Impact of the internet, social media on children: what is the role of pediatricians?

Johan Christian Silaen

Departemen Ilmu Kesehatan Anak, Fakultas Kedokteran Universitas HKBP Nommensen Medan

Article Info	ABSTRACT
Keywords: internet, social media, children, role of pediatricians	During the child and adolescent years, internet and social media use has a significant impact on social, emotional and mental health development. UN research shows that 47 percent of the world's population uses the internet, with one-third of them under the age of 18. Intense social media use, such as checking more than 10 times per day, can have negative impacts, including threats to personal safety, sleep disturbances and addiction. However, the internet also provides extensive access to information and strengthens social relationships. The role of pediatricians is crucial in educating parents and providing wise guidance on children's use of the internet and social media, including supervising, setting limits, and providing information on cyberbullying and sexual harassment. With proper supervision, children and adolescents can utilize the internet and social media positively without harming their mental health and development.
	Corresponding Author: Johan Christian Silaen Departemen Ilmu Kesehatan Anak, Fakultas Kedokteran Universitas HKBP Nommensen Medan

INTRODUCTION

Childhood is the initial period in life. A child's life is very complex, becoming the basis for human development in later life, such as adolescence and adulthood. Children's development at the beginning of life requires stimulation until this development reaches an optimal point. Humans develop starting from babies by getting to know and learn from the environment around them. All aspects and components that influence life starting from infancy require a complete combination of genetic and environmental factors that provide a place for development and learning.[1]

Childhood and adolescence are important periods of emotional and social development. One aspect that has developed dramatically in the last 20 years is the era's adaptation to information, communication and entertainment. The United Nations (UN) conducted research which estimates that 3.5 billion people use the internet or 47 percent of the world's population, of which one third is less than 18 years old.[2]

According to a recent survey, 22 percent of children and teens use social media more than 10 times per day, and more than 50 percent of young teens use social media more than once per day. More than 75 percent of teenagers now have their own mobile phones, 25 percent of them use social media, 54 percent use them for typing, and 24 percent of them use them for sending short messages. As one of the impacts, the social environment

and development of the current generation are greatly influenced when using the internet and social media.3

Adverse impacts that can occur on children and adolescents include personal safety, identity theft, invasion of privacy, exposure to inappropriate content, dependence on social media, and increased mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders. Some of these bad impacts are caused by a lack of parental supervision and safety in using gadgets. However, the internet and social media can also have a positive impact, namely access to broad information and strengthening relationships with friends who have the same interests. To increase this positive impact, parents must teach how to use the internet and social media well and wisely as part of their children's education.4

While the internet network provides many opportunities and benefits for children and teenagers, such as broad social relationships, establishing communication and improving learning abilities, it turns out that this also has many risks. Although the risks that arise do not always have a long-term impact, it is important to know when and how the internet and social media can be dangerous for children. 5

DISCUSSION

Socialization and Communication

Social networking via the internet can have a positive impact on a child's social development, increasing happiness and eliminating stress, where the internet makes it very easy to communicate with their friends. As an illustration, 51 percent of children aged 13 to 17 years in the United States reported communicating using social media. Good friendships and relationships can also be obtained through social media and the internet so this can be an important component in children's psychological development and well-being.5

The internet and social media also enable children and teenagers to complete many important tasks in everyday life such as connecting with friends and family, making new friends, sharing pictures and photos, and exchanging ideas. Apart from that, it offers to stay connected with oneself, the community and the whole world through, for example, raising money for charity events, through musical and artistic activities.3

Education and learning ability

The internet and social media also have an important role in children's education and learning abilities. Children can share ideas with classmates regarding assignments and activities, and from there they will get the latest resources or references and also expand their knowledge. The importance of sharing the knowledge they have with each other will make them have better knowledge and achievements because they increase each other's knowledge and learn from the experiences of fellow students. In order to do and achieve this, it is necessary to have a good communication group.5 Several schools have succeeded in using story columns as a learning method which can later be accessed by students via the internet.6

Health Information Source

Teenagers can also find information related to diseases and health problems via the internet. They also have the opportunity to join several communities or groups that have the same diseases and health problems, for example diabetes, bronchial asthma, cystic fibrosis and other chronic diseases. Together with this community, they can discuss or share concerns and find answers and support through related organizations. The thing to remember is that the information obtained may not be conveyed properly and could be misunderstood. Therefore, parental supervision is still needed in obtaining information regarding health problems. 5,6

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a form of behavior carried out via electronic and digital media by a person or group which is carried out repeatedly by giving messages or utterances that aim to disturb and cause a dangerous effect on other people. If cyberbulling is compared to conventional bullying, it can be very dangerous because anyone who wants to do this can do it to the victim at any time. This can also be done aggressively because the person who will do cyberbullying can do it anonymously, and the effects can be worse than conventional bullying. What's more, the perpetrator will be able to use a fake identity against his victim.5

On the other hand, this has become something that is very common, can arise in any condition and has an impact on deep psychological aspects such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, and even suicide.6

Sexual harassment and sexting of children

Child sexual abuse is defined as a child or teenager who is sexually abused if they participate in pornographic content, either as a participant or as a viewer in the form of videos, photos, recordings, films, and any other form with the aim of exploitation. Related to this, one form of sexual harassment is sexting.7

The term sexting is defined as sending messages, receiving messages, or forwarding messages that explicitly contain sexual content such as photos, images, videos via computers or electronic media. This can spread quickly via the internet and social media and the population that often interacts with and accepts things like this are teenagers. A study states that 20 percent of teenagers who use the internet and social media send pictures of themselves naked or semi-nude. The impact is that teenagers who do this can be threatened with punishment and expelled from school.6,7

Mental Health Disorders

Mental health in children and adolescents due to use of the internet and social media will be disturbed if there are things or substances that damage mental and emotional health as evidenced by disorders such as anxiety, depression, withdrawal, emotional decline, and even developmental delays.7 A study in Singapore and Korea found that young female adolescents aged 13 to 18 years experienced disturbances in self-confidence and self-esteem. This is caused by using smartphones, especially social media, for more than 3 hours every day.8

Many children are influenced by the advertisements they see on the internet, and this has a very strong influence on their daily behavior and life habits, and many do not realize that they are individually targets due to the spectacle they continue to see every day. .8 Young teenagers today are dependent and can become dependent on the internet and social media by watching for hours on end. This can also disrupt their usual daily activities, for example disrupting eating, sleeping, studying, exercising and other productive activities. Ultimately what happens is that learning achievement at school decreases or even does not advance to a grade. This is also a concern, it turns out that during school hours many children and teenagers use the internet and social media, even checking their social media notifications more than 100 times.9

A systematic review study in Canada stated that children who use the internet and social media for more than 3 hours have the potential to experience mental disorders. This is related to the effect of using virtual media which disrupts children's emotional and social development, which leads to mood and behavioral disorders, and in adolescents, this has an even greater impact.10

The role of pediatricians on internet and social media use

Pediatricians have a unique and special role in educating about the complexity of the virtual world and its challenges in children's health and children's social behavior, which many children experience, such as bullying, popularity, depression, social anxiety, and things related to children's sexual disorders. In this case, the pediatrician can help parents understand what is happening and the problem, which will help them respond and provide direction on what actions should be taken. 5,6

Several roles that pediatricians can play 6

1. Encourage parents to talk to their children about their use of the internet and social media in relation to problems that occur
2. Encourage parents to take time to monitor internet and social media use, and teach children to use it wisely
3. Discuss with the family about the need to use online media and require settings in electronic devices that limit access to things that are dangerous
4. The importance of discussing with parents the regulations and limits on internet and social media use and playing a role and monitoring what children see and search for on the internet and social media
5. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) advises all pediatricians to increase their knowledge about the use of electronic media and technology so that pediatricians are expected to have references and descriptions that will be shared with parents, in this case it can be used as a tool to provide guidance in anticipating problems. which often occurs related to the use of the internet and social media in children.5,6
6. Pediatricians must be able to provide appropriate guidance in using the internet and social media for parents, and follow-up consultations
7. The role of pediatricians is very important to provide direction and advice on the use of social media, such as: 5
   a. Parents must know the types of social media that children often use

b. Parents must be aware of issues related to cyberbullying such as Facebook depression syndrome
c. Get to know sites or website addresses that are competent and have a good reputation for children's educational and emotional development
d. Communication more frequently regarding children's use of the internet and social media
e. Inform children of the positive and negative impacts of continuously using the internet and social media

CONCLUSION

Nowadays, the use of the internet and social media among children and teenagers has become an unavoidable necessity. The internet and social media are the most widely used methods for many things such as communication, gaining knowledge, socializing, finding as much information as possible, and becoming a source of learning. There are many positive and negative impacts that can be had due to the use of the internet and social media on children and teenagers. Proper supervision from parents and assistance from pediatricians can help children and teenagers use the internet and social media appropriately so that they can avoid bad impacts such as pornography, mental and psychological disorders, and developmental disorders in children. Parents must be at the forefront in monitoring and limiting children's use of the internet and social media, so that their use can achieve the right targets and have a good influence on children and teenagers.

REFERENCE

Fadilah AS. The influence of social media on early childhood growth in the era of the NET generation. Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research. Atlantis Press. 2018:(249);250-6

McBride DL. Risks and Benefits of Social Media for Children and Adolescents. J Ped Nurs. 2011:(26;)498–9

O'Keefe GS, Pearson KC. The Impact of Social Media on Children, Adolescents, and Families. Pediatrics. 2011:(127);800–4

Dyer T. The effects social media on children. DJIM 2018:(18):1-16

Hadjipanayis A, Efstathiou E, Altorjai P, Tom Stiris T, Valiulis A, Koletzko B, Fonseca H. Social media and children: what is the paediatrician's role? Eur J Pediatr. Springer.2019. hal 1-8

McDoll E, Powell P, Roberts J, Taylor K. The internet and children''s psychological wellbeing. J Health Eco. Elsevier. 2019.hal 1-20

Ahmad N, Abdullah R, Damit N. the impact of media social on children: an overview. International Journal for Studies on Children, Women, elderly, and Disabled. 2018:(4);258-75

Yang H, Wang JJ, Tng YQ, Yang S. Effects of Social Media and Smartphone Use on Body Esteem in Female Adolescents: Testing a Cognitive and Affective Model. Children.2020[]149);1-19

Keles B, Mc Crae N, Grealish A. A systematic review: the influence of social media on depression, anxiety and psychological distress in adolescents. Intr J of Adol Youth. 2019. hal 1-16

Hamm Mp, Shulhan J, Williams G, Milne A, Scott SD, Hartling L. A systematic review of the use and effectiveness of social media in child health. BMC Pediatrics. 2014:(14);1-15