

Chapter 3

Social Media and Children

Mustafa Ersoy

Cumhuriyet Universitesi, Turkey

ABSTRACT

As a result of high-tech developments and the increase in the importance of the global communication, social media websites and applications have occurred as a new way of communication and self-expression in the contemporary world. Globalization has forced people to obtain and spread the necessary information quickly, and due to this requirement, people of all ages have had to acquire digital skills which they utilize to meet their need of learning and being informed about the issues happening around the world. Social media tools and applications are being highly and commonly used all round the world by all kinds of people from all ages in order to express themselves, get to know other people, share their opinions and learn others' opinions on the world issues, socialize, and have fun. Regarding its effects on children, social media has both advantages and disadvantages.

INTRODUCTION

Social media refers to the environments that change the way people communicate, interact and socialize and, in the meantime, allow people to express themselves as they want, using internet infrastructure.

Social Media is a platform that enables its users to participate in activities and events identified as its content as a way of communicating with their social circles including other users in the system and society, to share their own opinions by bringing them together to create their own content (Cohen, 2011). Although interaction and communication between social media users are emphasized in this definition, Fredman (2013) divides social media platforms into two different groups as interactive and non-interactive social media environments.

According to the way Fredman (2013) distinguishes social media platforms, interactive social media environments provide a way for users to communicate. Outputs of the software programs that make this communication among users possible depend on input from registered users in these environments to the system. In other words, all kinds of information and interpretation that users share in the system directly affect the output of the programs. Digital and electronic devices, software, touch tablets, applications, video games, interactive screen-based media such as Facebook, MySpace, game play sites, club penguins,

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blogs and YouTube are directly influenced by the output of virtual site programs and they are designed according to these outputs. Non-interactive social media platforms, on the other hand, do not provide an interactive experience. These environments consist of content that electronic devices cannot change, such as songs, movies, photographs, news articles, online images, and ads that appear on sites. These include digital copies of television programs, DVDs and CDs that have been shipped to the market. In summary, interactive social media environments are social media sites where users interact with each other and create their own content through their sharings and comments, while non-interactive social media platforms are the social media sites where users listen to music files and watch the video files that are added to the content without communicating with each other and sharing their own content.

Whether it is interactive or noninteractive social media environment, it is an undeniable fact that social media tools exist and occupy a huge part of modern life. Therefore, it is important that their uses and effects be searched in detail and people, especially parents, be aware of their both positive and negative effects on children and behave accordingly.

BACKGROUND

Increasing Trends About Social Media and Its Uses

In the 21st century, the breathtaking pace of the developments and innovations occurred in the field of high-tech and the increased networking and communication means as a result of these advancements have made people develop digital skills in order to keep track of this rapidly changing information era. Especially, the Z generation have found themselves in a highly digital world in which they have to acquire the digital skills. In today's world, there are children who actively use all the social media websites through the applications in their mobile phones. The fact that communication technologies and the internet are getting more and more accessible from every other day has made it possible to spread the so-called social media tools, applications and services (Boyd, 2008: 92). The fact that people can perform activities such as introducing yourself, getting to know others, sharing and spreading their own opinions and ideas, learning others' ideas and information, having fun, playing games, advertising and organizing events quickly and economically makes social media highly widespread all around the world. When compared to the real life, the cost of doing all the aforementioned activities in the virtual world seems to be quite economical in terms of business, time and other costs. It is also seen that the conditions of competition and business union in the real world change in virtual environment.

It can be said that the increasing trend of the internet which started to be used in the 1990s is continuing and social media is one of the important driving forces in this trend. The fact that naturally, human beings are in the effort of socialization and the decrease of the resources that he has to spend for this effort contributes to the continuation of this upward tendency in internet use. Nearly all Internet sites, such as shopping sites, training and research sites, news sites, forum sites, etc., have social media links in the Internet.

According to the 2017 We Are Social data (We Are Social, 2017), 3.77 billion people, which is equal to almost 50% of the world's whole population, use the internet while 2.8 billion people, which corresponds to 37% of all the people living in the world, use social media. 4.92 billion mobile users make up 66% of the world's population and 2.56 billion are social media users.

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