



# Restricting Social Media: Can Indonesia Adopt Australia's Approach?

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**Abstract.** The widespread use of social media among students has sparked debates about its implications for education and mental health. This study explores the potential of implementing Australia's policy, which bans social media use for children under 16, in the Indonesian context. Indonesia's education system heavily integrates technology, including social media, for learning, collaboration, and creative expression, creating a need for policies that balance its benefits with mitigating risks such as distraction, mental health issues, and exposure to inappropriate content. Using the literature study method, this research reviews existing academic works and reports to analyze the impact of social media use and restrictions on education. Findings suggest that while Australia's approach may improve mental well-being and academic focus, implementing a similar policy in Indonesia presents unique challenges, including digital divides and the reliance on social media for educational purposes. Proposed solutions include focusing restrictions on children under 10 and introducing specialized educational devices to foster a safer and more equitable digital learning environment. These strategies aim to enhance the integration of technology in education while safeguarding students' developmental needs. The study concludes with recommendations for tailored policies that align with Indonesia's educational and technological landscape.

**Keywords:** Social Media in Education, Australia Approach, Indonesia Approach

## 1 Introduction

Australia recently passed a significant policy that prohibits children under 16 years of age from accessing social media platforms. This legislation, introduced in late November 2024, was championed by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and other government officials [1]. The law, part of amendments to the Online Safety Act, mandates social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat to verify users' ages and restrict access for those under 16.

The policy was driven by growing concerns about the negative impacts of social media on children's mental health and safety, including exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying, and online predators [2]. Studies cited by the government indicated that existing protections on social media platforms were inadequate. The goal of the law is twofold: 1) To safeguard the mental health and well-being of children; 2) To pressure social media companies to enhance user protections and accountability. Social media platforms have until the end of 2025 to fully implement age verification measures or

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D. R. Hidayat et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Environmental Learning Educational Technologies (ICELET 2024)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 908, [https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-374-0\\_12](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-374-0_12)

face substantial penalties. While the government has clarified that users won't need to provide formal ID to access platforms, details about the enforcement mechanisms are still under development. The policy has sparked debates, with supporters highlighting the need to protect children and critics warning about potential loopholes and risks of driving young users to less regulated online spaces.

From an educational perspective, the policy aims to mitigate distractions and foster healthier learning environments. By reducing dependency on social media, schools can encourage students to focus more on collaborative and in-person learning, which are crucial for cognitive and social development. Evidence also suggests that limiting digital distractions, such as smartphones, can improve classroom engagement and academic outcomes [3]. However, the policy raises concerns about equity and access. Social media and digital tools are often used for educational purposes, such as group projects, accessing information, and fostering digital literacy. Restricting access could disproportionately affect students who rely on these platforms for learning resources or peer interaction, especially in remote areas. The restriction may inadvertently impact students who rely on social media for educational purposes, such as collaborative projects and accessing resources. This raises equity concerns, particularly for those in underprivileged areas, prompting schools to explore alternative tools for digital learning. Despite these challenges, The Australian government's policy to ban social media use for children under 16 involves several key steps such as implement stringent age verification systems. This includes AI-based tools and manual checks to ensure compliance without compromising sensitive personal data. Companies failing to enforce these measures face substantial penalties, emphasizing the government's commitment to safeguarding young users [4].

In education, the policy is expected to yield mixed outcomes. By limiting distractions, it aims to improve students' focus and engagement in classrooms, fostering better academic outcomes. Research suggests that reducing screen time during school hours can lead to improved academic performance, especially among students who struggle with managing their online activities [5]. Additionally, reducing social media use could alleviate mental health challenges like anxiety and depression, which are prevalent among adolescents [6]. Lastly, the policy may encourage the development of healthier online behaviors and strengthen parental and institutional roles in guiding digital habits. This approach aligns with efforts to create safer and more supportive environments for young users.

The educational context in Indonesia significantly differs from the situation in Australia, where a policy restricts children under 16 from using social media. In Indonesia, gadgets are widely utilized in schools to enhance the learning experience. Many educational institutions permit students to bring their gadgets to class as tools for accessing digital resources, managing assignments, and fostering creativity [7]. This approach has been embraced, especially during the shift to digital learning accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, studies show that students who use gadgets in the classroom can access a wide array of learning materials, which helps them learn

at their own pace, particularly through interactive videos and educational apps [8]. Moreover, students are more likely to develop critical thinking skills and independent learning habits, as they can research, take notes, and collaborate more effectively.

In Indonesia, while social media can support learning and creativity, it also presents potential risks to students' mental health. Excessive use can lead to sleep disturbances, anxiety, and negative impacts on academic engagement. The overuse of platforms like Facebook and Instagram, if not managed properly, can distract students from their studies and contribute to emotional distress, including issues like burnout or "fear of missing out" (FOMO), which can lead to disengagement in class activities [9]. These effects may hinder not just their social interactions, but also their cognitive and emotional development. Moreover, it has been noted that students who heavily engage with social media might experience more psychological distress and lower academic outcomes due to distractions and the pressures of social comparison [10]. Therefore, while social media can enhance learning, its misuse can undermine students' mental well-being and academic success. In light of these challenges, some educators and mental health professionals argue that students may not yet be ready for the pressures that come with unrestricted access to social media [11]. They emphasize the need for comprehensive digital literacy education to help students navigate these platforms responsibly and with awareness of the mental health risks involved [12]. Balancing digital engagement with well-being remains an ongoing conversation in Indonesian education. These concerns highlight the need for thoughtful policies and support systems to ensure that the use of technology in education does not adversely affect students' mental health.

## 2 METHOD

The increasing integration of social media in students' daily lives has raised significant concerns about its impact on education and mental health. Countries like Australia have implemented strict age restrictions on social media use to address these issues, particularly for children under 16. In Indonesia, however, social media is widely used not only for social interactions but also as a tool to support education through information sharing, collaboration, and creative expression. This duality poses a critical question: how can policies balance the benefits of social media in education with the need to mitigate its potential harms? To explore this, a literature study method will be employed to analyze the existing body of research, policies, and educational practices concerning social media use among students. The literature study method will involve systematically collecting and analyzing existing academic works, such as journal articles, books, and credible reports, to understand the relationship between social media policies and their impact on education [13]. This approach is ideal for synthesizing insights from diverse studies and identifying key patterns, trends, and knowledge gaps within the field. The process will include identifying relevant sources, critically evaluating their credibility and relevance, and organizing findings to address the research objectives [14]. By leveraging prior research, this method ensures a

thorough and evidence-based exploration of the topic, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how social media policies might be adapted to different educational contexts, such as those in Indonesia. This approach also provides a foundation for recommendations aimed at creating a balanced framework for technology use in education.

### 3 Results And Discussion

In Indonesia, the regulations surrounding the minimum age for social media use are currently under consideration, although the country has yet to impose strict legal age limits like in some other nations. The Ministry of Communications and Information (Kominfo) has discussed potential age restrictions, acknowledging the challenges of managing children's use of social media [15]. While there are existing regulations that require social media platforms to verify users' age to ensure that children access appropriate content, a specific nationwide ban or strict age limits have not yet been implemented. There have been considerations based on recent global trends, such as Australia's social media age restrictions, and Indonesia may eventually follow suit but with careful study and gradual implementation.

Additionally, concerns about children's mental health and the impact of social media use have been growing in Indonesia, especially following reports of high anxiety levels among teenagers [16]. The government is exploring ways to improve public health, which may involve regulating social media access to protect young people from harmful content and online risks. However, any new regulations will likely take time to establish, with a focus on creating a healthier digital environment.

Social media has been integrated into students' daily lives, and its impact on mental health remains a growing concern. A number of studies suggest that students in Indonesia are not fully mentally prepared for extensive social media use. This is particularly evident among younger students, who may use social media as a means of coping with stress or loneliness, leading to negative consequences such as addiction, anxiety, and depression [17]. Research has shown that excessive social media use is associated with a decline in students' self-esteem, an increase in feelings of isolation, and difficulties with academic focus [18]. The primary concern is that many students tend to engage with social media platforms for activities that are not directly educational—such as playing games or engaging with entertainment content—which can detract from their academic focus. This, in turn, may have a detrimental effect on their academic performance and overall well-being. While social media can be beneficial in terms of communication and learning, the negative impacts, such as disrupted sleep, anxiety, and reduced attention span, are prevalent [19]. Thus, there is a need for more guidance and regulation to ensure that students are using social media in a balanced and productive way.

If Australia's policy of banning social media for children under 16 were implemented in Indonesia, it could bring several advantages. A key benefit would be improved mental health, as reduced exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying, and the addictive nature of social media could alleviate anxiety and depression among young people. Academic focus might also improve, with students spending less time on distracting platforms and more on learning. Additionally, schools could enhance digital literacy by focusing on teaching responsible internet usage and ethical technology practices, preparing students for better online behavior in adulthood.

However, the policy would also present significant challenges in Indonesia. Many schools rely on social media as a learning tool, using platforms like WhatsApp and YouTube for assignments and communication, so a ban might disrupt these practices, especially in resource-limited areas. Enforcement would be difficult due to Indonesia's large population and varying levels of internet access, as students could easily bypass restrictions with fake accounts. Furthermore, social media supports peer connection and creative expression, and its absence might hinder social development and collaborative learning. Balancing restrictions with education-focused use would be crucial to mitigating these drawbacks.

Implementing Australia's social media policy in Indonesia could bring additional considerations that extend beyond educational settings. One major concern is the potential to exacerbate the digital divide in Indonesia. For many students in rural and underprivileged areas, social media serves as a critical tool for accessing information and learning materials. Restricting access without providing viable alternatives could leave these students at a disadvantage compared to those from wealthier areas who can afford specialized learning tools and resources.

The success of such a policy would also rely heavily on the roles of parents and educators. In Indonesia, many parents and teachers may lack the awareness or resources to guide children toward responsible technology use [20]. This could result in students seeking unregulated or unsafe platforms, which might undermine the policy's intent. Furthermore, cultural differences in how technology is perceived and used in Indonesia compared to Australia could affect the policy's implementation. In Indonesia, technology and social media are deeply integrated into social and educational life, making outright bans potentially disruptive without tailored solutions.

To address the challenges of balancing the benefits and risks of social media use among students, several alternative solutions could be implemented. Instead of enforcing a blanket ban for children under 16, age restrictions could focus on those under 10, a group generally less prepared to handle the complexities of social media. This approach acknowledges that younger children are generally less equipped to navigate the complexities of social media, such as recognizing misinformation, managing cyberbullying, or handling online privacy concerns [21]. At the same time, it permits older students to access valuable online resources for educational purposes and peer collaboration, provided they are supervised or supported by digital literacy programs.

This solution could also foster more responsible social media habits among teenagers. By gradually introducing them to online platforms with guidance, they can learn to navigate digital spaces in a way that supports their mental health and academic growth. Furthermore, limiting access for younger children could reduce exposure to inappropriate content and prevent early-onset social media dependency, while still maintaining the advantages of digital engagement for older students who use these tools effectively in learning environments. Such an approach bridges the gap between safeguarding children's mental health and fostering their digital competence.

Another potential solution involves schools providing dedicated educational devices for students. These gadgets would be specifically designed for learning, with restricted access to non-educational websites and applications. Such devices could ensure that students remain focused on academic tasks while minimizing distractions and exposure to harmful content. Providing students with dedicated educational devices offers significant opportunities to enhance learning outcomes while addressing the challenges of unrestricted gadget use. Beyond merely minimizing distractions, such devices can be pre-loaded with curated educational content, interactive learning applications, and digital textbooks tailored to curriculum standards. These tools could provide students with consistent access to high-quality resources, ensuring equity in education, particularly for schools in rural or underprivileged areas where access to digital learning materials is limited. Additionally, these devices could be integrated with school monitoring systems, allowing teachers and administrators to track usage patterns and ensure that students stay engaged in productive activities.

A trade-in system for upgrading or recycling older devices could also promote sustainability and affordability, making it easier for schools to adopt this approach. By reducing reliance on unregulated personal gadgets, this solution fosters a safer and more focused digital learning environment while preparing students with the technological skills necessary for future academic and professional success. Additionally, a system allowing for specialized, trade-in gadgets designed for education could make such tools more accessible and practical for widespread use in schools. A trade-in system for specialized educational gadgets could foster a collaborative and community-driven approach to technology use in schools. Such a system allows schools to continuously upgrade their devices without incurring high costs, while promoting sustainability by reducing electronic waste. Schools could partner with tech companies or local businesses to create a circular economy model, where old devices are recycled or repurposed, ensuring that technology remains accessible to all students. This system not only provides students with up-to-date learning tools but also encourages environmental responsibility and digital equity, especially in lower-income areas. Additionally, the trade-in model could include personalized support and warranties, ensuring that students receive devices that are optimized for educational use and free from the distractions of unnecessary apps and functions.

## 4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the potential benefits of implementing age restrictions on social media use in countries like Indonesia, similar to Australia's recent policy, can significantly improve students' mental health and academic performance. By focusing age restrictions on younger children, particularly those under 10, this solution minimizes the exposure to harmful content while still allowing older students to engage with educational tools on social media platforms. However, the challenges lie in enforcing such policies in a country as vast and diverse as Indonesia, where access to technology and educational resources is not uniform. Schools must balance safeguarding students' mental health with ensuring that they have the tools to learn and collaborate effectively in the digital age. Moreover, providing specialized educational devices or introducing trade-in systems for upgrading gadgets could be a feasible solution to support learning while addressing the risks associated with unregulated personal devices. This approach could help schools maintain a focused, safe, and equitable digital learning environment, especially for students from underprivileged backgrounds. By combining the benefits of age restrictions with dedicated educational technology, Indonesia could create a more controlled yet enriching digital ecosystem that nurtures responsible internet use while fostering students' technological skills for future success.

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