

## Social Media and Its Impact on Common Sense of Children

\*<sup>1</sup>Geetanjali Verma

\*<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Drawing & Painting, S.M.M. Govt. Girls College, Bhilwara, Rajasthan, India.

### Abstract

Although the social media has become essential part of our life. People are not able to live without social media, though it has many pros and cons. Common sense is obviousness of anything. The impact of social media on common sense cannot be neglected in our day to day life. We have many examples of lack of common sense around the world. No one can deny its negative impact on mental health of children. Children are more prone to any kind of positive or negative impact of social media. Regarding impact of social media on mental or physical health issues several studies are undergoing and their results are giving a very shocking and devastating picture of our children. They are lacking concentration and attentiveness towards the situations or activities happening around them. They are living in a fake, virtual, dreamy world of social media and not realizing the actual or factual situations. They must be aware of the consequences around them due to social media and potential risks of it. But they are not aware of the logics and are not using their common sense. They just rely upon the fake world around them and are alone among crowd. Many times they lose their common sense and fall prey of cyber bullying or even relying upon the unknowns may cause them have to face many awkward situations. We all are very well aware of such incidences through Newspapers, Television, Survey s, Studies etc. One reason behind this lack of Common Sense is children are learning maximum things through Internet or Social media because they rely upon them except their Family, Friends and Teachers. They are having very less sharing and caring with their near and dear ones. They just get irrelevant information at just a click. They don't have practical experiences but have only virtual ones. To have Common sense one have to have experiences in life so they can feel or learn something and can get used to of obviousness of their life's experiences. Like we have to smell a flower to have an idea of that flower's particular smell so we can use our common sense of recognizing that flower at a look and correlate it with that smell. It's an important process of learning too. I am afraid we will be responsible for not saving the childhood of this generation. It is our first priority and responsibility to secure their future and let them bloom as natural as to be. We will have to spend time with them and make them learn through experiences but not through any virtual media. Make them sensible and logical towards whatever comes to them in life.

This research paper examines the multifaceted impact of social media on the development and exercise of common sense in children. As digital platforms become increasingly integrated into childhood experiences, understanding their influence on practical reasoning, judgment and everyday decision-making becomes critical. This paper explores both the detrimental and beneficial effects of social media exposure, analyzing how these platforms reshape children's cognitive development, social intelligence, risk assessment abilities and critical thinking skills.

**Keywords:** Common Sense, Cyber bullying, Learning Process, Logical thinking, Social Media, Social Responsibility, Virtual World.

### Introduction

Common sense, traditionally understood as sound practical judgment concerning everyday matters, represents a crucial component of child development. It encompasses the ability to make reasonable decisions, assess risks, understand social norms and navigate daily situations with appropriate judgment. However, the digital age has introduced unprecedented variables into this developmental equation, with social media platforms fundamentally altering how children interact with information, peers and the world around them. The paper presents a balanced view, acknowledging that social media's impact is complex—neither wholly positive nor negative—but dependent on multiple factors including how it's used, the level of adult guidance and the child's developmental stage.

With children as young as eight years old accessing social media platforms and adolescents spending an average of 4-6 hours daily on these platforms, the question of how this exposure affects their practical reasoning abilities has become increasingly urgent. This paper investigates the complex relationship between social media usage and common sense development in children, examining both the cognitive and

social dimensions of this phenomenon.<sup>6</sup> How social media distorts reality perception and critical thinking, effects on risk assessment and social skills development, positive impacts like expanded information access and digital literacy, the role of age, parental guidance and usage patterns, practical recommendations for parents, educators, platform designers and policymakers and neurological considerations during brain development.

### Defining Common Sense in the Digital Age- Traditional Components of Common Sense

Common sense traditionally comprises several key elements:

- **Practical Reasoning:** The ability to make sound judgments in everyday situations.
- **Social Intelligence:** Understanding unwritten social rules and interpersonal dynamics.
- **Risk Assessment:** Recognizing potential dangers and consequences.
- **Contextual Awareness:** Adapting behavior appropriately to different situations.
- **Experiential Learning:** Drawing lessons from direct

personal experiences.

### Digital-Era Modifications

The digital landscape has introduced new dimensions to common sense, including digital literacy, online safety awareness, information verification skills and understanding of virtual versus real-world consequences. Children must now develop common sense that operates across both physical and digital realms, creating new developmental challenges.

### Negative Impacts on Common Sense Development-

**Distorted Reality Perception:** Social media platforms present highly curated versions of reality, with filtered images, staged scenarios and selective sharing creating skewed perceptions of normal life. Children exposed to these distortions may develop unrealistic expectations about appearance, success, relationships and lifestyle, undermining their ability to make grounded assessments of real-world situations.

The prevalence of influencer culture and viral content can lead children to believe that extreme behaviors, luxury lifestyles and constant excitement represent typical experiences. This distortion interferes with the development of realistic expectations and practical judgment about what constitutes normal or achievable in everyday life.

**Diminished Critical Thinking:** The rapid-fire nature of social media content, characterized by short-form videos, memes and bite-sized information, may reduce children's capacity for deep, analytical thinking. When information is consumed in fragments without context or verification, children may fail to develop the habit of questioning sources, considering multiple perspectives or thinking through consequences before forming opinions.

The algorithmic curation of content creates echo chambers where children are primarily exposed to information confirming their existing beliefs, limiting exposure to diverse viewpoints essential for developing nuanced understanding and practical wisdom.

**Impaired Risk Assessment:** Social media platforms often glamorize risky behaviors through viral challenges, dangerous pranks and attention-seeking stunts. Children exposed to these normalized risks may develop impaired judgment about real-world dangers, viewing potentially harmful activities as acceptable or desirable because they generate online engagement. The disconnect between virtual or online actions and immediate physical consequences can lead children to underestimate risks in both digital and real-world contexts. When negative outcomes are not immediately visible or are minimized through editing and framing, children may fail to develop appropriate caution and risk awareness.

**Reduced Face-to-Face Social Skills:** Heavy social media use correlates with decreased opportunities for in-person social interaction, where children learn to read body language, interpret tone, understand social cues and navigate complex interpersonal dynamics. These face-to-face experiences are fundamental to developing social common sense.

Children who primarily interact through screens may struggle with understanding context-dependent social rules, reading emotional nuances or responding appropriately in unscripted social situations. The ability to handle conflict, show empathy and build genuine relationships requires practice in real-world settings that social media cannot fully replicate<sup>[2]</sup>.

**Attention Fragmentation and Shallow Processing:** The constant stream of notifications, updates and new content trains children's brains for distraction rather than sustained

focus. This fragmented attention pattern interferes with the deep processing necessary for learning from experiences and developing sound judgment. Common sense often requires reflection and consideration, capacities undermined by the attention-scattering nature of social media<sup>[2]</sup>.

**Instant Gratification and Impulsivity:** Social media platforms are designed to provide immediate feedback through likes, comments and shares, creating expectation patterns around instant gratification. This conditioning can erode children's patience, persistence and ability to delay gratification—qualities essential for making sensible long-term decisions and exercising practical judgment.

### Positive Impacts on Common Sense Development-

**Expanded Information Access:** Social media provides children with unprecedented access to diverse information, experiences and perspectives from around the world. This exposure can broaden understanding, challenge provincial thinking and help children develop more comprehensive worldviews. Educational content, expert insights and real-time global events accessible through social platforms can enhance knowledge that informs better decision-making.

**Digital Literacy and Safety Awareness:** Navigating social media requires children to develop new forms of common sense specific to the digital age. They learn to identify suspicious accounts, recognize phishing attempts, protect personal information and understand privacy settings. These digital safety skills represent an evolution of common sense appropriate to contemporary life<sup>[2]</sup>.

**Consequence Learning Through Observation:** Social media allows children to observe the consequences of others' decisions without direct personal risk. Watching peers face repercussions for poor choices, witnessing public accountability for inappropriate behavior and seeing how actions spread through digital networks can provide valuable lessons that inform children's own decision-making.

**Community Building and Support Networks:** For children in isolated communities or facing unique challenges, social media can connect them with supportive communities, mentors and resources that contribute to their development. Access to diverse role models and support systems can enhance judgment by providing multiple perspectives on handling life situations.

**Social Awareness and Civic Engagement:** Social media exposes children to social issues, current events and civic discussions that can enhance their understanding of broader societal concerns. This awareness can cultivate empathy, critical consciousness and informed perspectives that contribute to more thoughtful engagement with the world.

### Mediating Factors-

**Age and Developmental Stage:** The impact of social media on common sense varies significantly with age. Younger children with less developed cognitive abilities and limited real-world experience are more vulnerable to negative effects. Adolescents, while more cognitively mature, face heightened peer influence and identity formation pressures that can amplify social media's impact on judgment<sup>[6]</sup>.

**Parental Involvement and Guidance:** Children whose parents actively discuss social media content, model critical thinking about online information, set appropriate boundaries and maintain open communication about digital experiences show more resilient common sense development. Parental mediation serves as a crucial buffer against negative effects<sup>[3, 6]</sup>.

**Educational Context:** Schools that integrate digital literacy education, critical media analysis and discussions about online behavior help children develop frameworks for exercising good judgment in digital spaces. Educational interventions can significantly mitigate negative impacts while amplifying positive ones.

**Usage Patterns and Time Investment:** The quantity and quality of social media engagement matter substantially. Moderate, purposeful use differs dramatically from excessive, compulsive scrolling. Children who use social media primarily for creative expression, learning or maintaining meaningful relationships show different outcomes than those engaging primarily in passive consumption of entertainment content.

### Neurological and Cognitive Considerations-

**Brain Development during Childhood:** Children's brains, particularly the prefrontal cortex responsible for executive functions including judgment and decision-making, remain under development through adolescence <sup>[7, 8]</sup>. Heavy social media use during these critical developmental periods may influence neural pathway formation, potentially affecting long-term capacity for reasoned judgment and impulse control.

### Dopamine Systems and Reward Learning-

Social media platforms exploit dopamine reward systems through variable reinforcement schedules that create compelling engagement patterns. This neurochemical conditioning can override developing judgment systems, training children to seek immediate rewards rather than considering longer-term consequences.

### Case Studies and Real-World Examples-

**Viral Challenge Participation:** Numerous documented cases of children participating in dangerous viral challenges—from the Tide Pod challenge to risky physical stunts—illustrate how social media can override common sense judgment. These incidents reveal how peer pressure amplified through digital platforms and the desire for online validation can lead children to make decisions they would likely avoid in offline contexts.

**Misinformation Acceptance:** Studies show that children frequently fail to verify information encountered on social media, accepting claims at face value without critical evaluation. This credulity represents a breakdown in common sense skepticism that would prompt questioning in traditional information contexts.

**Positive Adaptation Examples:** Conversely, some children demonstrate enhanced problem-solving abilities, having learned from online tutorials, developed creative skills through digital communities or found support for personal challenges through social media connections. These cases illustrate that social media can supplement traditional common sense development when used thoughtfully.

### Recommendations for Stakeholders-

**For Parents:** Parents should establish clear guidelines around social media use, including age-appropriate time limits, content restrictions and device-free zones.<sup>4</sup> Regular conversations about online experiences, modeling critical thinking about social media content and maintaining awareness of children's digital activities help protect common sense development. Co-viewing and discussing content together provides opportunities for teaching judgment and

critical analysis.

**For Educators:** Schools should integrate comprehensive digital literacy curricula that teach information verification, critical media analysis, online safety and ethical digital citizenship. Encouraging real-world problem-solving activities, face-to-face collaboration and experiential learning helps balance digital exposure with traditional common sense development opportunities.

**For Platform Designers:** Social media companies bear responsibility for creating age-appropriate features, implementing effective age verification, designing interfaces that encourage thoughtful rather than impulsive engagement and prioritizing child safety over engagement metrics. Algorithmic changes that promote quality over virality could reduce exposure to content that undermines sound judgment.

**For Policymakers:** Legislation should protect children's online privacy, regulate targeted advertising to minors, require transparency in algorithmic content curation and mandate age-appropriate design standards. Funding for research into social media's developmental impacts and support for digital literacy education would help address these challenges systematically.

### Future Perspectives for Research

Several areas warrant further investigation, including longitudinal studies tracking common sense development across different social media usage patterns, neurological research examining how social media exposure affects developing brain structures related to judgment, cross-cultural studies comparing impacts in different social and regulatory contexts and intervention studies testing effectiveness of various protective measures and educational approaches.

Understanding the mechanisms through which specific platform features and usage patterns affect practical reasoning would enable more targeted protective strategies. Research should also explore potential positive applications of social media for enhancing common sense through intentional design and educational integration.

### Conclusion

Social media's impact on children's common sense is neither uniformly positive nor negative but represents a complex interaction of multiple factors. While digital platforms pose genuine risks to the development of practical judgment, critical thinking and risk assessment abilities, they also offer opportunities for learning, connection and developing new forms of digital-age common sense.

The key to protecting and promoting common sense development lies not in wholesale rejection of social media but in thoughtful mediation, age-appropriate boundaries, active parental and educational involvement and platform designs that prioritize child wellbeing. Children growing up in the digital age need to develop common sense that operates effectively across both physical and virtual contexts.

As social media continues evolving, ongoing research, adaptive educational strategies and responsive policy frameworks will be essential. The goal should be raising children who can navigate digital spaces with the same practical wisdom, sound judgment and critical thinking that characterize common sense in traditional contexts, while also developing new capacities appropriate to the challenges and opportunities of contemporary life.

The development of common sense in children has always required careful guidance, rich experiences and opportunities to learn from both successes and mistakes. In the social media

age, these fundamental principles remain valid, but their application must adapt to new realities. By understanding both the risks and opportunities that social media presents, stakeholders can work together to ensure that today's children develop the practical wisdom they need to thrive in an increasingly complex world.

## References

1. Center on the Developing Child at Harvard (2017). Three principles to improve outcomes for children and families. Available from: <http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu>
2. When is Your Brain Ready for Social Media? @CommonSenseEducation. <https://www.commonsense.org/you-tube>, 10 July 2019.
3. Media Use and Screen Time – Its Impact on Children, Adolescents and Families, American College of Pediatrician- May 2020.
4. Ernesto R Ramirez<sup>1,2</sup>, Gregory J Norman<sup>1</sup>, Dori E Rosenberg<sup>1,2</sup>, Kerr Jacqueline<sup>1</sup>, Brian E Saelens<sup>3</sup>, Nefertiti Durant<sup>4</sup>, James F Sallis<sup>2</sup> Adolescent Screen Time and Rules to Limit Screen Time in the Home Adolesc Health. 2010 Oct 15.
5. Crone EA & Dahl RE. Understanding adolescence as a period of social-affective engagement and goal flexibility. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*. 2012; 13:636–650. [DOI] [PubMed] [Google Scholar]
6. Fuhrmann D, Knoll LJ & Blakemore SJ. Adolescence as a sensitive period of brain development. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*. 2015; 19:558–566. [DOI] [PubMed] [Google Scholar].
7. Glimcher PW & Fehr E. *Neuroeconomics: Decision making and the brain* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn). London: Elsevier, 2013. [Google Scholar]
8. Sohn SY, Rees P, Wildridge B, Kalk NJ, Carter B. Prevalence of problematic smartphone usage and associated mental health outcomes amongst children and young people: a systematic review, meta-analysis and grade of the evidence. *BMC Psychiatry*, 2019.