

Impact of Social Media on Adolescent Social Interaction Patterns in Digital Education

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Article Info

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Abstract

This research analyzes the impact of social media on adolescent social interaction patterns within Indonesia's digital education landscape. Utilizing a qualitative systematic literature review guided by Media Ecology and Social Capital theories, the study examines how platforms like TikTok and Instagram reshape social dynamics. Findings indicate that while digital connectivity expands bridging social capital through diverse global networks, it simultaneously erodes bonding capital and face-to-face communication quality. The emergence of a pervasive "scroll culture" and "phubbing" behaviors in schools has led to a significant decline in interpersonal empathy and academic focus. Furthermore, psychosocial risks such as FOMO and cyberbullying underscore a "digital native paradox," where technical proficiency lacks corresponding ethical literacy. The study concludes that mitigating these negative impacts requires a robust multi-sectoral framework, integrating digital literacy, parental and educator collaboration, and strategic regulatory interventions. Fostering a balanced media ecology is essential to ensure healthy adolescent development in mediated systems.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis dampak media sosial terhadap pola interaksi sosial remaja dalam lanskap pendidikan digital di Indonesia. Menggunakan tinjauan pustaka sistematis kualitatif yang dipandu oleh teori Ekologi Media dan Modal Sosial, studi ini menguji bagaimana platform seperti TikTok dan Instagram membentuk kembali dinamika sosial. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun konektivitas digital memperluas modal sosial menjembatani melalui jaringan global, hal itu secara bersamaan mengikis modal sosial mengikat dan kualitas komunikasi tatap muka. Munculnya "budaya gulir" yang meresap dan perilaku "phubbing" di sekolah telah menyebabkan penurunan signifikan dalam empati interpersonal dan fokus akademik. Risiko psikososial seperti FOMO dan perundungan siber mempertegas "paradoks penduduk asli digital," di mana kecakapan teknis kurang memiliki literasi etis yang sesuai. Studi menyimpulkan bahwa memitigasi dampak negatif ini memerlukan kerangka kerja multisektoral yang kuat, mengintegrasikan literasi digital, kolaborasi orang tua dan pendidik, serta intervensi regulasi strategis. Membina ekologi media yang seimbang penting guna memastikan perkembangan remaja sehat dalam sistem.



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A. INTRODUCTION

1. Background

The contemporary transformation of the Indonesian educational landscape is defined by an unprecedented convergence of digital connectivity and formal pedagogy. As of early 2025, the digital ecosystem in Indonesia has reached a state of maturity that fundamentally alters the social fabric of the adolescent population. Data from the start of 2025 indicates that there are 212 million internet users in Indonesia, reflecting a penetration rate of 74.6%.¹ Within this vast digital demographic, social media has emerged as the primary environment for adolescent socialization, with 143 million active social media identities roughly 50.2% of the total population shaping a new "hypersocial" character.¹ The Indonesian government's strategic integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) through programs such as Merdeka Belajar and the Digital School initiative has accelerated the adoption of tech-enabled learning environments, pushing traditional classrooms into a broader digital media ecology.² However, this rapid shift has brought to the forefront a complex set of social challenges, as the boundary between educational utility and recreational social media use becomes increasingly blurred.

The urgency of investigating these interaction patterns is underscored by recent national discourse and regulatory shifts in Indonesia. In February 2025, the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs (Kemkomdigi) intensified efforts to draft regulations restricting social media use for children under the age of 16 to protect them from inappropriate content, cyberbullying, and sexual exploitation.³ These concerns are grounded in alarming statistics: 89% of Indonesian children are online daily for an average of over five hours, and approximately 87% are introduced to social media before they reach the age of 13.⁴ Furthermore, data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in 2024 reveals a significant disparity in internet usage; while 61.65% of students utilize the internet for social media, only 27.53% engage in formal online learning activities. This suggests that the digital environment, while designed for education, is being dominated

¹ "Digital 2025: Indonesia — DataReportal - Global Digital Insights," 2025, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-indonesia>.

² Imarc Transforming Ideas, "Indonesia Online Education Market Statistics & Outlook 2033," 2025, <https://www.imarcgroup.com/indonesia-online-education-market>.

³ Jakarta Globe id, "Should Social Media Be Restricted for Kids? Indonesia Joins Global Effort to Protect Children Online," 2025, <https://jakartaglobe.id/lifestyle/should-social-media-be-restricted-for-kids-indonesia-joins-global-effort-to-protect-children-online>.

by a "scroll culture" that prioritizes peer interaction and viral trends over academic substance.

Theoretical analysis of this phenomenon requires an interdisciplinary approach, primarily leveraging Media Ecology Theory and Social Capital Theory. Media Ecology Theory suggests that media are not simply tools but environments that shape human perception and social structure.⁴ In Indonesia, the "hypersocial" nature of the population suggests that digital platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok act as the "agar" or medium in which social relationships are cultivated.⁵ Concurrently, Social Capital Theory provides a framework for understanding how these platforms facilitate the acquisition of "bridging" capital access to diverse information and weak ties while potentially complicating "bonding" capital, which is built on deep, trust-based relationships.⁸ The digitalization of interaction has created a new, more flexible form of social capital, with 80% of young Indonesians now conducting their social lives in digital spaces.⁶

A review of recent Scopus-indexed literature from 2024 and 2025 reveals a growing body of research on the psychosocial impacts of these digital shifts. Previous studies have established strong links between excessive social media use and negative mental health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and attention deficits.⁷ Research by Nafisah et al. (2024) and others suggests that while digital literacy-based learning can enhance motivation and socialization, many students remain trapped in a "digital native paradox" possessing high access to technology but lacking the skills for responsible and effective utilization.⁸ This report identifies a critical gap in existing research: the need for a holistic analysis that specifically focuses on the intersection of social media patterns and the Digital Education framework within the unique socio-cultural context of Indonesia. Unlike general studies of social media, this research examines how the specific mediated

⁴ Carlos A. Scolari, "Media Ecology: Exploring the Metaphor to Expand the Theory," 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264738650_Media_Ecology_Exploring_the_Metaphor_to_Expand_the_Theory.

⁵ Alva Beriansyah And Mariatul Qibtiyah, "Instagram And Political Literacy Generation Z," *Bhineka Tunggal Ika: Kajian Teori Dan Praktik Pendidikan PKn* 10, no. 1 (May 2023): 134–49, <https://doi.org/10.36706/jbti.v10i1.20463>.

⁶ Muhammad Faisal and Romi Mesra, "Social Capital Transformation in the Digital Era: A Study of the Shift in Social Interactions of Indonesian Youth," *COMTE: Journal of Sociology Research and Education* 1 (November 2024): 178–83, <https://doi.org/10.64924/sn3v3e81>.

⁷ Nilot Pramudita et al., "Dampak Penggunaan Media Sosial terhadap Tingkat Perilaku Kenakalan Remaja di Era Digital Saat Ini," *Dialogika: Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi dan Sosialisasi* 1, no. 3 (July 2025): 231–44, <https://doi.org/10.62383/dialogika.v1i3.533>.

⁸ Safitri Yosita Ratri and Lina Aviyanti, "Unlocking Digital Literacy in Indonesia: Insights from the Use of Social Media Platforms," *Jurnal Prima Edukasia* 13, no. 1 (March 2025): 191–200, <https://doi.org/10.21831/jpe.v13i1.83433>.

environments of school WhatsApp groups and virtual classrooms reconfigure the very nature of adolescent relatedness and communication.

The novelty of this research lies in its synthesis of real-time Indonesian data with the structural logic of Media Ecology to examine how "scroll culture" disrupts the traditional educational hierarchy. By moving beyond a binary "good vs. bad" perspective, this study explores the hybridity of social interactions where digital intimacy often replaces physical presence.⁹ The findings of this research indicate that while social media expands bridging social capital and provides a platform for informal learning, it leads to a significant reduction in the quality of face-to-face interactions, exemplified by the rising prevalence of "phubbing" behavior in schools.¹⁰ Ultimately, the study concludes that adolescent social dynamics in the era of digital education are defined by a tension between hyperconnectivity and emotional depletion, requiring a robust digital literacy framework and collaborative parental-educator oversight to ensure healthy development.¹¹

2. Research Questions

The central inquiry of this report is to analyze how the integration of social media platforms and the resulting digital behaviors impact the social interaction patterns of adolescents within the Indonesian digital education system. To address this, the following research questions have been formulated:

- a. How does the pervasive environment of social media platforms (WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok) reshape the formation and maintenance of bonding and bridging social capital among Indonesian adolescents?
- b. In what ways does mediated communication and the phenomenon of "phubbing" impact the quality and empathy of face-to-face social interactions in educational settings?
- c. How do psychosocial factors such as the "Fear of Missing Out" (FOMO) and social comparison, facilitated by social media algorithms, influence adolescent mental well-being and academic focus?
- d. What are the implications of the current "digital native paradox" for the implementation of digital literacy and regulatory policies in Indonesia?

⁹ "From Likes to Bonds: A Scoping Review on the Impact of Social Media on Youth Social Interaction Patterns | Nusantara Journal of Behavioral and Social Science," 2025, <https://ukinstitute.org/journals/4/njbss/article/view/93>.

¹⁰ Ratri and Aviyanti, "Unlocking Digital Literacy in Indonesia," March 2025.

¹¹ Safitri Yosita Ratri and Lina Aviyanti, "Unlocking Digital Literacy in Indonesia: Insights from the Use of Social Media Platforms," *Jurnal Prima Edukasia* 13, no. 1 (March 2025): 191–200, <https://doi.org/10.21831/jpe.v13i1.83433>.

3. Research Methods

This research utilizes a qualitative systematic literature review (SLR) methodology combined with a thematic analysis of secondary data from 2024-2025. The data collection process involved identifying and synthesizing peer-reviewed articles from the Scopus database, official reports from Indonesian governmental bodies (BPS, Kemkomdigi), and findings from industry associations like APJII. The analysis technique centers on the principles of Media Ecology Theory and Social Capital Theory to interpret how communication technologies function as environments rather than mere tools. The study also integrates specific case study data from secondary sources, such as observations of phubbing behavior at SMP Negeri 74 Jakarta, to ground theoretical insights in empirical reality.¹² Reference is made to recent longitudinal and cross-sectional studies from 2024 to identify emerging trends in digital behavior, such as the "scroll culture" and "binge-watching" phenomena among Indonesian Gen Z. This multi-dimensional approach allows for a comprehensive narrative that bridges the gap between macro-level statistics and micro-level behavioral insights.

B. DISCUSSION

1. The Socio-Technical Landscape of Indonesian Digital Education

The integration of social media into the Indonesian educational experience is a reflection of a larger socio-technical shift. The Indonesian online education market, valued at \$1,143.08 million in 2024, is projected to reach over \$8,214 million by 2033. This growth is catalyzed by a government-led push toward tech-enabled learning, but the reality for adolescents is that their "digital school" life is inseparable from their recreational social life.¹³ As social media platforms become the primary tools for both informal learning and social validation, the educational environment is reconfigured as a "hybrid" space where traditional values are reinterpreted in digital contexts.¹⁴

¹² Carlos A. Scolari, "Media Ecology: Exploring the Metaphor to Expand the Theory."

¹³ Imarc Transforming Ideas, "Indonesia Online Education Market Statistics & Outlook 2033."

¹⁴ Muhammad Faisal and Romi Mesra, "Social Capital Transformation in the Digital Era: A Study of the Shift in Social Interactions of Indonesian Youth," *COMTE: Journal of Sociology Research and Education* 1 (November 2024): 178–83, <https://doi.org/10.64924/sn3v3e81>.

Platform	Usage Rate in Indonesia (%)	Primary Function
YouTube	93.8%	Educational tutorials & Entertainment
WhatsApp	87.7%	Peer communication & School groups
Instagram	86.6%	Self-expression & Social comparison
Facebook	85.5%	Community networking
TikTok	Rising	Trend participation & Short-form content

In this landscape, adolescents act as "active digital agents," but their agency is bounded by the architectures of the platforms they use.¹⁵ The "hypersocial" character of Indonesian youth leads to a high intensity of "insta-story" production and a preference for visual, ephemeral content that prioritizes immediate emotional rewards over deep cognitive engagement. This creates an environment where students may be physically present in a lecture but mentally "distracted" by the digital interactions occurring on their screens, a trend that significantly correlates with decreased academic performance and increased anxiety.¹⁶

2. Algorithmic Mediation and the "Scroll Culture" Environment

The term "scroll culture" describes a shift in adolescent cognitive habits characterized by the rapid, non-linear consumption of short-form content. In the context of Media Ecology, this culture is an environment that prioritizes speed, "vibe," and emotional resonance.¹⁷ For Indonesian adolescents, who spend an average of 5 hours and 24 minutes on the internet daily, the majority of this time is spent in the "scroll zone" of platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels.⁴ This environment discourages deep, focused tasks and instead promotes a fragmented attention span, which has direct consequences for digital education.¹⁸

¹⁵ Simon P Hammond, Neil Cooper, and Peter Jordan, "Social Media, Social Capital and Adolescents Living in State Care: A Multi-Perspective and Multi-Method Qualitative Study," *The British Journal of Social Work* 48, no. 7 (October 2018): 2058–76, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcx144>.

¹⁶ Prodeep Mondal, "Exploring the Impact of Digital Distraction on Learning: A Qualitative Analysis of University Students Experiences and Strategies," *International Journal of Emerging Knowledge Studies* 03 (September 2024): 625–32, <https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-03-09-023>.

¹⁷ The News Desk, "Exclusive | The 3-Second Revolution – Poonam Prahlad of Born Hi on India's Reels-First Culture › Mediabrief.Com," *Exclusive | The 3-Second Revolution – Poonam Prahlad of Born Hi on India's Reels-First Culture*, 2025, <https://mediabrief.com/exclusive-poonam-prahlad-of-born-hi/>.

¹⁸ Prodeep Mondal, "Exploring the Impact of Digital Distraction on Learning: A Qualitative Analysis of University Students Experiences and Strategies," *International Journal of Emerging Knowledge Studies* 03 (September 2024): 625–32, <https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-03-09-023>.

The power of social media algorithms significantly determines the visibility and popularity of information, creating "echo chambers" and "filter bubbles" that can isolate adolescents from diverse viewpoints. This is particularly dangerous when algorithmic curation prioritizes emotionally provocative content over verifiable educational facts, thereby eroding "epistemic welfare" the collective access to reliable information.¹⁹ In Indonesian schools, this manifests as a reliance on social media for news and academic help, where students may share information without verifying its accuracy, leading to the rapid spread of "hoaxes" or misinformation.²⁰

3. Transformation of Social Capital: Bridging vs. Bonding Dynamics

Social media has fundamentally expanded the "bridging" social capital of Indonesian adolescents by allowing them to connect with diverse peer groups outside their geographical boundaries. This is especially true in digital education, where platforms enable telecollaboration and peer-to-peer knowledge sharing across the Indonesian archipelago. These "weak ties" provide students with access to creative inspiration, new information, and professional aspirations that were previously inaccessible.²¹

However, the "bonding" capital the deep, trust-based relationships within a family or a close-knit school group faces new challenges. While school WhatsApp groups can support relatedness, they can also "thwart" it if the usage is excessive or toxic. Studies show that while digital transformation creates more flexible social networks, it also creates a "digital divide" where the quality of social capital depends on an individual's level of digital literacy.²²

Interaction Type	Social Capital Focus	Digital Mechanism	Impact on Adolescent
Bridging	Weak Ties / Diversity	Global communities, hashtags	Creative expansion, info access
Bonding	Strong Ties / Intimacy	School WhatsApp groups, DMs	Emotional support, school belonging

¹⁹ Essien Oku, "Climate Change Disinformation on Social Media: A Meta-Synthesis on Epistemic Welfare in the Post-Truth Era," *Climate Change Disinformation on Social Media: A Meta-Synthesis on Epistemic Welfare in the Post-Truth Era*, 2025, <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/14/5/304>.

²⁰ Ainun Nafisah et al., "The Effect of Social Media on Students' School Life in Indonesia," *Acta Pedagogica Asiana* 3, no. 2 (May 2024): 80–90, <https://doi.org/10.53623/apga.v3i2.426>.

²¹ Monique West, Simon Rice, and Dianne Vella-Brodrick, "Adolescent Social Media Use through a Self-Determination Theory Lens: A Systematic Scoping Review," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 21, no. 7 (July 2024): 862, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph21070862>.

²² Hammond, Cooper, and Jordan, "Social Media, Social Capital and Adolescents Living in State Care."

Linking	Vertical Networking	Virtual influencers, educators	Career inspiration, professionalism
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The process of accumulating digital social capital is significantly faster and more dynamic than traditional forms, yet it is often shallower. For Indonesian youth, the "hypersocial" character drives them to seek validation through likes and followers, which are the new "social currency" of the digital age. This shift necessitates a new understanding of social reciprocity that is no longer bound by physical presence but by the speed and consistency of digital response.

4. Mediated Communication and the Erosion of Face-to-Face Skills

The shift toward mediated communication means that adolescents are missing out on vital non-verbal cues, such as body language, facial expressions, and vocal inflections.¹⁷ This "indirect communication" barrier makes face-to-face interactions feel increasingly intimidating for a generation that is "hyperconnected" yet physically isolated.¹⁷ In Indonesian school settings, this is most visible in the "phubbing" phenomenon. Research at SMP Negeri 74 Jakarta indicates that students frequently ignore their peers in favor of their smartphones during recess, leading to a significant decrease in active social participation.²³

Behavioral Indicator	Finding from Indonesian Research	Statistic / Impact
Phubbing Behavior	Students ignore peers for smartphones	10.2% reduction in interaction quality
Device Preference	Preference for smartphone chatting	6 out of 10 students (sample)
Comm. Barrier	Missing non-verbal cues online	Increased misunderstandings/anxiety
Social Skills Gap	"Digital Native Paradox"	High access, low ethical/social skill

This erosion of interpersonal skills is a major concern for the "character education" goals within the Indonesian curriculum.²⁹ The tendency of adolescents to avoid the "risk" of face-to-face conflict by using digital platforms can lead to maladaptive social behaviors.¹⁵ Furthermore, the lack of practice in real-world social cues makes it difficult

²³ Faisal and Mesra, "Social Capital Transformation in the Digital Era," November 2024.

for students to develop empathy, as the digital distance allows for more "extreme" and potentially harmful ways of disagreeing without the immediate social consequence of seeing the other person's reaction.¹⁷

5. Psychosocial Risks: FOMO, Anxiety, and Performative Validation

The psychological health of Indonesian adolescents is deeply influenced by the "performative" nature of social media. The "Fear of Missing Out" (FOMO) is a prevalent phenomenon where students feel a sense of inadequacy or anxiety when they perceive their peers are having better experiences.¹⁶ This is compounded by the "upward social comparison" facilitated by highly curated, filtered images on platforms like Instagram.¹⁷ The constant need to check notifications and stay "in the loop" leads to significant distractions from academic tasks and disrupts sleep patterns, especially among adolescent girls.²⁴

Quantitative analysis in Indonesian contexts has shown mixed results regarding the direct impact of screen time on motivation. One study found no notable correlation between screen time and academic motivation ($R^2 = 0.004, p = 0.607$), suggesting that the *type* of activity is more influential than the *duration*.²⁵ However, "problematic use" and "passive consumption" (scrolling without interacting) are strongly associated with increased symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Psychosocial Issue	Mechanism of Action		Consequence in Education
FOMO	Algorithmic updates	social	Anxiety, lack of concentration
Social Comparison	Curated/Filtered aesthetics		Lower self-esteem, body image issues
Digital Loneliness	Shallow connections	digital	Feelings of isolation despite being "connected"
Performative Validation	Validation Likes/Shares	through	Emotional fragility based on external rewards

²⁴ "Exploring the Impact of Digital Distraction on Learning: A Qualitative Analysis of University Students Experiences and Strategies," *ResearchGate*, ahead of print, August 6, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-03-09-023>.

²⁵ Shareen Ahmed Ainun Nafisah, Nasheeta, "The Effect of Social Media on Students' School Life in Indonesia," *ResearchGate* 3(2) (August 2025): 80-90, <https://doi.org/10.53623/apga.v3i2.426>.

6. Cyberbullying and the Collapse of Physical-Digital Boundaries

The most severe risk in the social interaction patterns of Indonesian adolescents is cyberbullying, which affects 48% of the population. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying transcends the physical boundaries of the school, following adolescents into their "safe spaces" at home.²⁶ This 24/7 exposure makes it impossible for victims to disconnect from the harassment, leading to deep psychological trauma and trauma-induced depression. The use of "abusive words" in Indonesian-language comments is a serious problem that educational institutions are struggling to control.

The collapse of these boundaries also exposes children to other harms. According to 2024-2025 reports, 50.3% of Indonesian children have encountered pornography, and 32.1% share private information with strangers online. This underscores the "digital native paradox" where students possess the technical ability to use platforms but lack the literacy to protect themselves or their peers. The anonymity provided by digital platforms also facilitates a "cycle of harm," where victims of bullying may retaliate by becoming perpetrators themselves in an attempt to regain a sense of power.²⁷

7. Strategic Interventions: Literacy and Collaborative Paradigms

To mitigate these negative patterns, a shift toward "digital literacy" and "digital detox" is being proposed in Indonesian educational policy. Research by Nafisah et al. (2024) indicates that when social media is integrated with a focus on literacy, it can positively influence socialization skills and academic engagement. This requires "pedagogical integration" teaching students how to use these tools for collaborative problem-solving rather than just passive consumption.

Parental-educator collaboration is the primary buffer against digital harm. Currently, 70% of Indonesian children have online rules from their parents, yet many parents feel unskilled in navigating the digital world compared to their children. Effective intervention involves setting healthy usage limits, as only 11% of Indonesian students currently adhere to the recommended 2-hour daily screen time.²⁸ Strategies such as

²⁶ "The Impact of Social Media on Children and Adolescents," Independence Health System, 2025, <https://www.independence.health/newsroom/2025/january/the-impact-of-social-media-on-children-and-adolescents/>.

²⁷ "Exploring the Relationships among Online Social Capital, Internet Self-Efficacy, Mental Health, and Cyberbully-Victim Roles in Adolescents: A Structural Equation Model," *ResearchGate*, ahead of print, September 12, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2025.1427655>.

²⁸ Ainun Nafisah, Nasheeta, "The Effect of Social Media on Students' School Life in Indonesia."

reverting to manual assignments or implementing digital detox periods in schools are being explored to help adolescents break free from distracting habits and rediscover the value of face-to-face interaction.

Strategy	Implementation Method	Intended Outcome
Digital Literacy Training	Curriculum-based (Nafisah et al. 2024)	Responsible content creation/usage
Usage Restrictions	Kemkomdigi Age Limits (Under 16)	Protection from harmful content/exploitation
Digital Detox	University/School-led initiatives	Reduced anxiety, restored focus
Parental Monitoring	Collaborative management app	Ethical behavior, improved sleep

The future of adolescent social interaction in Indonesia depends on the successful implementation of the PP TKAPSE regulation and the development of a hybrid social-educational model. By emphasizing "civic virtue" in digital spaces and fostering a culture of reciprocity and trustworthiness, Indonesia can transform social media from a source of distraction into a powerful tool for building social capital and community productivity.⁹

C. CONCLUSION

The integration of social media into Indonesian digital education has created a hybrid media ecology where adolescent social interaction is defined by high-frequency digital engagement at the expense of face-to-face quality and emotional depth. While digital platforms expand bridging social capital and enable informal peer learning, the pervasive "scroll culture" and algorithmic mediation contribute to significant psychosocial risks, including phubbing, FOMO, and systemic cyberbullying. The current "digital native paradox" underscores an urgent need for multi-sectoral collaboration to enhance digital literacy, implement age-based regulations, and promote a balanced interaction paradigm that prioritizes mental well-being alongside technological proficiency. Ultimately, the resilience of the younger generation depends on fostering a digital environment that supports authentic relatedness and ethical social participation within both virtual and physical educational spaces.

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