. For this reason, efforts should be made to prevent adolescents from being exposed to these negative effects. It is crucial to identify the risk factors and protective factors related to cyberbullying, as they can guide preventive interventions.

Some cyber bullying examples include:

- **spreading lies about or posting embarrassing photos of someone on social media**
- **sending hurtful messages or threats via messaging platforms**
- **impersonating someone and sending mean messages to others on their behalf.**

I. cyber bullying versus real-world bullying

Past work has revealed a significant relationship between one's involvement in cyberbullying and affective disorders.

In traditional bullying situations, most incidents occur between the victim and a bully, or a group of bullies, within a school environment. These incidents can range from name-calling and verbal insults to more serious forms of bullying, including spreading rumors, harassment, threats, and physical harm. However, unlike victims of traditional bullying, who may have an opportunity to feel safe when they return home, victims of cyberbullying often have no such escape.

Cyberbullying does not end when the school day is over. It can occur at any time, including throughout the night, through text messages, social media posts, chatrooms, altered images and videos, and other digital platforms.

Cyberbullying can also leave victims with limited opportunities to defend themselves. Unlike traditional bullying, there may be no teachers or parents present to witness what is happening and intervene. In some cases, cyberbullying can be anonymous, making it difficult for victims to identify the person responsible or report them to an authority figure. Furthermore, social media allows harmful content to reach hundreds or even thousands of people within a short period of time, potentially increasing the emotional impact on the victim.

Even when victims know the identity of the bully and block their account, the harassment may continue through newly created accounts, text messages, messaging platforms, or the accounts of other individuals. As a result, cyberbullying can be particularly difficult to escape and can have a significant impact on a victim's sense of safety and well-being

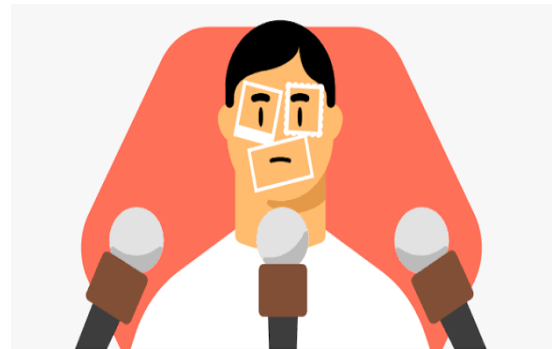
The effects of cyberbullying may not be immediately noticeable; however, over time, one or more of the following behavioral changes may become apparent and could indicate that an individual is experiencing cyberbullying.

- A drop in social behavior — avoiding friends or social events
- Isolating themselves in their room more than usual
- Becoming more quiet or withdrawn
- Finding it hard to concentrate on schoolwork
- Losing interest in activities that they normally enjoy
- Skipping school or expressing a desire to skip school
- Appearing angry when looking at their phone, tablet, or computer
- Hiding their phone or computer screen from view
- Expressing dark thoughts or emotions

Some effects of cyberbullying can also result in enduring feelings of embarrassment. Online bullying feels more permanent, especially when it is performed through social media posts that don't immediately disappear. It can lead to overwhelming feelings of exposure and distress to the individuals who's facing it.

2. AI generated deep fake

A deepfake is AI-generated synthetic media that mimics a real person: video, image, audio, or text using artificial intelligence to make something appear real. They can be used to create embarrassing, harmful, or sexualized images of children without their permission. This is becoming a serious online safety issue. . In 2026, the FBI, WEF, and Gartner now treat deepfake-enabled identity attacks as a top-tier enterprise risk. This guide covers the formal definition, the four types, how they differ from cheapfakes, and why the category matters.



The Four Primary Types of Deepfakes;

Facial Swapping; Facial Swapping involves substituting the face of an individual in an existing video or image with the likeness of another target person, typically achieved using deep autoencoders and Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs).

Facial Puppetry & Reenactment; Puppetry drives the facial expressions, head movements, and mouth articulations of a target individual using a driving video or audio stream, allowing bad actors to make real people appear to say or do things they never did.

3. Voice Cloning: Voice Cloning (Audio Deepfakes) synthesizes hyper-realistic synthetic speech matching a specific person's vocal timbre, pitch, accent, and inflection pattern using only brief audio samples, posing severe threats to voice-biometric authentication systems.

4. Generative Personas: Textual and Generative Personas construct fully synthetic digital entities or mimic specific human writing styles across messaging platforms and emails, facilitating highly sophisticated social engineering and spear-phishing campaigns.

Deepfake images can negatively affect children's mental health and emotional well-being. A child whose face is placed into a fake image may experience fear, embarrassment, anxiety, shame, or a loss of trust in other people. Even when the image is not real, the emotional consequences can be very real. UNICEF has emphasized that deepfake abuse can cause lasting harm to children.

The problem is particularly serious because fake images can spread quickly through social media. Children may worry that their classmates, friends, teachers, or family members will see the images. This can lead to social isolation, bullying, stress, and damage to self-esteem. UNICEF also reports that online abuse and cyberbullying can contribute to risks to children's mental health, including self-harm and suicidal thoughts.

Recent research shows how widespread the problem has become. A UNICEF, ECPAT and INTERPOL study across 11 countries found that at least 1.2 million children reported having their images manipulated into sexually explicit deepfakes during the previous year. UNICEF also found that many children are worried about AI being used to create fake sexual images of them.

3. Fake Profiles and the Online Disinhibition Effect

The online disinhibition effect refers to the lack of self-control felt when communicating online relative to offline. Six interacting factors create this effect: dissociative anonymity, invisibility, asynchronicity, solipsistic introjection, dissociative imagination, and minimization of authority. Rather than revealing an underlying "true self," disinhibition represents a shift in self-structure involving clusters of affect and cognition that differ from in-person dynamics. Anonymity leads individuals to perceive heightened safety by diminishing concerns over potential repercussions, such as physical harm or punitive measures. Beyond anonymity, factors including asynchronous communication, empathy deficit, individual personality variables, and cultural influences further contribute to online disinhibition.

I. Incels and Misogyny

The term 'incel' is a blend of the words 'involuntary celibate'.

Incels think they can't form sexual or romantic relationships. They blame this on their looks, how they see social structures, and their status in society. Its usage has changed over time, and now the term incel refers to an online subculture of predominately young, heterosexual men who believe they are unable to establish relationships. These self-proclaimed incels tend to blame society – and women in particular – for their lack of sexual or romantic experiences. The incel community has grown to be deeply ideological, promoting hate and violence against women across social media platforms.

Incel culture believes that some men will remain celibate due to women's choices and social structures. Core elements include:

- Fatalism about dating (the view that it's predetermined they will never date)
- Resentment toward women who are seen as shallow or manipulative

- Hostility toward men who are perceived as more attractive or successful with women.

Online forums amplify these ideas. They create echo chambers full of slang, memes, and shared frustrations.

When children and teenagers are repeatedly exposed to misogynistic content, it can influence how they understand gender, relationships, and themselves.

Research from UNICEF shows that online hate and harmful stereotypes can affect children's attitudes and contribute to negative ideas about gender. Boys may begin to believe that women owe men relationships or that rejection is unfair, while girls may develop negative ideas about their own value or appearance.

Research by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) also found that social-media algorithms can recommend increasingly misogynistic content to young users after they interact with similar material. This can create an online environment where hateful ideas seem normal and are reinforced by other users.

However, seeing this content does not automatically make a child misogynistic. Family, education, friends, and critical thinking can help children question harmful messages. Repeated exposure to online misogyny can influence children's beliefs about themselves, women, men, and relationships, which is why digital literacy and healthy education about relationships and gender are important for helping children recognize and challenge harmful ideas.

G. Digital Vulnerability

Digital vulnerability refers to the increased susceptibility of individuals, particularly children and adolescents, to risks and harms associated with their participation in digital environments. It is influenced not only by factors such as age, knowledge, and digital literacy, but also by the design of online platforms, the nature of digital interactions, and users' social and economic circumstances. Children are particularly vulnerable because they may have a limited ability to recognize, evaluate, and respond appropriately to online risks. According to UNICEF, children's increasing engagement with digital technologies exposes them to various risks, including cyberbullying, harmful content, privacy violations, online exploitation, and the misuse of personal data. Similarly, the OECD identifies several categories of online risks, including exposure to harmful content, inappropriate contact, harmful conduct, consumer-related risks, and privacy concerns, all of which can negatively affect children's health and well-being.

In addition to these risks, children can also be exposed to misleading or manipulative commercial practices. Personal data monetization and misuse, exploitative digital marketing and dark patterns – in which online platforms design interfaces that trap users into doing things they didn't mean to – all pose risks to a child's right to protection.

1. Child Sexual Exploitation and Online Grooming

Online grooming occurs when an adult uses electronic communication (including social media) in a predatory fashion to try to lower a child's inhibitions, or heighten their curiosity about sex, with the aim of eventually meeting them in person for the purposes of sexual activity. This can include online chats, and other interactions.

Also, Online grooming is a term used broadly to describe the tactics abusers deploy through the internet to sexually exploit children. It can happen quickly or over time, but at its core it is

a process of exploiting trust to shift expectations of what safe behavior is and leveraging fear and shame to keep a child silent. Technology did not create grooming—the process has existed in offline abuse—but the variety of platforms in existence, and the prominence of digital environments in our lives, has increased abusers’ reach and opportunity. Adults seeking to abuse children will go where kids are. As a result, grooming can theoretically happen just about anywhere online. Predators can reach children in video game chats, possibly creating fictional personas to develop a sense of kinship with victims, or portraying themselves as a trustworthy adult in a place where other adults are largely absent.

With the popularity of live streaming across online platforms, an interaction may start as something that feels harmless to the child. However, this type of action can quickly turn into something more concerning when an innocent moment is captured and shared elsewhere online or the interaction continues on over the course of time, with boundaries being pushed along the way. Any child can be at risk of being groomed, regardless of age, gender, race or location. Some children may be more at risk due to other vulnerabilities or special educational needs and disabilities, and may find accessing support from a trusted adult or online reporting tools difficult.

It’s not always easy to tell the difference between someone genuine and someone with bad intentions, especially for children. There are several warning signs to look out for when children or adolescents communicate with new people online:

1. The person may seem **too good to be true** by sharing all of the child’s interests, agreeing with everything they say, and giving them excessive attention or compliments. This may be an attempt to make the child feel special and gain their trust.

2. They may also **send a large number of messages** within a short period of time, sometimes contacting the child across different social media platforms or messaging applications.
3. Another warning sign is when they send **sexual messages** or introduce sexual topics into the conversation. They may initially make flirtatious comments about the child's appearance and gradually attempt to discuss sexual topics..
4. Another warning sign is when they attempt to **blackmail or manipulate** the child. They may threaten that something bad will happen or that they will stop communicating with the child unless the child does what they demand. If the child has already shared images or videos with them, they may threaten to distribute this content to other people. Such threats can be used to create fear, pressure, and control over the child.
5. They may also **avoid video or phone calls**, claiming that their camera or phone is not working. This may indicate that they are attempting to hide their true identity. However, even when the child sees the person on camera, this does not necessarily confirm their identity, as manipulated, recorded, or otherwise fake video content can also be used to deceive children.
6. Finally, they may try to **keep the conversation private** by encouraging the child to move the conversation to a more private platform, such as WhatsApp or Snapchat, or by asking the child not to tell anyone about their communication. They may also attempt to create fear or secrecy by suggesting that the child will get into trouble if they reveal the conversation to others. These behaviours can be important warning signs of online grooming and manipulation.

2. Lack of Personal Data Privacy and digital foot print

Increasingly, governments, corporations, social media platforms, websites, and other entities are collecting information about children that they willingly or unknowingly give out online. Even seemingly innocuous apps may now collect a wealth of data about them: their name, age, gender, physical address, email address, phone number, the particular device from which they access the Internet, their location, photographs, who their friends and family members are, and their interests and online activities. UNICEF explains that children's online activity can create digital records that may be difficult or impossible to erase.

This information may not seem dangerous when children share it, but personal data can reveal much more about them when different pieces of information are combined. Apps and websites may also request access to a child's camera, microphone, photographs, contacts, and location. UNICEF recommends checking these permissions and limiting access when it is unnecessary.



Social media use has become very common among young people, but the safety and privacy of these platforms are an increasing concern. Children may share photographs, videos,

comments, locations, school information, or personal details without realizing that this information can be viewed, copied, stored, or shared by other people. Once something is posted online, it may be very difficult to completely remove it. This creates a permanent digital footprint, which can potentially affect a child's reputation, relationships, education, and future opportunities. Although many governments are taking steps to introduce laws and regulations to protect children's privacy, these protections are not enough by themselves. Children also need to understand how to protect their own personal information.

The Main Risks of Sharing Personal Information Online

- Increased exposure to phishing and scams: Children may receive messages from strangers asking them to click on links, provide passwords, or share personal information. Scammers can use information found online to make these messages appear trustworthy.
- Real-time location tracking: Sharing a location through social media, photographs, games, or other apps can reveal where a child is or where they regularly spend time. This can create serious safety risks. recommends reviewing location permissions and limiting unnecessary access to location data.
- Potential for identity theft: Personal information such as a child's name, address, photographs, and other identifying information can be valuable to criminals. The FTC notes that children's online personal information can include physical location, photographs, recordings, and identifiers that can be used to track their activities.
- Exposure to cyberbullying: Social media can make it easier for people to send hurtful messages, spread embarrassing photographs, or bully others. UNICEF identifies cyberbullying and other forms of online violence as important risks for children.

- Risk of doxing: Someone with harmful intentions may collect information about a child from different websites and social media accounts and then publish private information without permission. This can put a child's safety and reputation at risk.
- Permanent digital footprints: Posts, photographs, comments, and videos can remain part of a child's digital history even after they are deleted. UNICEF recommends teaching children that what they do online can leave a lasting record and can have real-life consequences.
- Exposure to strangers and online exploitation: Children may communicate with people online without knowing who they really are. UNICEF warns that online perpetrators can be strangers or people a child already knows and may attempt to gain a child's trust before manipulating or exploiting them.
- Spread of misinformation: Children can encounter false or misleading information online. Because not everything on social media is reliable, children should learn to question information, check sources, and avoid immediately believing or sharing everything they see.

H. Possible Physical Ailments

Environmental studies, metabolic research, and state of the art research in neurobiology point towards the reduced amount of natural day and sunlight exposure of the developing child, as a consequence of increasingly long hours spent indoors online, as the single unifying source of a whole set of health risks identified worldwide, as is made clear in this review of currently available literature. Over exposure to digital environments, from abuse to addiction, now concerns even the youngest (ages 0 to 2) and triggers, as argued on the basis of clear

examples herein, a chain of interdependent negative and potentially long-term metabolic changes. This leads to a deregulation of the serotonin and dopamine neurotransmitter pathways in the developing brain, currently associated with online activity abuse and/or internet addiction, and akin to that found in severe substance abuse syndromes.

Some reviews discuss facts and figures to highlight that lack of exposure to natural daylight environments during childhood and adolescence is a direct consequence of worldwide internet penetration and massive digitalization. This represents a tangible risk to children's and adolescents' physiological, psychological, and cognitive well-being. Scientific evidence showing that insufficient daylight exposure triggers a chain of interdependent, negative, and potentially long-term effects on the regulation of a child's physiology will be brought forward. This includes the deregulation of brain mechanisms ensuring far vision, or long-distance visual capacity, vitamin D levels, and neural circuitry, in particular the serotonin and dopamine transmitter pathways, in the still developing brain. Complex causal links between different metabolic factors involved in a cascade of cause-effect chains, from digital environment to brain function and behavior, are then brought to the forefront. Many analyses lead to the conclusion that the health of future generations may be severely compromised if nothing is done to raise public awareness about the necessity for regulatory measures at individual and institutional levels that will effectively prompt children to change and self-monitor their interactions with digital environments wherever possible.

1. Disrupted concentration

Concentration disruption, which is usually made worse through digital reading, occurs when your concentration is frequently broken by outside distractions, forcing you to constantly refocus your concentration. This can be particularly important for children because their ability to control impulses and shift their attention is still developing. As a result,

notifications, messages, and other digital interruptions can interfere with their ability to concentrate, particularly during homework and schoolwork.

Digital reading environments inherently promote fractured attention through constant notifications, hyperlink architecture, and multimedia interruptions. Unlike the linear, immersive format of print media, screens can be designed to capture and redirect focus outward. Animations, sounds, highlighted features, notifications, and interactive elements can repeatedly draw children's attention away from the material they are reading. These rapidly changing features can attract children's attention but may also decrease their comprehension.

This structural difference can alter how children process information, encouraging rapid scanning rather than sustained engagement with a difficult text. However, it is important to recognize that digital reading itself is not always harmful to comprehension. The difference between reading on a screen and reading on paper depends on factors such as the type of text, the design of the digital environment, and whether the reader is being distracted. The problem is therefore not simply the screen itself, but the distracting features and multitasking that often surround digital reading.

Because hyperlinks constantly invite us to jump down new rabbit holes, every paragraph becomes a potential exit ramp, actively discouraging the mental stamina needed to untangle complex, nuanced arguments. When children frequently switch between reading, notifications, videos, games, and social media, they may become accustomed to processing information in short bursts rather than remaining focused on one demanding task.

Multitasking can also interfere with learning and productivity among young people.

V. Resolution should cover

- Prevention of cyberbullying and online harassment targeting children.
- Protection of children's mental health from the negative effects of excessive or harmful social media use.
- Prevention of kinds of body dysmorphia.
- Digital literacy and online safety education for children, parents, teachers, and caregivers.
- Age-appropriate and child-friendly social media policies, including stronger protections for children online.
- Accessible mental health support for children affected by cyberbullying or harmful online experiences.
- Reporting and response mechanisms that allow children to safely report bullying, harassment, or harmful content.
- Responsible platform design, including measures to reduce exposure to harmful content and prevent online harassment.
- Data privacy and protection of children's personal information on digital platforms.
- Training for teachers, parents, and professionals on recognizing and responding to signs of cyberbullying and digital-related mental health difficulties.
- Special consideration for vulnerable children, ensuring that digital safety and mental health services are accessible to all.
- Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of proposed policies and programs.

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