

Should social media come with an age restriction of 18+?

Introduction

This Project explores the positives and negatives of social media usage, and how it can negatively affect children more than adults, bringing up the question of whether it should be restricted to only those over 18+

I chose this Project topic because social media is gradually becoming more and more of a fundamental part of all of our lives, and it is important to know the risks that come with its usage, as these are mostly little-known.

This Project links to my other subjects in that it delves into human psychology, which is a subject that I am interested in studying in the future. It also has aspects of history and philosophy, when comparing social media to other major inventions in the past, and when questioning the ethics of social media.

This Project links to the wider context of technology as a whole in that it explores its uses for entertainment over the years, and why social media is so much more addictive and dangerous in comparison to videogames or television, which young people in the past would have spent their time on.

The objectives of my Project are: to find out more about some of the psychological and mental effects of social media, both positive and negative; to learn about the ways that social media companies hook their users; to learn about the way that social media usage can be correlated to disorders such as depression and anxiety; and to improve my abilities to research effectively, to plan and write a balanced essay, and to produce a project over a long period of time.

AO1
clear
rational
linked to
P.P.F.

Research Review

"The Social Dilemma" is a documentary written by Jeff Orlowski, Davis Coombe and Vickie Curtis, directed by Jeff Orlowski and distributed by Netflix in 2020. This is a primary source and is closed access. This source is relevant to my research question in that it gives a variety of effects of social media, and shows the impact it has on modern society clearly. From this research, I learnt about the ways that social media is designed to keep your attention, despite deterioration to your health or wellbeing, as well as some of the ways that it uses your data. This source helps me place my research question into the wider context of the research area by clearly outlining the issues with social media in our modern society and by giving succinct reasons for them. The source scores 14/15 using the CRAAP method because it was written in 2019 and released in 2020, which is relatively recent. The source gives me useful information that relates to my main question directly. The organisation responsible for its distribution is very well-known and the team behind its actual making are also experienced, having made other documentaries in the past. The source is trustworthy in that a lot of the information that I have learnt from it appears in different forms in many other sources, meaning the information is reliable. Finally, the purpose of this source is to spread to the public all of the negatives that come with social media. However, this means that it leaves out many positives. Overall, this is a reliable source for academic work because it scored 14/15 using the CRAAP test method. (The Social Dilemma, 2020)

AO2 -
appropriately
described
documentary
source

AO2 -
strong sense of
source
reliability

AO2 -
correct
citations

✓

"Impact of Social Media on Youth" is a lecture delivered by Katanu Mbevi and distributed in 2019 by TED. This is a primary source and is open access. This source is relevant as it is about the negative effects that social media has, as well as commenting on ways it can be used positively. From this research, I learnt how insecurity is often caused by comparison with others on social media, and how the response to a post made online can affect this too. This source helps me place my research question into the wider context of the research area by explaining three ways social media can negatively impact its users, but also showing how it can be used positively, adding points to both sides of the argument. The source scores 13/15 using the CRAAP method because it was written in 2020, which is relatively recent at the time of writing. The source addresses my question and gives me useful information relating to the negative effects that social media can have on youth. The organisation behind its distribution, TED, is very well-known and gives a platform to hundreds of speakers yearly to voice their opinions. The source is trustworthy in that it gives detailed statistics and explains them. However, sources are not shown. Finally, the purpose of this source is to share with the viewer the effects that social media can have, and to advise them to be careful when using it. It is not asking them to completely stop it, nor is it telling them that it has no positives and is just harmful. It gives a balanced explanation. Overall, this is a reliable source for academic work because it has scored 13/15 using the CRAAP testing method. (Mbevi, 2020)

A02 - strong sense of source reliability

developed reliability. A02

A02 - correct citation style

"How many years does a typical user spend on social media?" is an article written by Marium Ali and published in 2023 by Aljazeera. This is a primary source and is open access. This source is relevant to my research question in that it provides me with a variety of useful statistics to use in my discussion. From this research, I learnt roughly 60% of the population uses social media, and that on average, people spend 2 hours and 30 minutes using it per day. This source helps me place my research question into the wider context of the research area by comparing statistics and facts about my topic and giving me a brief history of it so I can better understand it. The source scores 14/15 using the CRAAP test method because it was written in 2023, the same year that I am accessing it. The source addresses my question and gives me useful information regarding the history of my topic and statistics that will be helpful when writing my discussion. The author isn't particularly well known, but the company behind the source's distribution is. The source is trustworthy in that it cites its sources, and I have cross referenced some of the facts with other online articles. Finally, the purpose of this source is to inform people on how much people use social media, some of the effects that social media has, and to provide a brief history so that the readers can better understand these statistics from an unbiased standpoint. Overall, this is a reliable source for academic work because I have given it 14/15 points using the CRAAP test method. (Ali, 2023)

A02 - strong sense of source reliability

Good evaluation A02

A02 - correct citation

"Mom sues social media giants for allegedly driving her 11-year-old daughter to suicide" is an article written by Penelope Lopez and Leda Alvim and published in 2022 by ABCNews. This is a primary source and is open access. This source is relevant to my research question in that it gives an example of one of the effects of social media by actually using a real-life happening. From this research, I learnt how social media algorithms are designed to simply keep you hooked, often disregarding your mental health. This source helps me place my research question into the wider context of the research area by describing one of the actual events that has happened in the past as a result of a high usage of social media. The source scores 13/15 using the CRAAP method because it was written in 2022, which is relatively recent at the time of writing. The source addresses my question and gives me useful information regarding the way social media algorithms actually work, and the effects

that using social media has. The authors are somewhat well known, but the company that distributed the article is a large, well-trusted news station in the USA. The source is trustworthy in that it gives quotes from those affected, cites its sources and comes from a well-known organisation. Finally, the purpose of this source is to tell people about this story, as well as to spread some of the effects of social media to the public. Overall, this is a reliable source for academic work because it scored 13/15 using the CRAAP test method. (Alvim & Lopez, 2022)

AOZ

“Social media isn't bad: you're just using it wrong” is a lecture delivered by Eva Amin and distributed in 2022 by TED. This is a primary source and is open access. This source is relevant to my research question in that it gives a variety of reasons why social media isn't as bad as it is made out to be, helping me to write my 'against' arguments. From this research, I learnt that social media is often used in negative ways, but the social media experience can easily become positive if a few simple changes are made. This source helps me place my research question into the wider context of the research area by showing the benefits of social media, and how it shouldn't always be viewed as negatively as it is. The source scores 14/15 using the CRAAP method because it was written in 2022. The source addresses my question and gives me useful information regarding my topic, helping me write some defences for social media. The organisation behind its distribution, TEDx, is extremely well known, and distributes dozens of other similar talks monthly. The source is trustworthy in that it clearly describes why social media is used negatively, and explains how it can be used positively using detailed and logical arguments. Some sources and anecdotes are also given. Finally, the purpose of this source is for the speaker to share her opinion on how social media isn't always a bad thing, and how this stigma surrounding it isn't necessarily true. Overall, this is a reliable source for academic work because it scored 14/15 using the CRAAP test method. (Amin, 2022)

Good range AOZ

Developed AOZ

AOZ

“Is there a 'right' age for kids to be on social media? 'I certainly don't think anyone under 13 should use it', expert says” is an article written by Tom Huddleston Jr and published in 2023 by CNBC. This is a primary source and is open access. This source is relevant to my research question in that it explains in great detail how social media can more seriously negatively affect children than adults. From this research, I learnt that children's brains fundamentally function differently to adults, meaning that their lives and wellbeing can be more seriously disrupted. This source helps me place my research question into the wider context of the research area by comparing the effects of social media on its two main target audiences. The source scores 13/15 using the CRAAP method because it was written in 2023, the year that I am accessing it. The source addresses my question and gives me useful information regarding the effects of social media on children. The author is a senior reporter in CNBC, a large news station in the USA. The source is trustworthy in that it was distributed by a trusted news corporation, and has a lot of information from experts with sources cited. Finally, the purpose of this source is to share the effects of social media, and how they vary from adults to children. Overall, this is a reliable source for academic work because it scores 13/15 using the CRAAP test method. (Huddleston, 2023)

Relevance AOZ

“Is Youth Mental Health Getting Better or Worse?” is an article published in 2024 by Action For Children. This is a secondary source and is open access. This source is relevant to my research question in that it offers statistics and evidence which will help me write my first paragraph in the discussion. From this research, I learnt about not only the way that the mental health of young people can be affected negatively by social media, but by a variety of other things, such as school pressure or the pandemic. This source helps me place my research question into the wider context of the research area by showing that not all youth mental health problems are linked to social media. The source scores 12/15 using the

Relevance

AOZ - strong source reliability

CRAAP method because it was written in 2023, which is relatively recent at the time of writing. The source addresses my question and gives me useful information regarding the mental health of the young generation. The organisation is well-known and reliable, as it is a charity that has been helping children for over 150 years. The source is trustworthy in that it gives sources and explanations for each of the statistics it gives. Finally, the purpose of this source is to educate the wider public on the state of mental health among youth and to comment on some of the reasons. Overall, this is a reliable source for academic work because I have awarded it 12/15 using the CRAAP test method. (Action For Children, 2023)

A02



"TikTok and the Death of the Attention Span" is an article written by Jui Zavery and published in 2023 by The Oxford Blue. This is a secondary source and is open access. This source is relevant to my research question in that it explains the ways in which social media affects the attention span, and overall cognitive function. From this research, I learnt that platforms like TikTok are hugely detrimental to the attention span because of the short-form content in them, but also that many people are attracted to these platforms because they provide quick, easy entertainment. This source helps me place my research question into the wider context of the research area by explaining one of the largest negatives of social media, and giving some statistics on how people are affected. The source scores 14/15 using the CRAAP method because it was written in 2023. The source addresses my question and gives me useful information about the effect of social media on attention span. The organisation is a well-known newspaper, and the source is trustworthy in that the organisation is trusted by Oxford University and has won awards, in addition to the source giving references and statistics. Finally, the purpose of this source is to educate on the subject matter, that being attention span and its relation to usage of social media. Overall, this is a reliable source for academic work because I have awarded it 14/15 using the CRAAP test method. (Zaverri, 2023)

A02



"How social media is tracking you & collecting your data" is an article published in 2022 by ZiphCyber. This is a primary source and is open access. This source is relevant to my research question in that it lists the ways that social media can track the information from its users, and explains how it negatively uses it. From this research, I learnt that a huge amount of information of the user is tracked, and it is used to create accurate models of the user in order to better personalise advertising. This source helps me place my research question into the wider context of the research area by explaining how almost all social media companies do this, and how the only true way to be safe from it is to cut out social media completely. The source scores 13/15 using the CRAAP method because it was written relatively recently, in 2022. The source addresses my question and gives me useful information regarding the way that social media tracks its users. The organisation is well known and has created many articles in the past detailing how to stay safe online. The source is trustworthy in that it gives clear data and explains it well. Finally, the purpose of this source is to make people aware of how social media is tracking them, so that they can make a better, more informed decision on whether or not they should continue to use it. Overall, this is a reliable source for academic work because I gave it 13/15 using the CRAAP test method. (XiphCyber, 2022)

A02 - fantastic range of sources covered & evaluated.



top M32 agreed
highly relevant & developed evaluators of reliability

Discussion

One of the main reasons that social media should be restricted to adults is the great effect it can have on mental health, as this is particularly prevalent in children. In the last 4 years, the number of children aged 5-16 who will likely have a mental health problem has increased from 1-in-8 to 1-in-6, and the number of people with a probable mental health issue for people aged 17-19 has gone from 1-in-6 to 1-in-4 (Action For Children, 2023). These statistics

A02 - effective written communication

directly line up with the popularity of social media among children around this time period, so there is clearly some correlation. One of the main reasons that social media can lead to these problems is because of the way that the social media algorithms work. The algorithms of social media platforms are designed to maximise the user's time spent using it, regardless of the effect on them (The Social Dilemma, 2020). This means that content showing people living perfect, idyllic but completely unrealistic lifestyles is recommended to users, therefore causing them to be dissatisfied with their own. This can sometimes be positive, and inspire people to change their lives for the better, but it is more common for this to lead to depression, anxiety, eating disorders, body dysmorphia etc. This is not helped by the fact that the majority of people will only post the highlights of their lives, and only post the best pictures of themselves, in an attempt to live up to these standards, which only ends up spreading the issue. Children are especially affected by this, and there have been many depression cases and even suicides in the past. An example is Selena Rodriguez, who had been suffering from depression and poor self-esteem as a result of a Snapchat addiction before she killed herself on the 21st June, 2021 (Alvim & Lopez, 2022). Children shouldn't be able to choose to take this risk by using social media, so it makes sense for only adults to be able to use it, once they are fully responsible for all of their decisions.

excellent synthesis A03.

However, directly contrasting this, the social media algorithms can sometimes play a huge positive role, as they allow content to be shared to huge amounts of people, both children and adults. From 2019 to 2022, a YouTuber called "MrBeast" raised \$20 million to plant 20 million trees around the world to combat climate-change (BusinessWire, 2022), and this simply would not have been possible if children watching his videos weren't asking their parents to donate. In addition, without the audiences that social media can reach, stories like Gary Larock's would have never ended happily. In January 2023, Gary posted on social media that he needed a kidney donor urgently, otherwise he would die. Luckily, a woman called Cecilia Hendy stepped up to the task and donated one of her kidneys without hesitation (Fox News, 2023) which saved Gary's life. Not only this, but countless non-profit charities and organisations are only able to function because of the support that they receive online, predominantly through social media. Another advantage of social media's wide reach, which was briefly mentioned earlier, is the way it can positively impact the life of a child or adult. This could be by encouraging them to start going to the gym, or by teaching them a new skill or hobby. People are encouraged to do things that they never otherwise would have thought to do and, even if they don't enjoy it, they will have at least tried, and have had a new experience. Therefore, social media can play a very important role in the lives of everyone by encouraging them to do new things, and it can also be used in positive ways which can help people all around the world, due to its wide reach and accessibility, which is a reason why everyone, not only adults, should be able to use it.

counter argument A03.

In contrast, the wide reach of social media can be negative, as it can cause inappropriate content to be exposed to anyone using it. This could be violence, pornography, or fake news. Social media companies are making an effort to crack down on this in a variety of ways, such as creating platforms specifically for kids, or by increasing moderation on the main platforms. However, neither methods have been particularly successful. Reports show that the majority of teenagers are or have been exposed to pornography online (Common Sense Media, 2023), and that real-world extreme violence online has been seen by roughly two thirds of teenagers online (Norton, 2023). However, the issue of fake news can be a lot more harmful than both of these, especially to children, as it can give them a false worldview. Many children and teenagers will believe almost all of what they see online, and as deepfake technology gets more powerful and more people start spreading disinformation online, the problem just worsens. The main reasons that disinformation is spread are either political or money related. Regarding the former, children's opinions on certain topics may be swayed without them

range of news A03.

A02

A03

A02

A03

A02 - sources linked to project A03

A03 - sense of balance

A02

even realising it, or they might develop prejudices against certain groups as they don't know any better (The Social Dilemma, 2020). They could possibly grow up and join a hate group as a result of consuming propaganda like this at a young age, as they are more easily influenced (Huddleston, 2023). Regarding the latter, people online will say whatever results in more views, and therefore more money. Although there isn't really malicious intent, many children are negatively affected as the majority of this information will be false, and their perception of the world will be changed for the worse. Therefore, it is important that children shouldn't use social media, as they can be exposed to inappropriate content, and can consume disinformation which can negatively affect their future.

AO2 - sources linked to project outcomes

On the other hand, on the topic of news, social media can be a great place to keep up-to-date, and even be educated for young people (Amin, 2022). It is true that many people will intentionally spread disinformation online, which can have negative impact on a child when they grow up, but as long as children are taught not to trust everything they see online, social media can be quite a useful tool. Also, as time goes on, moderation will just become better, and this will become less of a threat. As social media is very accessible to most children and teenagers, it is great for staying informed on current events. Most trustworthy news stations have social media accounts on apps such as YouTube or TikTok, which allow people to process the news and what it means in a way that is more understandable to them (Heins, 2023). Social media apps can also just help people learn new things overall. They can teach people to cook or to play a sport. Another point is that social media can be used to help people learn about new cultures or places, without any travel required. This can help people become educated and have a wider, more open worldview. Therefore, as social media can help people stay up to date with current affairs, and teach them about other cultures and help them learn new skills, it should be able to be used by everyone, so that everyone can receive these benefits.

AO3 - good understanding of topic

AO3 - raised views

AO2 - sources used effectively

However, another large issue with social media is the fact that it makes cyberbullying a much larger problem, which mainly affects children. Research shows that roughly 20% of children have been bullied repeatedly online (Security.org, 2023). The reason that cyberbullying has become so prominent is that it is impossible for most victims to escape it, and that it is a lot harder to be caught and held responsible for it than face-to-face bullying. Before social media, victims of bullying would only really have been affected outside of their house, but now, since most children and teenagers are unable to put away their phones, it continues wherever they are (TeensHealth, 2022). Furthermore, not everybody is aware of how to report others on social media and will often retort. This can negatively affect both the bully and the victim in the future, as everything posted online stays there, which could make it harder for them to find employment in the future, as an example (Cooper, 2021). Also, cyberbullying can be anonymous, which makes it impossible to stop as it is often not even known who is doing it in the first place. Apps like Send It only help with this, and actively encourage anonymous messaging. Even worse, social media makes it possible for contact to be made between children and complete strangers, which could lead to inappropriate relationships, or just add to the cyberbullying problem. This is also an issue in many online games, where a lack of moderation causes people to have huge arguments and make extreme threats. Cyberbullying has become such a large problem in recent years due to the way it affects mental health and self-esteem, which seems to be a recurring theme in the negative effects of social media. Therefore, due to the way that it makes cyberbullying such a large problem, social media should not be available for children who are more likely than adults to experience it.

AO3 - logical ordering of points

AO2 - sources linked to project outcomes

Despite this, if children are educated properly on how to use social media safely, it can really be beneficial to their ability to contact friends and meet new people (Mbevi, 2020). Social media can help millions of people all over the world to connect, which means children will

AO3 - sense of balance

have an easy way to contact friends and family without a large risk of cyberbullying if certain precautions are taken, and this make things like planning events so much easier. The original aim of social media was to help people connect, and it is still an incredibly powerful tool for this. It can help people stay in contact from long-distances or help people to reconnect with others that they might not have spoken to in person in years. People can simply give somebody their phone number in person, and then properly acquaint themselves online, which is almost always more practical if time isn't in abundance. It also provides a platform for people to stay up to date with the lives of their close friends and families, which only makes their connections stronger. Social media can also be used so that many people with shared interests can discuss topics online that might not be well known to others in their real-life social circle, which can really benefit some individuals. It can create entire online communities built around certain hobbies or film series (Gaglio, 2021). Therefore, due to the ways in which it can be used to connect with others with complete ease, and because it can help like-minded individuals meet each other, social media should be able to be used by everyone, as long as there are precautions in place.

However, there are some great negative effects that simply cannot be avoided through precautions like these. These include reduced attention span, sleep deprivation, and, ironically, poorer social skills. Attention span is mainly negatively affected through scrolling apps like TikTok, which are entirely comprised of short, 30 second videos. This leads to people being unable to focus for longer amounts of time, as, with platforms like this, the user can simply skip past videos that don't completely grasp their attention within a few seconds. This is made worse by the fact that so many people depend on these apps for quick entertainment, as in their mind it is easier to watch a few short videos than to watch a film, yet they end up scrolling for hours. In a survey on TikTok users, 50% said that videos longer than a minute long were stressful (Zaveri, 2023), which is ridiculously short. For children in school, this can have disastrous consequences for their future, as they are unable to concentrate in lessons. Even at home, if a phone is a constant distraction, it can be impossible for people to do anything productive, as it is too tempting to start scrolling. Time spent on social media can also have negative effects for sleep and wellbeing, but this will be discussed in more detail later. Finally, an overindulgence in social media can cause many children to simply be unable to talk to others, as the only social interaction they usually receive is through a screen. This can seem like an exaggeration, but it is getting more and more common. Many people who spend a lot of time gaming online or in chatrooms become worse at holding eye contact, or being able to pick up non-verbal cues. Even people who regularly speak with friends in person can be negatively affected by this, as the need to meet up in real life becomes less important if they can simply send a text message. This can also have negative consequences for their future of children as it might be more difficult to perform well in a job interview, and can lead to mental health issues as a result of less social contact. Another way that social media affects its users' ability to communicate is the way that users are forced to use ultra-shortened, and generally incorrect English. This can be convenient at the time, as they are typing, but this "internet slang" does carry over to real-life interactions for many children, which I know from my own experience. This negatively affects their communication skills. Therefore, as it is very damaging to attention span and can reduce social skills, both of which can make life more difficult as an adult, social media should not be able to be used by children.

On the other hand, social media can be a great form of entertainment for children and adults alike. This is because most of the content is created by its users, meaning that it can appeal to the majority of people (Holmes, 2010). It is also vastly more accessible than other forms of entertainment, such as films or video-games. Both of these require a device to use, and a purchase. In addition, after the film/game is complete, there is no choice but to purchase something new. For social media, this is different as new content is constantly being

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A03-
clear connections between topics
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A02

A03
excellent evaluative writing.

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A02

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A03-
excellent topic connections

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A02

uploaded. On average, an hour of YouTube content is posted per second. (Bullas, 2017). Furthermore, all social media platforms only require two things – a device and an internet connection, which most people in the modern day will have access to. There are no mandatory purchases to use most social media apps, which, combined with its ease of use and entertainment value, make it an incredibly versatile form of entertainment. Because of this, it can be used by almost everyone, regardless of their wealth or interests (Sharma, et al., 2021). Also, it can be used in a much larger variety of situations than most other forms of entertainment, due to the nature of its short videos. Someone would rather watch a few Instagram Reels while waiting for a bus, rather than watching 2 minutes of a film. Social media has also greatly increased in popularity over the past few years, largely due to the pandemic. In early 2019, TikTok had roughly 300 million users, which is over 6 times less than its 2 billion users today (Iqbal, 2024). This growth has been amongst both adults and children, and wouldn't have been possible without the accessibility and entertainment of social media. Also, like most entertainment forms for children, social media can be used to spread positive messages and teach lessons, like children's books or cartoons (Amin, 2022), only with a greater audience. Therefore, due to the versatility of social media as a form of entertainment, it should be able to be used by both adults and children.

A03-
Detailed
topic
knowledge
A02

excellent
summary
of
research
well
cited
A03

The entertainment value provided by social media, however, can be a curse in the form of addiction. Addiction to social media has become extremely prevalent among children, and, though it is not a physical addiction, a social media addiction can definitely be compared to an alcohol or drug addiction (The Social Dilemma, 2020) due to its dopamine release, yet it is available for all age groups. In a survey, it was revealed that the average US teen spends 4.8 hours on social media daily (Rothwell, 2023), and this number is similar to that of teenagers all around the world. The age that spent the highest amount of time on social media per day was 17, at 5.8 hours. Furthermore, this value will simply increase as social media gets more popular. Many of the participants also revealed that they thought that so much time spent on social media was negatively affecting them, but they couldn't stop themselves from using it. The survey also showed that TikTok and YouTube are the most popular platforms, which is interesting as these apps involve less socialising than most other platforms, and mainly involve short videos posted by strangers. YouTube also does have long-form content, but it is more likely that these teenagers watch mostly Shorts (an initiative by YouTube that is essentially TikTok) as it fits the pattern of short-form video content being especially addictive. This is because these types of videos release a large amount of dopamine into the brain, similar to drugs or junk foods (The Social Dilemma, 2020). Social media companies are also taking advantage of the fact that people are easily addicted to this type of content by rebranding this same idea. This can be seen through Instagram Reels, Snapchat Spotlight etc, which are all essentially the same thing. Some of the effects of an addiction to social media that have been discussed previously are poor mental health, reduced attention span and an altered world view. There are also some negatives that can be applied to almost any addiction, such as lack of sleep, which can be particularly detrimental to children who require more of it. Another is decreased physical activity, which could potentially lead to weight problems, and possibly mental health problems as a result. A dependency on social media can also make it very difficult to cope without it, if, for whatever reason, it is taken away. Therefore, as it is simply extremely addictive, and an addiction to it will have serious consequences, social media should only be able to be used by adults who accept the risk.

A03
Summary

Contrarily, social media's wide usage can be beneficial to the economy in a variety of ways, and it is a growing industry, meaning that these benefits will continue to increase (Cui, 2021). There are many ways in which money is circulated through social media, the main one being through advertising (Moorthi, 2023). Social media platforms tend to be almost entirely free, which means that their income comes from predominantly external companies paying for

A02

A03-
logical
ordering

A02

adverts in their platform. Advertising has been proven to support the economy, as it encourages people to purchase new products from a variety of business, both large and small. Also, many social media companies run "creator initiatives", in which they pay their most popular users to continue to create content that drives people to the platform. This means that uploading YouTube or TikTok videos is becoming a full-time profession, where money is made and then circulated (Hund, 2023). Many of these content creators also make further money through sponsors and partnerships, further adding to the benefits to the economy that social media as an industry can provide. This simply would not be possible if all of social media's younger users were unable to use it, as they account for a large amount of all social media users. Therefore, as their use of it can greatly benefit the economy, teenagers and children should be able to use social media along with all age groups.

✓
A02

✓
A03

However, the way that advertising tends to work on social media usually accesses a huge amount of information on the user's device without their knowledge. An average user, who doesn't upload or livestream any of their own content, is at a risk of their location, IP address, browsing data, text message history, and device information being tracked. This is in addition to all the information given when registering, such as name, age, possibly credit card details, and all of the details on the average person's profile, such as face, job, hobbies etc. There is also a greater risk for people who upload content that is publicly available, as this only adds to the information online that anybody could access, including the social media company itself. Furthermore, there is a huge amount of data being tracked while using the app normally. Virtually everything the user does while using the app is being collected and stored. This includes how long the user spends watching each video, which types of videos they like or comment on, who they are subscribed to and for how long, which people they contact more often than others etc. Most users are not even aware of this, as they don't often read the Privacy Policy and Terms and Conditions. All of this data is being collected in order to create a realistic, online likeness of you, so that social media can predict how you would react when shown something on their app. The Social Dilemma does a great job of portraying this. This likeness of the user is typically used for advertising. A common misconception is that these apps actually sell the data, when instead they just use it to give more personalised, relevant advertising, increasing their chance of buying a certain product (The Social Dilemma, 2020). The saying, "If you don't pay for the product, then you are the product," clearly applies here, as these third parties are benefitting more from social media than the users. Also, as technology advances, the methods used for data mining and personalised advertising are only going to get more powerful, especially with the rise of AI. Some countries and states have already banned apps like TikTok on government devices, to prevent this getting any further (Sabbagh, 2023). Also, touching on a point from earlier, social media makes it possible for strangers to contact you, which inevitably leads to scamming and phishing. The only way to truly be safe from having your entire life mapped out by social media is by not using it. Therefore, as it virtually tracks your entire online existence, a majority of your physical one, and can simply puts a huge amount of personal information at risk, social media should not be able to be used by children, who are especially vulnerable and not entirely aware of this.

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A02

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A03

Evaluative writing
A03

My final argument is one that has been suggested by many of my friends and relatives that defend the use of social media for all age groups, and it is that social media is relatively new, and it is too early to come to conclusions. 50 years ago, when TV became commonplace in most households, many parents were concerned about their children watching too much of it, and believed it had many negative effects. 50 years before that, this argument would have existed for radio. Both of these things are extremely common now, and many parents would probably prefer their children to watch television than to scroll through TikTok. My point is that it is in human nature to want to be resistant to change, and to even be scared of it if this is not possible. However, the only way that humans can move forward is by embracing it, as

✓
A03

interesting comparison.

there is simply no alternative. Therefore, as it is simply too early to come to negative conclusions about the nature and effects of social media, and it is better to move forward with humanity's advancements rather than shunning them, social media should be able to be enjoyed by users of all ages.

My final argument for the restriction of social media for people under the age of 18 is that the internet is such a powerful tool, yet it is being wasted by people mindlessly scrolling. (Mbevi, 2020) It can be used to educate or to learn, and yet people are simply destroying their attention spans and spending hours a day watching people online preach topics of which they have no knowledge. The arguments that "it's too early to make conclusions" and "people think the same way about anything new" become obsolete when considering how different the nature of social media is to virtually any other entertainment form. It is far more addictive, can be far more damaging to mental health and is far more dangerous, but is becoming so widespread and used that this is acceptable. The fact that nearly all children regularly use it is proof of this. There are certainly some positives, but can it really be said that they outweigh all of these negatives? Therefore, as it simply comes with a plethora of negative effects that are especially impactful on children, it should be restricted to only the use of adults who are aware of and accept the risk.

Conclusion

In response to the question, "Should social media come with an age restriction of 18+," I conclude that it should be, for a variety of reasons. I mainly believe that all of the negatives that have been previously discussed vastly outweigh the positives, especially effects to mental health and addiction. Something like social media might also be easier to restrict by governments than most physical items used by teenagers, such as vapes or alcohol, as it is entirely online, and advanced technology could be used to determine the age of the user. If this were to happen, although it would be difficult for many children who will struggle to cope without social media, I believe that it will ultimately be a positive change that will end up causing many teenagers and children to spend more time with family, friends, and being able to focus more in school. This Project could be extended by conducting further research into how these effects will impact these children in the future. This would mean waiting until the current generation of teenagers and children are adults, and seeing what differences there will be to their lifestyles, compared to adults at the moment, as a result of consuming a large amount of social media as a child.

Evaluation

Whilst undertaking this Project, I have learnt a great deal about the effects of social media and the ways in which it keeps its users hooked. I also learned of many ways in which social media has impacted the real lives of various people, both in a positive and negative way. This has also changed the way that I view and use social media, as I can now see it through a new perspective. My original aims and objectives, as set out in Section 1 of my Project Proposal Form, were to find out more about some of the psychological effects of social media, both positive and negative, to learn more about the methods used by social media companies to get people to use them more, to learn more about how social media can increase the chance of some people getting disorders such as depression or anxiety, to find out more about some of the mental effects of social media, such as lowered attention span and to improve my skills at researching effectively, planning and developing an argument, writing a conclusion and evaluation and completing a project over a long period of time. I

A02

A03

A04 -
conclusions based
on evidence.

A04 -
ideas for
follow up
research

A04

see also
oral
presentation
A04

A04 -
clear reflections
on objectives

believe that I have achieved all of these goals to a good level, especially learning about the effects of social media and researching effectively.

I have learnt a great deal about the research process, in particular how to cross-reference information from sources to ensure accuracy.

There were some limitations to my methodology which included not properly planning how long each section would take. I had created a rough plan, but underestimated how long certain sections would take, resulting in me having to work on some sections simultaneously.

With hindsight, I should have taken into account how long each section for my FPQ dissertation was, and used that to help me properly plan out how long I should spend writing each section. I also have tried to find a larger variety of sources, as the majority of mine are articles or lectures.

I have learnt skills such as researching effectively and writing formally and coherently, which will help me in the future if I were to complete a PhD or something similar.

From completing my oral presentation, I learnt about the importance of being concise when creating a presentation, and I worked on my public speaking skills when I delivered it. I could have given clearer responses to the questions asked, as I felt that I repeated points just with different phrasing until I settled on a way that I could say my point properly. However, I believe that, ultimately, completing this oral presentation has improved some skills that I might need in the future.

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Not effective reflection

Not sense of skills learned

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RR1
RR9
RR5

AO2 - correctly formatted bibliography

Wide range of sources AO2

Appendices

Project question:	
Arguments in favour: 'Yes' because...	Arguments against: 'No' because....
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Younger people compare themselves to influencers living an idyllic, unrealistic life which can lead to depression, anxiety, insecurity and eating disorders 2) Most scrolling apps (e.g. Instagram or TikTok) are awful for attention span and general cognitive function, which can affect life in school, which is bad as the youth is the future, and education is important. It also reduces social and writing skills as less people are talking face-to-face, and most people don't even use correct English when sending messages 3) It makes cyberbullying a massive problem, which affects millions of people and has led to suicides in the past. It also makes it possible for strangers to contact you, which can be dangerous. 4) Young people are just getting addicted to it, spending far more time that is healthy using it per day, because social media sites are actively trying to make their sites as addictive as possible. Average time spent using it per day is over 3 hours, and for teenagers is nearly 5. It is just unhealthy to do this for this long, and effects include less sleep and overall less physical activity 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Social media can help people connect from all over the world and brings millions of people together everyday. It also makes it a lot easier for friends to contact each other to organise plans, or something similar. 2) Social media can help keep young people up to date on current events such as the news, through apps like TikTok or YouTube. Some could even argue that there is some educational value in some videos 3) Social media can be used to advertise which can help grow businesses, posting on social media is slowly becoming a job, with users being paid if they get enough views or likes, making it overall beneficial for the economy 4) Social media can provide entertainment quickly, and on the go, unlike something like film which must have a significant amount of time set aside to experience it. The argument that it decreases attention span can apply to all media and entertainment, so does it really make sense to say this? 5) Social media can reach a large audience, which can help multiple people work and collaborate together.

<p>5) Younger people can get exposed to inappropriate content, such as violent videos or pornography, that should not be viewed by people their age. There is also a lot of fake news that can sound realistic, but the people who post it most likely just made it to be as attention grabbing as possible, to get more clicks and subsequently a higher paycheck.</p> <p>6) Social media apps often can access a lot of the sensitive information on a mobile device, often without the user even realising this. There are rumours and allegations that some companies are selling this information. This can lead to data being hacked, money being stolen or identity theft.</p> <p>7) The Internet is an incredibly powerful tool, that should be used to improve oneself, to learn new skills and to learn new information. It should not be used so much on social media, which can and does negatively impact millions of lives, even if it is not consciously noticed at the time. There are obviously some positives, but do they really outweigh all of the negatives?</p>	<p>In 2019, a youtuber called Mr Beast raised \$20,000,000 to plant 20,000,000 trees to help the environment. Multiple nonprofit charities and organisations can also receive more donations by advertising on social media rather than television. It can also help people make positive changes in their lives</p> <p>6) There has always been an argument that “the next thing” can be harmful for young people. This exact argument would have existed 50 years ago, but for television. 50 years before that, for radio. It is in human nature to be resistant to change, but it is inevitable. The world is always evolving, it is better to evolve with it.</p>
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Jay Patil

Level 2 Higher Project Qualification:

‘Should social media come with an
age restriction of 18+?’

*AO4
Evaluation*

Abstract

- Social media is growing in popularity and usage all around the world, and is being used by both adults and children
- This project looks at its advantages and disadvantages, and aims to answer the question “Should social media come with an age restriction of 18+?”
- It contains an introduction, research review, discussion, conclusion and evaluation, all of which have slides in this presentation
- After writing, I reached the conclusion that, ultimately, it would be more beneficial for young people not to have access to social media, due to the amount of negative effects

Introduction

- This project explores the effects, usage and data related to social media, in order to answer the project title
- I chose this topic because of the massive increase in usage of social media in recent years, especially among young people, and wanted to learn more about its effects
- Some of the aims of this project were find out more about some of the psychological and mental effects of social media, both positive and negative, to learn about the way that social media usage can be correlated to disorders such as depression and anxiety, and to improve my abilities to produce a project over a long period of time.
- This project links to my other subjects in that a great part of it is related to psychology, a subject that I am interested in studying in the future, and contains some themes of history and philosophy

Research

- For this project, I researched a range of sources. These include documentaries, articles and lectures.
- Research for this project was somewhat difficult, but made easier by the fact that awareness of the effects of social media is becoming more widespread
- The most useful source included in my research review was “The Social Dilemma”, a Netflix documentary that discusses in great detail many effects of social media
- In addition, I asked many adults and children around me on their opinions on this topic, and factored this into my discussion, though this isn’t cited

Research (continued)

- In addition to writing research review paragraphs for 9 sources, in which I looked at the currency, relevance, authority, accuracy and purpose of the source, I used and cited many other sources that didn't provide as much information, but were still useful.
- In total, much of the time to complete the project was spent on research, as I did it while completing various other sections. I feel that this large amount of time really helped me to understand my topic, and write my conclusion in a better, more informed way.

Discussion

- My discussion contains 13 arguments – 7 “for” and 6 “against”. It has an alternating “for” and “against” structure
- While writing, I thought a lot about how each point related to the central question, and made sure to cite sources that provided relevant information
- Before fully writing up, I filled in a table of arguments so that I knew how to properly structure the essay. I used this to help me write my arguments in an order that flowed naturally
- Out of all the sections, the discussion has gone through the most amendments and revisions, in addition to taking the most time to write. This is probably because of how it needs to be unbiased, while also using a lot of detail.

Discussion (continued)

- My arguments “for” were:

1. Social media can lead to depression and other similar disorders due to unhealthy comparison to people with idyllic lifestyles
2. Social media can easily spread inappropriate content to young people, which includes disinformation and fake news
3. Social media makes cyberbullying a massive problem, which can affect millions of children in various ways.
4. Short-form videos shared on platforms such as TikTok are greatly detrimental to attention span, and social media as a whole can, ironically, reduce social skills as most interactions are through a screen
5. Social media is extremely addictive, and teenagers spend ridiculously long amounts of time on it per day. It releases large amounts of dopamine in a similar way to alcohol or junk food
6. There is a large amount of personal information that social media companies have access to, and they use this to further personalise your advertising. This is also very dangerous if they were to be hacked
7. Social media has simply too many negative effects for the positive effects to be worth anything, and the internet is too powerful of a tool to be wasted on it

Discussion (continued)

- My arguments “against” were:
 1. The wide reach of social media can be used for many positive things, like charity, and can also encourage wide range of people to pick up new hobbies
 2. Social media can be a good place to follow the news and current affairs if used properly, and trustworthy sources are used
 3. It is a great way to connect with friends and family, and can help people meet others with similar interests
 4. It is can be an easily accessible, high-quality form of entertainment, as recommendations are personalised, and most platforms are free
 5. It can benefit the economy in a variety of ways, as “social media creator” is practically a career now, and it creates a whole new realm for advertising
 6. It is too early to come to concrete, negative conclusions about social media, as it has existed for too short of a time. Similar arguments existed against TV and radio when they were new, too.

Conclusion

- My conclusion for the project was that social media should be restricted to people over 18, due to its many negative effects among children and teenagers
- I reached this conclusion based on all of the arguments that I had written, in addition to the sources I used
- The project could be extended by researching how children and teenagers who have grown up on social media will be affected in adulthood by it

Evaluation

- From completing this project, I learned a lot about the positive and negative effects of social media, and more about the topic as a whole
- I improved my skills at planning a large project, researching effectively and writing to inform
- In hindsight, I could have more efficiently planned how long each section would take to write, as I had to complete some simultaneously
- I also could have tried to find a wider variety of sources, so that my final conclusion would have been more informed

Questions?