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LIMIT KIDS' ACCESS TO SOCIAL MEDIA

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SOCIAL media platforms are expanding their reach across all generations, from children to techsavvy seniors. But it is the growing participation of children that has become a worry. The vastness of social media's reach means that practically anyone can participate, regardless of their background or status.

Children can view, write or post content without supervision.

They may encounter many complex political and sociocultural issues that they don't understand or can explain with their knowledge or experience and, thus, become confused and frustrated.

The prevalence of misinformation, disinformation and unethical activities may impact their development.

Another concern is that children often struggle with time management.

Addictive media can consume a substantial portion of their time, which would be better spent on academic work, sports, debates, storytelling and dinner table conversations. Additionally, face-to-face interactions with different age groups, including seniors, are essential for their emotional and intellectual growth.

Unlike social media, these interactions do not carry the same risks.

While some argue that children should have autonomy and freedom of expression, it's crucial to ensure that this occurs in an authentic and secure environment, something that social media cannot always guarantee.

High-quality newspapers, magazines or journals (online or offline) designed for children can provide a platform for kids to express their opinions and write stories in a guided manner.

It seems unethical to expose our children to the complexities of the social media world before preparing them for this.

Gradual exposure to social media would be prudent.

Parents should be mindful of their own social media activities in front of their children, as these can serve as examples.

Academic institutions can create social media accounts for academic purposes, inviting students to participate in discussions under supervision.

A mandatory module on Internet security and privacy could be helpful.

Many of us are unaware of how to manage digital privacy.

The consequences of leaking personal information or falling victim to a hacked account can be severe, even life-threatening.

Real-world examples underscore the urgency of safeguarding our digital lives.

We have yet to develop a policy addressing these concerns.

Exploring age-appropriate guidelines for social media usage is gaining traction.

Countries are discussing the possibility of setting a minimum age for children to access these platforms. These regulations aim to strike a balance between digital literacy, online

safety and healthy development.

France has passed a bill mandating parental consent for minors under 15 years to access social media, aiming to reduce children's screen time and to boost their online protection. Florida has banned minors from having social media accounts until they turn 14. It's commendable that Malaysia is also taking steps to protect children by restricting access for those under 15.

However, there's a critical juncture between ages 15 and 17, when students prepare for their school final exams. The freedom from their 15th birthday onwards may impact some students' exam performances.

As such, the ultimate responsibility lies with parents to manage their children's social media use. Although laws and regulations play a role, it is up to parents to determine the boundaries.

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