

World Health Organization (WHO)

STUDY GUIDE



TOPIC:

**Balancing Risks and Opportunities:
Social Media and Adolescent Mental Health**



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Introduction to the Committee

The World Health Organization (WHO) is the specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for directing and coordinating international health efforts. Since its establishment in 1948, WHO has worked to ensure that health is recognized as a fundamental human right and that all people, everywhere, can achieve the highest possible standard of well-being. Its mandate includes promoting universal health coverage, coordinating responses to health emergencies, and advancing healthier lives from pregnancy through old age (World Health Organization, n.d.).

WHO's Constitution reflects the conviction that health is a prerequisite for peace and security. From its earliest days, the Organization has focused on strengthening primary health care systems, providing technical assistance, and closing gaps in global health responses, particularly in countries with underdeveloped or fragile health infrastructures. The initiative for its creation dates back to the 1945 San Francisco Conference, where representatives from Brazil and China proposed the establishment of an international health body within the UN framework (World Health Organization, 2024).

Today, WHO's role extends beyond physical health to encompass mental health and well-being, recognizing their importance as integral to overall health. This focus is particularly urgent given the challenges faced by adolescents in the digital age. A recent WHO Europe study revealed that problematic social media use among teenagers rose from 7% in 2018 to 11% in 2022, with an additional 12% at risk of gaming addiction (World Health Organization, 2024). Excessive screen time has been associated with heightened anxiety, sleep disruption, and lower academic performance. Gender differences are also evident: adolescent girls are more likely to struggle with social media, while boys face higher risks related to online gaming (World Health Organization, 2024).

At the same time, digital platforms can serve as spaces for connection, creativity, and support networks when used responsibly. The challenge, therefore, lies in balancing the risks and opportunities of digital engagement. Experts stress the importance of fostering digital literacy, promoting healthier online habits, and prioritizing mental health advocacy to help young people navigate the online world safely (Katella, 2024; Weir, 2023).



For the purposes of MUNARJÍ XVIII, this committee will provide delegates with the opportunity to debate and design international strategies under WHO's mandate. Their challenge will be to consider how the organization can best guide member states in protecting adolescents from the risks of excessive social media use while ensuring that the opportunities of digital technologies for health, education, and social connection are not lost.



Background of the topic

Glossary

- **Social media:** Digital platforms that enable people to communicate, share, and interact while also posing ethical questions for public health stakeholders (World Health Organization, n.d.).
- **Digital literacy:** The ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, and critically evaluate information in an increasingly digital, fast-changing world (UNESCO, 2025).
- **Cyberbullying:** Bullying that occurs through digital technologies such as social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms, and mobile phones; it is typically repetitive and intended to intimidate, anger, or shame (UNICEF, 2025).
- **Mental health:** A state of well-being that allows people to cope with stress, realize their abilities, learn and work effectively, and contribute to their community (World Health Organization, 2022).
- **Online behaviour:** The functional and interpersonal actions people take while online, including networking, self-presentation, and both pro-social and anti-social interactions (IGI Global, n.d.).
- **Anxiety:** Excessive fear or worry that is intense and often difficult to control (World Health Organization, 2023).
- **Addiction:** A medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's experiences (American Society of Addiction Medicine, 2019).
- **Digital detox:** A set period of time in which individuals intentionally avoid devices and social media to restore balance in daily life (Brown University Health Blog Team, 2023).
- **Self-esteem:** How individuals value and perceive themselves, shaped by their opinions and beliefs, which may be resistant to change (Mind, 2022).

Context

Social media has profoundly reshaped communication, identity, and access to information. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and emerging applications are now embedded in daily life and are often perceived as indispensable tools for interaction, entertainment, and community building. For adolescents, these platforms are not only spaces for connection but also arenas where identity, belonging, and self-expression are continuously negotiated.

Despite these benefits, growing concerns have emerged regarding the excessive and problematic use of social media. Scholars and health professionals point to its potential impacts on adolescent mental health, productivity, and the quality of real-life social interactions (Weir, 2023). These concerns are particularly significant because adolescence is a critical stage of cognitive, emotional, and social development, making young people more vulnerable to online risks such as cyberbullying, anxiety, or addiction.

Since the early 2000s, research has identified multiple risks linked to overuse. A 2014 report by the American Psychological Association highlighted associations between high social media use and lower self-esteem among adolescents. In 2017, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially recognized gaming disorder as a mental health condition, sparking broader debates about the psychological effects of excessive screen engagement. These concerns were further magnified during the COVID-19 pandemic, when global reliance on screens for learning, work, and socialization increased dramatically, coinciding with a documented rise in anxiety, depression, and disrupted online behaviours (Lee et al., 2022).

In response, WHO and other international bodies have urged governments to strengthen regulations and expand digital education programs. In 2023, WHO released recommendations encouraging states to implement measures that limit excessive screen time while promoting responsible digital literacy. Complementary initiatives by the United Nations, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), UNICEF, and UNESCO have targeted issues such as child online protection, cyberbullying prevention, and the reduction of harmful online content (UNESCO, 2024; UNICEF, 2025).

Global Responses

Several governments have introduced concrete measures to protect young people:

- **France:** In 2024, legislation prohibited children under 15 from opening social media accounts, a step intended to address rising concerns about adolescent well-being (Haeck, 2024).
- **Australia:** In 2025, the government banned social media use for individuals under 16, pairing the measure with literacy campaigns to prepare schools and families for the change (Singer, 2025).
- **United States:** Cities such as New York have declared social media a public health threat and filed lawsuits against TikTok, Meta, and YouTube, accusing them of contributing to the youth mental health crisis (Minamitani, 2024).

These examples illustrate the diversity of international approaches, ranging from strict age restrictions to legal accountability, and underscore the complexity of balancing public health, freedom of expression, and technological innovation.

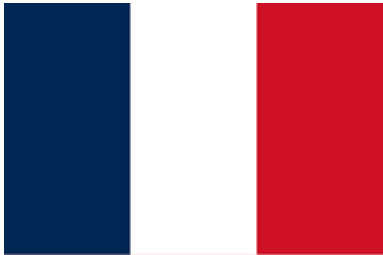
Balancing Risks and Opportunities

On one hand, evidence consistently shows that excessive engagement can contribute to anxiety, disordered eating habits, and reduced academic performance (Katella, 2024; Sina et al., 2022). On the other hand, digital platforms can foster connection, creativity, and activism, particularly for marginalized adolescents seeking community and voice (Keles et al., 2023). The challenge, therefore, is not whether social media is inherently harmful or beneficial, but how to balance risks and opportunities through effective policies, education, and international cooperation.

For policymakers and delegates at MUNARJÍ XVIII, this duality represents both an urgent challenge and a unique opportunity. Adolescents' mental health must be addressed as a public health priority and a human rights concern, requiring collaboration among governments, civil society, and technology companies. The World Health Organization and the United Nations play a critical role in leading these efforts and guiding member states toward comprehensive, balanced, and evidence-based solutions.

Key Stakeholders and Positions

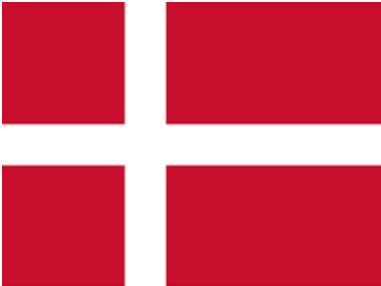
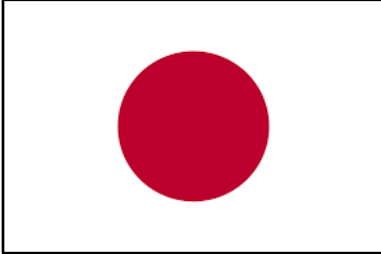
The issue of adolescent mental health in relation to social media is a global challenge, but stakeholders approach it differently depending on cultural, political, and economic contexts. Some states prioritize strict regulation and age limits, while others emphasize digital education, family involvement, or legal accountability for tech companies. Non-governmental organizations and international institutions also play key roles, advocating for digital safety, ethical platform design, and public health interventions.

Flag	Position
United States of America 	The U.S. frames excessive social media use as a public health crisis. Several cities, including New York, have declared social media a <i>public health threat</i> and filed lawsuits against TikTok, Meta, Snap, and YouTube. The aim is to hold tech companies legally accountable for fueling rising levels of adolescent anxiety, depression, and self-harm (Minamitani, 2024).
French Republic 	France is experiencing a worsening youth mental health crisis, with demand for adolescent mental health services rising since 2016. In response, France passed a law prohibiting social media use for individuals under 15 and is pushing for a Europe-wide age restriction. This reflects a strong regulatory approach (Haeck, 2024).
China 	China faces widespread youth overuse of digital media, with over 600 million internet users by 2013 and nearly one-quarter under 19. Adolescents frequently exceed two hours of daily screen time. The government has responded with strict controls, such as gaming curfews and monitoring policies, positioning regulation as key to protecting minors (National Library of Medicine, 2019).

Russian Federation 	Research highlights negative correlations between heavy social media use (particularly on VK) and adolescent well-being, including sleep problems, isolation, and poor mental health. Russia acknowledges the risks but has taken limited regulatory action, focusing instead on research-based recommendations (Brodowicz, 2025).
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland 	The U.K. emphasizes research and data to shape policy. Longitudinal studies have linked early social media use with declining self-esteem and mental health in later adolescence. The U.K. promotes evidence-based policy grounded in scientific findings rather than restrictive bans (Winstone, 2023).
Canada 	Canada adopts a balanced stance. While research links social media overuse to depression and self-harm, other studies highlight its role in maintaining social ties. The government acknowledges risks but has not implemented restrictive legislation, focusing instead on awareness and parental engagement (Kerr & Kingsbury, 2023).
Australia 	Australia has taken a restrictive regulatory approach, passing amendments to the Online Safety Act requiring users to be at least 16 years old to create social media accounts. This was coupled with social media literacy programs for adolescents and support resources for parents (Singer, 2025).

Mexico 	Mexico recognizes the harmful effects of social media, including anxiety and depression, but has not enacted strict regulations. Instead, it promotes responsible use through education, parental involvement, and expert-led awareness campaigns, highlighting prevention rather than prohibition (Effects of Social Networking on Teens in Mexico, n.d.).
Argentina 	Argentina debates between health concerns and free expression. Experts warn of anxiety, irritability, and depression linked to excessive social media use, while President Javier Milei has criticized regulations as censorship. This creates a divided stance balancing regulation and civil liberties (ElArgentino.ar, 2023).
Kingdom of Spain 	Spain has not passed strict laws on adolescent social media use but growing research shows strong negative impacts, particularly on adolescent girls. Public awareness is rising, but political action remains limited (Arenas-Arroyo et al., 2023).
Colombia 	Colombia has yet to adopt an official stance but studies reveal strong links between excessive screen time, anxiety, and depression, particularly among girls. Growing recognition of cases of social media addiction indicates a need for future policy attention (CGTN, 2017).

Chile 	Chile reports increased social media addiction during the COVID-19 pandemic, linked to depression and anxiety in adolescents. Policy discussion is still developing but the issue has been flagged as a public health concern (Varela et al., 2023).
Nigeria 	Nigeria acknowledges the risks of social media overuse, with evidence linking it to depression and suicide among youth. Experts recommend regulation and positive content creation to reduce harm (Department of Philosophy, Imo State University, 2025).
Romania 	Romania recognizes the risks of excessive social media use, linking it to anxiety, depression, and declining academic performance. Policy focus is on awareness and digital literacy, rather than bans (David et al., 2024).
Italy 	Italy has launched the SMART project, a state-funded initiative to study and address problematic social media use. The focus is on research, awareness, and self-help tools to promote healthier digital habits (Donisi et al., 2024).

Germany 	Germany requires parental consent for users aged 13–16, but overall regulation remains limited. Studies reveal over 25% of adolescents engage in risky online use, leading to growing calls for stricter protections (Ostendorf et al., 2020).
Denmark 	Denmark emphasizes education and self-regulation. Instead of bans, schools and parents are encouraged to guide healthy habits. National surveys show high adolescent use, but the approach prioritizes resilience-building over prohibition (Santini et al., 2024).
Norway 	Norwegian adolescents are among the most active social media users, with concerns about loneliness and anxiety. Policymakers encourage balanced use, guided by parents, schools, and awareness campaigns (Hjetland et al., 2021).
Japan 	Japan faces high rates of youth internet overuse, with surveys showing one in four students may be “internet addicted.” Some local governments have implemented screen-time restrictions, such as Kagawa Prefecture’s smartphone use limits (Nagata, 2020).

South Korea 	South Korea has enacted strong regulatory measures, such as the “Shutdown Law” restricting gaming at night. Government counseling centers support teens with internet addiction. Policies highlight national concern over depression and suicide risks (Rudolf, 2024).
Thailand 	Thailand reports high levels of adolescent social media addiction linked to anxiety and depression. The government has partnered with platforms like TikTok on awareness campaigns and launched the <i>Sati</i> app to support teen mental health. Its approach emphasizes prevention and collaboration with tech companies and health professionals (Bangkok Post, 2024).
South Africa 	South Africa recognizes the link between social media and poor mental health, including depression and low self-esteem. Research highlights urgency, but systemic health challenges make comprehensive responses difficult (Lukose, 2023).
Kenya 	Kenyan studies show links between adolescent overuse of social media and anxiety, depression, and pessimism. Findings stress the importance of family guidance and education in prevention (Muchiri, 2022).

Qatar 	Research shows Qatari adolescents—especially males—are prone to internet addiction, with parents reporting family strain due to overuse. The issue is culturally framed around family cohesion and well-being (Ibrahim, 2021).
Saudi Arabia 	Studies reveal high rates of adolescent social media overuse, linked to poor sleep, anxiety, and stress. Surveys show most youth attempted to cut back for health reasons. The government emphasizes awareness and mental health research (Faqihi et al., 2024).
Brazil 	Brazil has taken a legal and restrictive approach. A 2025 law bans smartphone use in schools except for emergencies, and lawsuits have been filed against platforms for failing to protect minors from harmful content (Savarese & Rodrigues, 2025).
Switzerland 	Switzerland is considering bans for under-16s but surveys show youth perceive school stress as more harmful than social media. Clinics have opened to treat social media addiction, reflecting growing institutional concern (Keystone-SDA, 2025).

Indonesia 	Indonesia is evaluating restrictions on adolescent social media use, including possible age limits. Studies link excessive engagement to anxiety, depression, and body image issues, pushing for balanced regulation and education (Purboningsih et al., 2023).
India 	India is increasingly concerned about adolescents' screen overuse and its links to anxiety, sleep disruption, and academic decline. While no strict bans exist, the government promotes digital literacy, parental guidance, and school-based awareness campaigns. India also supports global cooperation on responsible digital use (Government of India, 2024).
Singapore 	Singapore emphasizes education and parental involvement over bans. Authorities promote digital well-being programs, school curricula on cyber safety, and partnerships with NGOs to address cyberbullying and screen addiction. Regulation is framed around empowering youth to self-regulate (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2024).
Philippines 	The Philippines faces high adolescent engagement on social media, with rising concerns about cyberbullying, anxiety, and sleep deprivation. Government initiatives focus on the Safe Spaces Act and partnerships with UNICEF to strengthen online child protection policies, while promoting responsible platform use (Department of Information and Communications Technology, 2023).

 Finland	Finland adopts a balanced approach, combining strong youth mental health services with digital education. Schools integrate media literacy into the curriculum, and public campaigns address risks such as body image issues and online harassment. Finland advocates evidence-based, rights-centered digital policies (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, 2024).
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NGOs and Regional Actors

Mothers Against Media Addiction (MAMA)

MAMA is a grassroots movement created by parents and family members concerned about the harmful effects of excessive screen use on children and adolescents. The organization advocates for prioritizing real-life experiences and offline activities over digital engagement. It conducts awareness campaigns on the impact of social media addiction and promotes healthy, non-digital alternatives for youth (MAMA, 2019).

Organization for Social Media Safety (OSMS)

The OSMS is dedicated to protecting young people from the unethical use of social media platforms. Its work focuses on education, raising awareness about cyberbullying, online propaganda, and digital safety. Collaborating with schools, governments, and community organizations, OSMS promotes responsible online behavior and works to prevent digital addiction among youth (Organization for Social Media Safety, 2017).

European Union (EU)

The European Union has emerged as a regional leader in regulating social media use. Recognizing the rising problem of adolescent overuse and its mental health consequences, the EU Parliament is drafting regulations to address harmful platform features such as infinite scrolling, autoplay, targeted propaganda, and cyberbullying. The EU's approach seeks to establish harmonized standards across member states to better protect minors and encourage healthier online environments (Ask EP, 2024).

UNICEF

UNICEF emphasizes the double-edged nature of digital technologies for children and adolescents: while they provide opportunities for learning and social connection, they also increase risks of cyberbullying, exploitation, and exposure to harmful content. UNICEF advocates for a balanced approach that promotes digital literacy, strengthens online protections, and ensures children's rights in digital spaces (UNICEF, 2017).

UNESCO

UNESCO highlights the role of digital literacy education as essential for preparing young people to navigate online environments safely. Its frameworks stress reducing screen dependency, fostering critical thinking, and addressing issues such as unrealistic body standards and misinformation. UNESCO calls for integrating media and information literacy into school curricula and global cooperation to protect youth from harmful online practices (UNESCO, 2024).

Previous UN Actions and Resolutions

The United Nations has increasingly recognized the risks associated with adolescent use of digital technologies and their impact on mental health. Over the past two decades, several resolutions, reports, and forums have addressed issues such as excessive social media use, gaming addiction, cyberbullying, and the spread of harmful online content.

Key UN Actions

- **Resolution 2012/1.** Adopted by the Commission on Population and Development, this resolution emphasized the general well-being of children and youth. It encouraged families, educators, religious leaders, and community organizations to guide adolescents toward the responsible use of technology, particularly social media, for educational rather than harmful or aggressive purposes (UN, 2012).
- **UNESCO Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report.** The GEM Report highlighted the risks posed by digital technologies, especially for young girls. It raised concerns about privacy violations, classroom distractions, cyberbullying, and harmful exposure to unrealistic beauty standards and stereotypes promoted online (UNESCO, 2024).
- **World Youth Report (2007).** This report noted that many adolescents spend most of their time on social media and websites. While recognizing the risks, it also encouraged the use of digital platforms for youth activism and education, urging policymakers to channel online engagement toward positive social change (United Nations, 2011).
- **UN Academic Impact “Prevention Forum”.** Co-organized by the United Nations in 2017, this forum focused on cyberbullying, online aggression, and the addictive features of social media. Studies presented revealed that 61% of adolescents felt they could not go more than a day without using social media, and 9% reported anxiety and loneliness after being offline for only 24 hours (United Nations, 2017).

Relevant UN Resolutions and Policies

- **UN General Assembly Resolution on the Rights of the Child.** This resolution acknowledges the risks posed by digital platforms and calls on governments to ensure **safe online environments for children**. It specifically addresses issues of cyberbullying, exploitation, and harmful content, and emphasizes stricter child-focused protections (United Nations, n.d.).
- **WHO Regional Office for Europe Report on Adolescent Digital Behaviour (2024).** This WHO study documented a significant increase in problematic social media use among adolescents. It urged comprehensive action, including **digital literacy education, parental mentoring, and national policies** to protect youth from the mental health risks of excessive online engagement (WHO, 2024).
- **UNICEF Report: Children in a Digital World (2017).** UNICEF stressed the dual nature of digital technology: while offering opportunities for learning and socialization, it also exposes children to risks. The report advocates for a **balanced approach** that combines digital literacy, ethical online behavior, and stronger responsibility by schools, governments, and technology companies (UNICEF, 2017).
- **UNESCO Digital Literacy Education Framework (2021).** This framework emphasizes equipping youth with the skills to use digital platforms responsibly. It proposes strategies to **reduce screen dependency, foster critical thinking, and encourage healthier online–offline balance** (APA, 2023).

Effectiveness of These Measures

International efforts have achieved **mixed results**:

- **Successes:** Laws restricting access for minors or limiting screen time have raised public awareness and gained support in certain countries. Digital literacy campaigns and school-based programs have improved responsible use among youth.
- **Limitations:** Many measures lack consistent global implementation, adequate resources, and follow-up. Rapid technological innovation, especially algorithms and personalized content, often outpaces regulation, making enforcement difficult. While some platforms have introduced safety features, effectiveness remains limited without coordinated action among governments, schools, families, and companies.

Current Challenges and Debates

Social media has introduced new dynamics into the lives of adolescents. On one hand, these platforms provide opportunities for connection, creativity, and self-expression; on the other, they pose significant risks to mental health. The World Health Organization (2024) reports that more than 11% of adolescents now display problematic patterns of social media use, struggling to control their online activity and experiencing harmful consequences. This issue has a gendered dimension: problematic use is more common among girls (13%) than boys (9%), reflecting the different ways in which young people engage with and are affected by digital platforms.

One of the most pressing challenges relates to psychological well-being. Excessive social media use has been consistently linked to higher levels of anxiety and depression, disrupted sleep cycles, and increased exposure to cyberbullying (Katella, 2024). Beyond psychological concerns, behavioral and physical health outcomes are also at stake. Research shows that adolescents who spend long hours online often develop unhealthy eating habits, such as skipping meals and consuming sugary foods, which can lead to long-term conditions like obesity and diabetes (Sina et al., 2022). Furthermore, some adolescents exhibit addiction-like behaviors, becoming unable to reduce their usage and experiencing withdrawal symptoms when disconnected. These patterns interfere with school performance, social relationships, and overall well-being (WHO, 2024).

The international debate on how to address these challenges is far from settled. Some governments have opted for strict regulatory approaches: for instance, Australia's 2025 law bans social media use for individuals under the age of 16, a measure that has sparked discussion about its effectiveness and enforceability (Stokel-Walker, 2025). Other contexts, such as the United States, lean toward parental empowerment. Connecticut's proposed HB 6857, for example, seeks to increase parental control by requiring stricter age verification and usage limits (Pathania, 2025). These contrasting strategies highlight the tension between prohibition and regulation, and between the responsibilities of governments, families, and technology companies.

20 Efforts to mitigate risks face several obstacles. The COVID-19 pandemic amplified dependence on digital platforms, as school closures and social isolation pushed adolescents to spend more time online. This not only heightened addictive tendencies but also contributed

to rising rates of anxiety and depression (Lee et al., 2022). Peer dynamics have further complicated the problem. The phenomenon of “Fear of Missing Out” (FOMO) drives adolescents to remain constantly connected to avoid exclusion from trends or conversations, fostering compulsive use and feelings of inadequacy (Perez-Lozano & Saucedo Espinosa, 2024). At the same time, the very architecture of social media platforms deepens these vulnerabilities: algorithms are designed to maximize user engagement by tailoring content to individual preferences and rewarding repeated log-ins. Features such as TikTok’s daily “streaks” encourage compulsive checking, trapping adolescents in cycles of overuse (Katella, 2024). Finally, lack of parental guidance exacerbates the issue. In many households, parents neither set screen-time boundaries nor monitor online behavior, leaving adolescents exposed to harmful or age-inappropriate content, including violent or sexual material, and reinforcing unhealthy usage habits.

Taken together, these challenges underscore the complexity of balancing the risks and opportunities of adolescent digital engagement. They also reveal why finding effective, sustainable solutions requires not only regulation but also coordinated action by governments, schools, families, and technology companies.

Case Studies

Parents in France Take TikTok to Court Over Self-Harm Content

In France, seven families filed a joint legal complaint against TikTok, accusing the platform of exposing their teenage children to harmful content related to suicide, self-harm, and eating disorders. They argue that TikTok's algorithm amplified vulnerable users' exposure, worsening their struggles. Two families lost their children to suicide, while others reported suicide attempts or eating disorders. A previous case in 2021 had already accused TikTok of "incitement to suicide" following the death of a 15-year-old girl. This illustrates the rabbit-hole effect of algorithm-driven recommendations. In response, the EU has opened investigations, and Amnesty International has warned about algorithmic risks. TikTok claims to have removed 22 million harmful videos and banned 5 million accounts within six months, yet critics argue these measures remain insufficient (RFI, 2024).

"A Time Bomb for Kids": Exploring Screen Culture in France

Photographer Jérôme Gence's project *The Screen Generation* highlights the growing impact of screens on French families. On average, children and parents spend 36 hours per week in front of digital devices. Parents describe a dilemma: allowing device use reduces control, while restricting it risks children's social exclusion. Gence warns that children's digital habits often mirror their parents' own dependencies and describes the situation as a "time bomb" for future generations. He emphasizes that solutions should combine family dialogue, better education, and stronger regulation, while acknowledging that challenges differ between wealthy and developing nations (RFI, 2024).

EU Investigation into TikTok's "Addictive Features"

In 2024, the European Union launched a probe into TikTok's Lite app, which rewarded users with points redeemable for gift cards when they watched or liked videos. Regulators expressed concern that such features could encourage addictive behavior, particularly among vulnerable adolescents. The European Commission, invoking the Digital Services Act, threatened to suspend the reward program and impose heavy fines unless TikTok proved it was safe. Despite TikTok's assurances that the feature was intended only for adults, critics

compared its addictive design to cigarettes. This case reflects the EU's determination to hold platforms accountable for harmful design practices (RFI, 2024).

Australia's Social Media Ban for Minors

Australia has taken a proactive regulatory stance by passing legislation in 2025 that bans individuals under 16 from creating social media accounts. This measure was accompanied by nationwide digital literacy programs to help schools and families adapt. Supporters argue that strict age limits are necessary to protect mental health, while critics question whether such bans are enforceable in practice. The Australian case highlights the ongoing debate between regulation and education, and whether restricting access or promoting responsible use is the most effective path forward (Singer, 2025).

These case studies collectively illustrate the multifaceted nature of adolescent social media challenges. France's lawsuits highlight the dangers of harmful content and algorithmic amplification, while Jérôme Gence's project underscores the cultural normalization of screen dependence. The EU case demonstrates how regulators are confronting addictive design features, and Australia's ban shows how governments experiment with age-based restrictions alongside education. Together, they reveal that no single approach is sufficient: tackling this issue requires a balance of legal accountability, family involvement, cultural awareness, digital literacy, and international regulation. For MUNARJÍ delegates, these examples serve as both warnings and potential models, offering valuable lessons for shaping effective resolutions.

Possible Solutions and Future Perspectives

Addressing the impact of social media on adolescent mental health requires a multilayered strategy that combines prevention, regulation, education, and international cooperation. The goal is not only to mitigate risks such as addiction, anxiety, and cyberbullying, but also to harness the opportunities of digital platforms for connection, learning, and empowerment.

Short-Term Measures

In the immediate future, governments, schools, and families can adopt practical interventions to promote healthier online habits.

- **Awareness campaigns:** Public information campaigns in schools and communities can emphasize the risks of overuse, the importance of digital balance, and the availability of mental health resources.
- **Family dialogue:** Encouraging open communication between parents and adolescents can help establish limits on screen time and reduce exposure to harmful content.
- **Promoting offline alternatives:** Initiatives that encourage sports, arts, volunteering, and face-to-face socialization provide adolescents with meaningful activities beyond digital spaces.
- **School-based workshops:** Training students to identify misinformation, cyberbullying, and addictive patterns of use strengthens early prevention.

Mid-Term Strategies

Over the medium term, governments and institutions can implement broader policies and educational reforms.

- **Digital literacy in curricula:** Embedding media and information literacy in national education systems equips young people with critical thinking skills to navigate online environments safely (UNESCO, 2021).

- **Training for educators and health professionals:** Teachers, psychologists, and health workers should receive training on how to identify problematic online behaviors and guide adolescents toward healthier habits.
- **Support systems for at-risk youth:** Establishing counseling centers and hotlines, particularly in urban areas where online dependency is highest, can provide accessible support.
- **Corporate responsibility:** Technology companies can be incentivized or required to integrate protective features such as screen-time notifications, restricted nighttime usage for minors, and stronger parental controls.

Long-Term Perspectives

Sustainable solutions require long-term, international collaboration that recognizes adolescent digital well-being as a global public health priority.

- **International regulatory frameworks:** Inspired by existing global health treaties, a UN-led framework could establish common standards for algorithm transparency, data protection, and child online safety.
- **Treaties and conventions:** Negotiating a global convention on the responsible use of digital technologies for children could create accountability mechanisms similar to those used for climate change or tobacco control.
- **Investment in research and innovation:** Funding long-term studies on the relationship between digital use and adolescent development ensures that policies remain evidence-based.
- **Balancing rights and responsibilities:** Future approaches must safeguard freedom of expression and access to information, while also prioritizing adolescents' right to health, protection, and education.



Looking Ahead

While each country faces unique cultural and technological contexts, the challenge is shared across borders. No single solution, whether bans, lawsuits, education, or regulation, can address the problem in isolation. Instead, meaningful progress requires a comprehensive, cooperative, and evidence-based approach that includes all stakeholders: governments, families, schools, civil society, and technology companies.



Guiding Questions

Understanding the Scope of the Problem

- How do the challenges of social media addiction differ between developed and developing countries?
- In which contexts—such as family environment, school pressures, or peer influence—are adolescents most vulnerable to problematic use?
- What have psychologists and health experts across different regions reported about the mental health effects of excessive digital engagement?

Cultural and Socioeconomic Dimensions

- How do cultural norms and traditions shape adolescents' online behaviors and screen time?
- In what ways do socioeconomic conditions influence the severity of social media overuse, particularly when comparing developed and developing nations?
- How do gender differences affect patterns of use and the risks associated with social media among teenagers?

Legal and Policy Approaches

- What legal frameworks or regulatory measures have developed countries implemented to protect adolescents, and how could these models be adapted to low- and middle-income regions?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of strict regulations (e.g., bans and age restrictions) compared to educational or parental approaches?
- How can governments balance the protection of adolescents with the right to freedom of expression and access to information?

Psychological and Behavioral Impacts

- What are the most significant behavioral and psychological outcomes of chronic social media use among adolescents, according to existing studies?
- How do issues such as anxiety, depression, sleep disruption, disordered eating, or cyberbullying manifest differently across cultural contexts?

Implementation Challenges

- What are the main obstacles faced by governments and organizations when trying to implement preventive measures?
- How can cooperation among authorities, schools, families, and technology corporations be strengthened to create a safer digital environment for adolescents?
- To what extent do rapid technological advances and algorithm-driven features undermine current regulatory and preventive efforts?

Suggested Readings and Resources

The following resources include articles, reports, and videos offering insights into the opportunities and risks of social media use among adolescents. They provide evidence, expert perspectives, and case studies that delegates may find useful in preparing speeches, drafting resolutions, and understanding the global scope of the issue.

Videos

- **ABC News (2023). *Does social media negatively impact teen mental health?***
A short news report examining the growing debate on whether social media use harms adolescent well-being.
<https://youtu.be/gnEpRDh4Y2A>
- **American Psychological Association (2023). *Why teen brains are particularly vulnerable to social media.***
Explains the neuroscience behind adolescent susceptibility to online influence and addiction.
<https://youtu.be/5YOmHEgxn0c>
- **PBS NewsHour (2025). *Are smartphones and social media harming teen mental health? Here's why experts are split.***
Presents contrasting expert opinions on the risks and benefits of digital platforms.
<https://youtu.be/kNypj-BhEPo>
- **60 Minutes Australia (2024). *Is social media killing our children?***
Investigative journalism highlighting extreme cases of online harm and the urgency of regulation.
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