



## The Changing Behaviour of A Child Due to Social Media and the Role of Psychology

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**Abstract :** *The rapid expansion of social media has significantly transformed the behavioral patterns of children across the globe. While digital platforms provide opportunities for communication, creativity, and learning, they also pose serious risks to psychological well-being and social development. This research paper examines the changing behavior of children influenced by social media and highlights the critical role of psychology in understanding, analyzing, and managing these changes. Using a descriptive and analytical approach, the paper reviews existing literature on cognitive, emotional, and social impacts of social media. The findings reveal that excessive and unregulated social media use is associated with anxiety, depression, aggression, reduced attention span, and altered social interactions. At the same time, psychology offers theoretical frameworks and interventions to mitigate these negative outcomes and promote healthy digital habits. The study concludes with recommendations for parents, educators, and policymakers to ensure balanced and responsible use of social media among children.*

**Key words– Social Media, Child Behaviour, Psychology, Mental Health, Cognitive Development.**

**1. Introduction-** The 21st century has witnessed an unprecedented rise in digital technology, particularly social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. These platforms have become an integral part of children's daily lives. Social media is no longer merely a communication tool; it has evolved into a powerful socializing agent influencing children's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

Children today are exposed to digital environments at a very early age, which has significantly altered traditional developmental patterns. Research indicates that social media is a "double-edged sword," offering both benefits and risks to children's psychological and behavioral development. While it fosters connectivity and creativity, it also exposes children to cyberbullying, unrealistic standards, and addictive behaviors.

This paper explores how social media is reshaping children's behavior and emphasizes the role of psychology in addressing these changes.

**2. Literature Review-** Numerous studies have examined the impact of social media on children's behavior and mental health. Research shows that excessive social media use is associated with increased anxiety, depression, and emotional distress among adolescents.

A systematic review highlights that children who spend more time on social media are more likely to experience poor sleep, low self-esteem, and exposure to online harassment. Similarly, studies indicate that social media usage contributes to aggressive behavior and cyberbullying tendencies among children.

Another significant concern is the impact on cognitive functions. Research suggests that increased screen time negatively affects attention span and academic performance. Furthermore, emotional dependence on online validation (likes, comments) influences self-worth and identity formation.

Despite these negative outcomes, some studies acknowledge the positive aspects of social media. It provides a platform for self-expression, peer support, and social connectivity, especially for marginalized groups.

### 3. Objectives of the Study-

- To examine the behavioral changes in children due to social media.
- To analyze the psychological effects of social media on children.
- To understand the role of psychology in managing these changes.
- To suggest strategies for healthy social media use.



**4. Methodology-** This research paper is based on secondary data analysis. Information has been collected from research journals, articles, and psychological studies. A qualitative approach has been used to interpret the findings and draw conclusions.

#### **5. Changing Behaviour of Children Due to Social Media-**

**5.1 Emotional Changes:** Children today exhibit increased emotional sensitivity due to social media exposure. Constant comparison with peers and influencers leads to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and depression. Studies indicate a strong link between social media use and mental health problems such as depression and anxiety.

Additionally, the need for online validation creates emotional dependency, where children measure self-worth through likes and comments.

**5.2 Social Behaviour Changes:** Social media has transformed the way children interact. Face-to-face communication is gradually being replaced by virtual interactions. This shift has led to reduced social skills, empathy, and interpersonal communication.

Children also engage in parasocial relationships, where they form emotional connections with online personalities. These relationships influence their behavior, preferences, and identity formation .

**5.3 Cognitive Changes:** Cognitive development is significantly affected by excessive social media use. Children experience:

- Reduced attention span
- Difficulty concentrating
- Lower academic performance

Studies suggest that frequent social media use is associated with poor concentration and learning difficulties. Constant notifications and multitasking disrupt cognitive processes.

**5.4 Behavioural Changes:** Behavioral patterns such as aggression, impulsivity, and addiction have increased among children. Exposure to violent or inappropriate content leads to imitation of such behaviors.

The Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura explains that children learn behaviors by observing others. The famous Bobo Doll Experiment demonstrated that children imitate aggressive behavior observed in media

Similarly, social media content acts as a model, influencing children's behavior through observation and imitation.

**5.5 Sleep and Lifestyle Changes:** Social media usage, especially at night, disrupts sleep patterns. Poor sleep quality leads to fatigue, irritability, and decreased academic performance.

Research indicates that excessive screen time is linked to sleep disturbances and unhealthy lifestyle habits.

#### **6. Psychological Theories Explaining Social Media Impact-**

**6.1 Social Learning Theory:** Children learn behaviors by observing and imitating others. Social media provides numerous role models, both positive and negative.

**6.2 Social Information Processing Theory:** This theory explains how children interpret social cues and respond accordingly. Social media alters this process, sometimes leading to aggressive or inappropriate responses .

**6.3 Cognitive Development Theory:** Excessive digital exposure affects cognitive growth, attention span, and decision-making abilities.

**6.4 Uses and Gratification Theory:** Children use social media to satisfy needs such as entertainment, social interaction, and identity formation.

**7. Positive Impacts of Social Media-** Despite concerns, social media also offers several benefits:

- Enhances communication and connectivity
- Encourages creativity and self-expression
- Provides educational resources
- Promotes social awareness and global exposure

Research highlights that social media can foster a sense of belonging and support among children .

#### **8. Role of Psychology in Addressing Social Media Impact-**



**8.1 Understanding Behaviour:** Psychology helps in understanding how social media influences children's thoughts, emotions, and actions.

**8.2 Early Identification of Problems:** Psychologists can identify early signs of:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Addiction
- Behavioral disorders

**8.3 Counseling and Intervention:** Psychological interventions such as:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Behavioral modification techniques
- Emotional regulation training

help children manage the negative effects of social media.

**8.4 Promoting Digital Literacy:** Psychology emphasizes the importance of teaching children:

- Critical thinking
- Media literacy
- Responsible usage

**8.5 Parental Guidance:** Psychologists guide parents to:

- Monitor screen time
- Encourage offline activities
- Build healthy communication

Parenting style significantly influences children's social media behavior and its outcomes.

## 9. Preventive Measures and Recommendations-

For Parents

- Limit screen time
- Encourage outdoor activities
- Monitor online content

For Schools

- Introduce digital literacy programs
- Provide counseling services

For Government

- Implement child safety regulations
- Promote awareness campaigns

For Children

- Practice balanced usage
- Avoid overdependence on social media

**10. Discussion-** The findings suggest that social media has a profound impact on children's behavior. While it offers opportunities for growth and learning, its negative effects cannot be ignored. Psychological theories provide a framework to understand these changes and develop effective interventions.

The role of psychology is crucial in creating awareness, guiding behavior, and promoting mental well-being. A balanced approach is necessary to maximize benefits while minimizing risks.

**11. Conclusion-** Social media has become an unavoidable part of children's lives, significantly influencing their behavior and development. The changing patterns of emotional, social, and cognitive behavior highlight the need for careful monitoring and intervention.

Psychology plays a vital role in understanding these changes and providing solutions. By promoting healthy digital habits, emotional resilience, and critical thinking, it is possible to ensure that children benefit from social media without compromising their mental health.

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