

# Detoxication of Social Media Addiction among Adolescents Through Regulatory Intervention

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## Abstract

Democratic nations are commonly associated with the freedom to access various social media platforms, such as Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Youtube, Snapchat, and Facebook. Unlimited access to these platforms among adolescents has resulted in serious social media addiction, which directly destroyed the fabric of adolescent society. Social issues, the threat to health and mental well-being, and attitude problems are among the negative impacts of social media addiction. The paper outlines the scenario of social media addiction and the regulatory framework in Malaysia for protecting the life of adolescents from being obliterated by social media. Reference is made to the practices in the People's Republic of China (China) on regulating access to social media among adolescents. Subsequently, this paper examines whether the imposition of regulations that limit the rights to access social media violates fundamental rights granted to the democratic citizen. This study adopts a doctrinal analysis, where materials are collected and compiled from legislations in Malaysia and China, journal articles, and databases. It is found that regulatory intervention is necessary to ensure access to social media can consciously create a constructive adolescent society rather than destroying it. This study is intended for the policymakers and the public to understand the possibility of imposing a hard law regulating access to social media platforms and preventing social media addiction among adolescents.

**Keywords:** addiction, Child Act, Communication and Multimedia Act, China's minor protection law, freedom, social media

## INTRODUCTION

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The notion of a democratic nation is among others vested in the adoption of freedom of speech and expression. The basic principle of freedom of expression includes freedom of information, to access and disseminate information through various means and platforms (Mathew, 2020). In the digital era, the freedom of information intersects with the freedom of the internet, as an immense amount of information is available online and just a click away. Based on the principle of democracy, internet users are entitled to unlimited access to information offered by various digital platforms, including social media platforms (Brooke, 2016). The domain of social media is pervasive, including entertainment, business, economics, politics, and education (Hruska & Maresova, 2020). Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and

Twitter are examples of online social media platforms that offer the opportunity for social interaction, and facilitate freedom of expression for acquiring and spreading various categories of information (O'Keeffe & ClarkePearson, 2011).

Globally, there are billions of social media users where social media has become part of the culture and daily routine of society. Malaysia is a democratic nation with one of the fastest growths in internet users and dominates many of the top global ranking internet engagement. According to the Ministry of Communication and Multimedia, as of January 2021, Malaysia recorded 28 million social media users which are equivalent to 85 percent of the country's population (Bernama, 2021). The number is increasing by 2.0 million (7.7%) between 2020 to 2021 (Bernama 2021). The social media penetration in Malaysia is at 81 per cent in January 2021, i.e., the fifth most active in the world (Statista Research Development, 2021). In addition, the freedom to access social media is available to all citizens regardless of the age limit. In terms of age distribution, it was reported 9 in 10 children aged 13 to 17 are internet users. Meanwhile, 92 per cent of students aged 13 to 17 have social media accounts (Malaysia Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2018). The unique features of social media such as being easily installed on a smartphone, accessible anywhere at any time, interesting and entertaining content, customise individual profiles, etc., make it very attractive to users. More than 50 percent adolescents in Malaysia use their social media accounts to share personal pictures and videos (Rosli, Adnan, & Aziz, 2021). Therefore, adolescents today have a greater presence on social media than they ever have in the past.

Furthermore, the hours spent on social media among adolescents continue to increase. In 2020, hours spent on the internet have increased by 13 per cent from 2018. 50 per cent of internet users spent between five to twelve hours a day on the internet. The time spent is mostly for visiting social media platforms, with 85.6 per cent. The top three social media platforms among Malaysians are Facebook (91.7%), YouTube (80.6%), and Instagram (63.1%) (Malaysia Communication and Multimedia Commission, 2020). Due to the extraordinary growth in usage and interest of social media platforms, there is a growing debate on the negative effects of social media on adolescents. The adolescents' persistent and pervasive use of social media has led to addiction with undesired effects on their lifestyle, including health, emotional, interaction, and performance problems (Marino, Gini, Vieno, & Spada, 2018; Zivnuska and others, 2019). The adverse effects of social media addiction are damaging not only to the adolescents themselves but also to society as a whole.

Thus, through doctrinal analysis, this article discusses the scenario of social media addiction and the regulatory framework in Malaysia for protecting the life of adolescents from being obliterated by social media. This paper examines the regulatory framework, i.e., the Child Act 2001 (Act 611) and Communication and Multimedia Act

1999 (Act 588) that protect adolescents from social media addiction. The analysis is extended to the principle of the fundamental right granted by the Federal Constitution of Malaysia. Reference is made to the regulatory framework in the People's Republic of China (China) on regulating access to social media among adolescents. The discussion in this paper is an attempt to regulate the risks of social media addiction towards adolescents. This study employs an in-depth analysis of the regulatory framework for social media and freedom of information in Malaysia and China, including journal articles, and databases.

It is important to note that, this study will not analyse the provisions of the Sexual Offences Against Children Act (SOAC) 2017 (Act 729). The SOAC was enacted to confer protection for children while they are online and offline. Nonetheless, the scope of protection is confined to sexual offences. While the focus of this study is on social media addiction among adolescents and the protection provided by the law to remedy the addiction.

## **BENEFITS AND RISKS OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

According to Kuss and Griffiths (2011), social media has become irreplaceable in the daily lives of adolescents. The increased attachment to social media has directly contributed to the increase of literature discussing the benefits and risks of social media to adolescents. Besides, various scientific studies have analysed the relationship between the time spent on social media with the benefits and risks to adolescents. Literature reveals that social media is an essential tool for millennials to explore and develop their identity. The unique landscape of social media allows for immediate, less costly, and anonymous communication that can help lower the barrier to self-disclosure. Social media enables adolescents who are struggling to make social connections due to low self-esteem to disclose and express themselves more openly to the public (Best, Manktelow, & Taylor, 2014). For example, a study found that Facebook is an appealing venue for self-disclosure among people with low self-esteem. According to Forest and Wood (2012), the opportunity to communicate with other people on Facebook will increase self-esteem.

Research also suggests that identity development among adolescents may be facilitated by social media. These online spaces provide them with opportunities to find their real, ideal, and false selves (Michikyan, & Suárez-Orozco, 2016). For instance, adolescents that are struggling with sexual identity or learning difficulties can find a like-minded online group to discuss their issues. The interaction and discussion will help them feel less lonely and more confident as they can share their problems and find solutions from those who had similar issues (Uhls, Ellison, & Subrahmanyam, 2017;

Bates, Hobman, & Bell, 2020). Intimacy is another key developmental task that can be fostered using social media. They may communicate with family, friends, or peer groups across the globe by updating their status, comments, and emoticons. This kind of interaction enables them to garner, maintain, and strengthen social and emotional support (Berriman & Thomson, 2015). Therefore, social media can directly contribute to the social and emotional well-being of adolescents.

Adolescents also have utilised social media as support for their studies. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok are not designed specifically for educational purposes. However, academicians and students have adopted social media for various educational purposes. There are numbers of affordances that make these social media an effective learning tool for adolescents such as universal access, convenience, encourage active learning, resource exchange, fostering creativity, and entertaining (Greenhow, Galvin, & Staudt Willet, 2019). Besides, education through social media represents the 21st-century skill standard required for students (Deeken, Mukhopadhyay, and Jiang, 2020). During Covid19, social media has emerged as a new frontier for academic engagement.

There is also great public concern on the risks of social media to adolescents, including cyberbullying, online harassment, sexting, privacy concern, digital footprint (Tartari, 2015; Hadjipanayis, et al., 2019). Meanwhile, the excessive and compulsive use of social media has resulted in social media addiction. O'Reilly and others (2018) contended that social media was constructed as an addiction. In turn, social media addiction has been shown to be associated with social issues, threats to health and mental well-being, attitude problems (Longobardi, Settanni, Fabris, & Marengo, 2020), and emotion regulation difficulties (Pontes et al., 2018), which directly contribute to the reduction of adolescent's well-being. A study by Ralasari, Setiadi, and Soemartjo (2020) found that students that are addicted to social media have no time or willingness to do anything else.

Consequently, these negative effects will erode the fabric of adolescent society, i.e., contributes to the destruction of the social order and likely affect the future of a nation. The adolescent is the generation responsible for the future fortune of the nation. In Malaysia, it was found that more than 72 percent of social media users in Malaysia are addicted to media social. Meanwhile, 78.8 per cent of internet users also suffer from internet addiction, including adolescents (Sualman, 2019). Therefore, corrective actions should be taken to overcome the problems of social media addiction. Discussion on the need to regulate the social media sphere as a strategy for the containment of social media addiction has begun (Lundahl, 2021). Social media addiction is regarded as a

legislative issue and an extensive campaign must be undertaken for greater regulation of social media.

## **MALAYSIA POSITION ON REGULATING SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION**

In 1995, Malaysia had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which mandates the member countries to provide a protective legal environment for children. The ratification has resulted in the enactment of the Child Act 2001. Currently, the Act is the main legislation relating to the care, protection, and rehabilitation of children below the age of 18 years old. The main purpose of the Act is to protect children from abuse, neglect, violence, and exploitation. It is also enacted to cultivate responsible parents with proper parenting skills that can produce children who are responsible for themselves, their parents, family, and the nation (Parliament Malaysia, 1999). The parental moral duties have been changed into legal duties where failure to comply is regarded as an offence.

Although the Act is to protect children against neglect and exploitation, the analysis of the provisions stipulated in the Act found that there is no express provision that protects children against the abusive and exploitative nature of social media. The Act is silent on protecting children against social media addiction, i.e., no provision that requires parents or guardians to monitor their children using social media either in relation to the time limit or content that they are watching. However, this study contended that the Act can be used to save the children that have been emotionally or mentally injured by social media addiction. The contention is made based on the provisions in Part V (Chapter 1: Children in need of care and protection). Section 17(1)(b) enumerates that:

A child is in need of care and protection if—

*The child has been or there is substantial risk that the child will be physically injured or emotionally injured or sexually abused and his parent or guardian, knowing of such injury or abuse or risk, has not protected or is unlikely to protect the child from such injury or abuse.*

Furthermore, section 17(2)(b) further provides that:

*A child is emotionally injured if there is substantial and observable impairment of the child's mental or emotional functioning that is evidenced by, amongst other things, a mental or behavioural disorder, including anxiety, depression, withdrawal, aggression, or delayed development.*

The wording in section 17(1)(b) indicates that a child can be classified as in need of care and protection if they are being exposed to substantial risks that will directly

injure their physical or emotions, and the parent fails to take reasonable action to protect the children from injury. Emotionally injured under section 17(2)(b) include mental or behavioural disorders such as anxiety, depression, or delayed development. As illustrated in the previous paragraphs, the adverse effect of social media addiction among children includes a threat to mental well-being and attitude problems. Therefore, if the social media addiction suffered by the children is so severe as it injures them mentally, the children can be placed into temporary custody for medical examination and treatment as provided under section 18.

Next is the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998. The CMA come into force in 1998 to regulate the communication and multimedia industry including telecommunications, broadcasting, and information technology. One of the CMA's objectives stipulated under section 3 is to promote national policy objectives for the communications and multimedia industry, inter alia, to continue enhancing the quality of work and life as well as to regulate the long-term benefits of the end-user. Even though the CMA is silent on social media, it does not mean that social media is excluded from the provisions in the CMA.

Section 6 defines content applications service as an application that provides content. Meanwhile, content includes sound, text, still picture, moving picture, or other audio-visual representation that is capable of being created, manipulated, stored, retrieved, or communicated electronically. Therefore, social media is classified as content application services, as it is a platform for sharing information using pictures and videos. The CMA imposes a legal mandate to social media providers on the content requirement. Section 211(1) states that:

*No content applications service provider, or other person using a content applications service, shall provide content which is indecent, obscene, false, menacing, or offensive in character with intent to annoy, abuse, threaten or harass any person.*

Section 211 (1) of the CMA prohibits social media providers or any person using it from posting content that is indecent, obscene, false, menacing, or offensive in character with intent to annoy, abuse, threaten or harass any person. Social media providers must ensure that videos available on their platform is appropriate as they will not physically or emotionally injure others. Hence, it imposes content screening requirements on social media providers. Failure to comply with content requirements shall be considered as an offence under section 211(2) of the CMA. Therefore, this provision will indirectly protect adolescents from inappropriate content.

Other than the CMA, the Communication and Multimedia Commission also had issued the Communications and Multimedia Content Forum of Malaysia, also known as

Content Code. The Content Code is a commitment by the industry to exercise self-regulation in compliance with the provisions of the CMA. Self-regulation includes efforts to ensure the content adheres to social values (Faizol & Nawi, 2020). This study believes that the Content Code could be used to protect children from social media addiction and instill good social values among adolescents. Part 2 (Clause 8.1) of the Code among others encourages content providers to closely supervise and monitor content designed for children below 14 years old, as they have impressionable minds. Furthermore, Part 9 (Clause 1.3) states that content providers together with consumer groups, parents, teachers, and individuals need to take collective efforts to educate society on how to protect children from being negatively influenced by the content provided on the internet. Part 10 (Clause 3.2) also promotes efforts to ensure the content provided will not result in causing, encouraging, or promoting physical injury or abuse of a child or exposing a child to moral danger. When the content for children is monitored, it can avoid them from wasting their time watching unsuitable content that can lead to addiction.

However, this study also believes that the Content Code is not an effective instrument to prevent social media addiction. First, compliance with the Content Code is voluntary, as provided under clause 6.2. It is not mandatory for content providers to review the children's content unless it falls under section 211 CMA. Second, content monitoring and supervision are only focused on content for children below the age of 14 years old. The problem of social media addiction due to inappropriate content also occurs among those above 14 years old.

### **Limitation on to Access Social Media from the Perspective of the Federal Constitution**

Article 10(1) of the Federal Constitution states that every citizen has the right to freedom of speech and expression. The term every citizen denotes that the adolescents should also be accorded with such right. The Federal Constitution does not define freedom of speech. However, according to Masum (2009), freedom of speech and expression includes the right to express, or disseminate, information and ideas, the right to seek information and ideas; the right to receive information and ideas; the right to impart information and ideas. Therefore, the right to access social media is part of freedom of speech, i.e., the right to receive and disseminate information using social media. It is also related to the principle of democracy, as freedom of speech is one of the features of democracy. The question is whether imposing a restriction on the time limit and types of content violates the principle of democracy and freedom of speech.

The freedom of speech accorded is not absolute and it is residual in nature because they are subjected to any law passed by the Parliament. Article 10(2) of the

Federal Constitution *inter alia* stipulates that the Parliament is empowered to impose restrictions as it deems necessary. In other words, an Act of Parliament may be enacted in which the effect of it is to limit freedom of speech and expression. However, the power of the Parliament to enact a law that restricts the freedom of speech is regulated (Sani, 2013). Article 10(2) (a) states that the law shall only confine to the interest of the security of the Federation, friendly relations with foreign countries, public order and morality, and privileges of the Parliament and State Legislative Assembly.

In *Dewan Undangan Negeri Kelantan & Anor V Nordin Salleh & Anor* (1992), it was held that the Parliament may restrict free speech only on the grounds specified in the Constitution. Similarly, *Madhavan Nair v. Public Prosecutor* (1975) ruled that any condition limiting freedom of speech not falling within the provisions of Article 10 clauses (2), (3), and (4) cannot be valid. Thus, the general grounds of state necessity, public policy, public interest, good government, efficiency, and common sense are not constitutionally permitted grounds for depriving a citizen of his or her right. By virtue of Article 10(2)(a) and decided cases, the introduction of a specific law that limits the right of adolescents to access social media is only valid and consistent with the Federal Constitution if it falls under the circumstances prescribed.

This study argues that the introduction of a law that imposes time limits for adolescents to access social media and confines to educational content or something appropriate for their age will not be contrary to the concept of freedom of speech in the Federal Constitution. It also does not defeat the principle of democracy. According to Devlin and Hart (1993), certain aspects of morality need to be regulated as moral erosion is dangerous for the well-being of society. Moral erosion affects the tangible aspects (the physical aspect) and intangible aspects (tolerance, attitude, interaction, and spiritual aspects) of society. The law to prevent social media addiction among adolescents is related to the issue of morality. Studies (Sheldon, Rauschnabel, & Honeycutt, 2019; Ralasari, Setiadi, & Soemartojo 2020; Harianti, Huwaida, Adriwiguna, & Qudsyi, 2022) indicate that social media addiction results in moral turpitude like adversely affect the academic score, obsession with inappropriate content, refusal to congregate in physical places, violence, and aggression. Furthermore, the incorporation of morality into the constitution signifies the important role of morality in building our nation (Aziz, 2005). This study once again emphasises that adolescents are the generation responsible to build our future nation. Hence, social media addiction must be regulated to prevent moral erosion among adolescents and such law is permissible under Article 10(2).



## CHINA'S MINOR PROTECTION LAW AGAINST SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION

China is the world's largest internet economy with the largest internet population. As of January 2020, there were 854.5 million internet users with 59 per cent of internet penetration. On the other hand, the number of social media users is 1.04 billion and the penetration stood at 72 per cent (Kemp, 2020). In 2021, 38.2 per cent of the social media users are adolescents (Kemp, 2021), in which they spent an average of seven hours per day visiting various social media (Thomala, 2021). Therefore, the phenomenon of spending long hours on social media among adolescents also happening in China, which directly contributes to online addiction among Chinese adolescents.

According to Liu and Ma (2018), social media addiction among adolescents is a growing problem in China. It was reported that 15 per cent of adolescents in China suffers from social media addiction with an extreme desire for social, informational, and entertainment gratification (Yao, 2016). A survey reveals that more than 40 per cent of Chinese parents believed their children are addicted to social media which negatively affects family relationships (Jie, 2020). Furthermore, the Chinese government and tech giants in China such as Young Douyin ((known as Chinese TikTok) have a long-held concern about the impacts of social media on Chinese adolescents (Yuwei, 2021). The Chinese government described online addiction including social media addiction as “spiritual opium” that will destroy the fabric of society (Feng, 2021). This has spurred a wave to regulate the internet and social media in China.

In general, the Chinese government is known for their kept tight rein on the internet, to avoid the potential subversion of power and protect their citizens against the internet's risks. The Great Firewall of China blocks selected foreign websites and monitor cross-border internet traffic, control and censorship of the internet content, keyword filtering (Xu, Mao & Halderman, 2011), and prohibition of anonymity for mobile apps registration (Reuters, 2016). The imposition of strict internet regulations is closely connected with the Chinese government's authoritarian political system. Unlimited freedom to the internet is believed to pose an insurmountable threat to authoritarian rule. The controlling of information on the internet through various regulatory discourse has always been a cornerstone of an authoritarian political system (Jiang, 2010).

Recently, China has tightened the screw for the internet particularly on social media regulation. In June 2021, the Chinese government has introduced a new regulatory framework to control access to the internet and social media. The aim is to overcome internet addiction among adolescents (Junxi, 2020). The new regulatory framework has been incorporated into the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Minors (hereinafter referred to as Law on Protection of Minors). In

December 2006, the Standing Committee of the Tenth National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China has adopted the Law on Protection of Minors. It has come into force in June 2007. Article 1 stipulates the purpose of the law, inter alia to protect the physical and mental health of minors with lofty ideals, sound morality, better education, and a good sense of discipline. The scope of the law is pervasive as it covers offline and online risks against minors. Table 1 lists the provisions relating to the control of access to social media and preventing social media addiction among adolescents.

As shown in Table 1, there are four new provisions incorporated in the Law on Protection of Minors to protect minors against social media addiction. From the table, it can be seen that the relevant government departments together with families, schools, and social organizations are required to adopt any relevant measures to prevent internet and social media addiction among minors. The measure includes installing software or other technological safety measures, educating minors about internet addiction, monitoring online goods, and improving internet literacy among parents.

The most notable measures are provided under Article 74. Minors must not be supplied with products or services that can induce them to indulge their time online and set up appropriate functions for managing usage of time. In general, the law prohibits minors from spending too much time playing online video games or browsing social media. The National Press and Publication Administration (NPPA) imposes a rule that prohibits citizens below 18 years old from playing video games for more than three hours a week. They can spend one hour a day from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, except for four hours on public holidays (Goh 2021). Social media providers such as Douyin have added a special feature known as "youth mode," designed to restrict youth access to the app and its content. The youth mode feature only permits adolescents to watch videos for less than 40 minutes at a time and they will not be able to access the app during blackout hours, from 10 p.m. until 6 a.m. (Conklin, 2021). The blackout hours are to stop adolescents from participating in social media conversation that runs deep into the night i.e., when nobody is on social media at night, users will not feel obligated to be there. According to the President of the Center for Humane, the blackout hours can eliminate social pressure and social dilemma among adolescents to be on social media (Kantrowitz, 2021).

Besides the time limit, youth mode also screened content uploaded by users to make sure it is appropriate for young users. They increase the educational videos such as on science and technology, museum exhibitions, history, and culture, where these videos appear in the feed (Kantrowitz, 2021). Educational contents reduce the risks of vulgar online content that can contribute to addiction. On the other hand, social media platforms such as Kuaishou and Huoshan adopted an anti-addiction system. Under the system, when adolescents watch a short video for the first time each day, a pop-up

window will direct users into an adolescent mode. They can only watch certain types of videos with limited time and functions (Shuo, 2019). These stringent interventions are the efforts to pull the plug on serious online addiction among Chinese adolescents and recreate positive energy without relying too much on social media.

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the discussion, the study presents four significant findings. First, social media addiction among adolescents is not a myth and now evolved into a much-debated global problem. It has become the opium of the masses and slowly eroded the fabric of our adolescent society. The adoption of social media is no longer making stronger democratic societies instead the freedom of speech and information creates risks in the society. There is a need to balance the benefits and risks of social media usage among adolescents. It is to ensure that the deployment of social media technology can positively contribute to their growth.

Secondly, the balance can be achieved by regulatory intervention. In certain situations, self-regulation or soft law is insufficient to regulate the behaviour of society. The pragmatic response to risks imposed by social media can be done by embedding hard law instruments into the regulatory framework (Santos Rutschman, 2022). It is found that the existing regulatory framework in Malaysia i.e., the Child Act 2011 and CMA1988 does not have specific provisions to overcome the problem of social media addiction. Although Section 17(1)(b) of the Child Act is relevant for social media addiction, the action of taking children into custody for care and treatment is only possible when children have been emotionally injured from the addiction.

It is also found that section 211(1) of the CMA is insufficient to prevent social media addiction among adolescents. The prohibition on inappropriate content is aimed to prevent online abuse, threat, and harassment. Social media addictions do not primarily cause by abusive, threatening, or harassing content. Furthermore, the analysis of the provisions in the CMA found that there is no express provision that mandates the social media providers to have an adolescent monitoring function, such as imposing the time limit for adolescents to access social media. The Content Code introduced by CMC is a voluntary measure and compliance is dependent on the industry discretions. Therefore, the existing regulatory framework that regulates social media is insufficient to provide early prevention against social media addiction. Third, the introduction of a law that limits the rights of adolescents accessing social media is not contrary to freedom of speech accorded by the Federal Constitution, as the law is among others to preserve the moral aspect of the citizen, including the adolescents.

Fourth, China has amended the law on minor protection by incorporating a specific provision to curb social media addiction among Chinese adolescents. The law

has changed the way they use social media, constructive instead of disruptive. This study acknowledges that the law in China is very strict by limiting only one-hour access to social media in a day and restricting to educational content only. The strict regulation on the internet including social media is consistent with the authoritarian system adopted by the Chinese government. The law not only curb social media addiction but also prevents foreign ideology from indoctrinating adolescents (Zhang, 2006). This study is unable to elaborate on the extent of the effectiveness of the new law in preventing social media addiction as the law is still new. Nonetheless, efforts have been taken by the Chinese government to regulate social media addiction from destroying Chinese adolescents.

It is recommended that the regulatory framework for social media should include express provisions to regulate social media addiction among adolescents, i.e., regulatory measures to detox the addiction and add extra layers of protection to adolescents while they are on social media. The regulatory framework introduced by the Chinese government to prevent social media addiction among Chinese adolescents can be adopted with modifications. It is further recommended that the framework should consist of at least three main provisions. First, a provision that limits the time to access social media. Social media providers need to introduce a special feature on their application that can limit access time among adolescent users. The time limit shall not be too rigid as imposed in China. The dark hours are sufficient to prevent them from accessing social media until late at night. Second provision on content screening requirement. It is to prevent adolescents from accessing inappropriate content that can lead to social media addiction. Their social media feed should consist of educational content or content that positively contributes to physical and mental development. The third provision shall impose collective responsibility on social service providers, parents, educational institutions, and relevant authorities to prevent social media addictions among adolescents. It shall include parents' responsibility to monitor their children.

## CONCLUSION

In the digital era, citizens in a democratic nation are free to access various social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, and Facebook. These social media platforms play a significant role in the life of adolescents and have become a daily routine. Various benefits, valuable opportunities, and supports are offered by social media to adolescents. However, accessing social media for unlimited hours has resulted in social media addiction among adolescents. Social media addiction is classified as a behavioural addiction that directly threatens the physical and mental well-being of adolescents. It impairs the important life area of adolescents which consequently destroyed the fabric of adolescent society. It is important to detox them from the addiction as they are the future leaders for the nation. Currently, there is an

absence of specific laws to monitor the freedom of accessing social media among adolescents. As a citizen in a democratic nation, they have been granted the right to access social media without any limitation, particularly in terms of hours spent. On the other hand, the Chinese government has introduced a specific law mandating social media providers, educational institutions, and parents to monitor contents and hours spent on social media. The legislative effort is to curb social media addiction among Chinese adolescents. It is also an indication that the Chinese government perceives social media addiction as a serious national problem that requires legislative intervention. The regulatory intervention is necessary to ensure access to social media can consciously create a constructive adolescent society rather than destroying it. It is about time for the policymakers and the public to understand the possibility of imposing a hard law regulating access to social media platforms and curbing social media addiction among adolescents.

Table 1  
*Provision related to the control of access to social media in China Law on Protection of Minor*

Article	Scope
68	Departments for news and publishing, education, health, culture and tourism, internet information, and so forth shall <i>periodically carry out publicity and education on the prevention of internet addiction</i> in minors; oversee online goods and service providers' performance of their obligations to prevent minors' internet addiction, and guide families, schools, and social organizations, to work together and <i>employ scientific and reasonable methods to prevent and intervene in minors' internet addiction.</i>
69	Schools, communities, libraries, cultural centres, youth activity centres, and other such venues providing minors with internet access facilities, shall <i>install software for the protection of minors online or employ other technological safety measures.</i> Departments for news and publishing, education, health, , culture and tourism, internet information, and so forth shall <i>periodically carry out publicity and education on the prevention of internet addiction in minors; oversee online goods and service providers' performance of their obligations to prevent minors' internet addiction, and guide families, schools, and social organizations, to work together and employ scientific and reasonable methods to prevent and intervene in minors' internet addiction.</i>
71	Minors' parents and other guardians shall increase their internet literacy, regulate their own internet usage, and strengthen guidance and oversight of minors' internet usage. <i>The parents and other guardians of minors shall effectively prevent minor's addiction to the internet by installing software for the online protection of minors</i> on smart-terminal products and choosing service models and management functions suitable for minors to avoid minors encountering online information that is harmful or that might impact their physical and psychological health.
74	Online product and service providers must not provide minors with products and services that induce them to indulge. Network service providers such as for online games, broadcasts, a/v works, and social media shall <i>set up appropriate functions for managing usage time, privileges, and spending</i> for minors using their services.  Online education network products and services that serve minors must not insert links to online games, or push advertisements and other information unrelated to teaching.

**Source:** Law on Protection of Minors

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