



Newsletter – June 2025

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The Rise of Social Media and Its Influence on Children

Data from the WHO Regional Office in Europe reveals a sharp rise in problematic social media use among adolescents, with rates increasing from 7% in 2020 to 14% in 2024. This, coupled with findings that 12% of adolescents are at risk of problematic gaming, raises urgent concerns about the impact of digital technology on the mental health and well-being of young people.

In the modern digital landscape, social media has become a dominant force, shaping how children interact, perceive themselves, and engage with the world around them. As parents and guardians, it is essential to understand this phenomenon through the lens of See, Judge, Act, particularly considering Catholic teachings.

See:

Social media platforms often promote idealized versions of reality, leading to unhealthy comparisons among peers. In the Gospel of Matthew (7:3), Jesus asks, “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?” This scripture highlights the danger of judgment based on mere appearances, reflecting how social media encourages children to focus on superficial qualities rather than deeper, more meaningful connections.

Parents must be aware of the pressures their children face online, including cyberbullying, fear of missing out (FOMO), and unrealistic beauty standards. It is essential to recognize these challenges as they significantly impact children’s mental health and self-image.

Judge:

In Philippians 4:8, we are guided to think about “whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable.” This verse encourages parents to foster a mindset of positivity and virtue in their children. Evaluating the content consumed on social media through this lens can help mitigate negative impacts.

Moreover, assessing their own social media habits sets a vital example for children. Are parents engaging in healthy interactions online? Do they emphasize real-life connections over virtual ones? By modelling these behaviours, parents can guide their children toward a balanced approach that prioritizes genuine relationships.

Act:

Colossians 3:2 advises, “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” This suggests encouraging children to focus on their self-worth that stems from their identity in Christ rather than external validation from social media. Open discussions about self-esteem, body image, and the difference between online personas and real life can empower children to have a healthy perspective.

Additionally, parents can establish guidelines for social media use, including time limits, monitoring platforms, and fostering a culture of open communication. Creating family activities that encourage face-to-face interactions can also counterbalance the isolating effects of excessive social media use.

Benefits of Social Media

While there are challenges and issues with the improper usage of social media, we cannot discount the benefits that social media can provide to children. Enhanced communication skills by online engagement, creative expression, social connections and confidence building are some of the benefits that children can derive from the proper and moderate use of social media. Given the proper guidance, children can adapt to the positive influences of social media and benefit from its usage and engagement with others.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the rise of social media presents both challenges and opportunities for children. It's crucial that we take steps to protect youth to allow them to navigate the digital landscape safely and equip them to make informed choices about their online activities, maximizing the benefits while minimizing the risks to their mental and social well-being.

By applying the See, Judge, Act framework alongside Catholic teachings, parents can navigate these complexities effectively. Recognizing the societal pressures that arise from social media is crucial for understanding its impact on children. Evaluating attitudes and behaviours regarding social media can help in fostering a positive environment. Finally, taking informed action empowers children to engage with social media mindfully, promoting mental health and self-worth.

As we encourage our children to navigate the digital landscape wisely, we fulfil our role as loving guides, helping them develop an understanding of their identity, dignity, and purpose grounded in their faith. Through this commitment, we nurture resilient, confident, and compassionate individuals equipped to engage with the world around them.