

[Your Name]

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[Date]

Federal Trade Commission

600 Pennsylvania Avenue

NW Washington, DC 20580

Dear Federal Trade Commission,

I am writing to express my deep concerns about the harmful impact of algorithms targeting children on social media and other online platforms, particularly as exemplified by TikTok and Meta (formerly Facebook). As a parent and concerned citizen, I have witnessed firsthand the detrimental effects of algorithmic influence on the mental health and well-being of children.

These platforms' algorithms are designed to maximize engagement and keep users hooked. However, this algorithm does not prioritize the well-being of children. Instead, it promotes addictive behavior and encourages users, including underage individuals, to spend excessive amounts of time on the platform. The algorithm's primary goal is to capture users' attention and generate profits, regardless of the potential harm it may cause to children's mental health and development.

Recently, Imran Ahmed, founder and CEO of The Center for Countering Digital Hate, conducted an eye-opening experiment that sheds light on just how dangerous these algorithms can be.

1. Experiment Findings:

- Ahmed's organization created accounts on TikTok, listing users as 13-year-old girls—the youngest age allowed on the platform. They played by TikTok's rules, and within minutes, the algorithm began feeding content

promoting self-harm to these young girls. It's disturbing how quickly and effectively the algorithm targets vulnerable users.

2. Examples of Harmful Content:

- In less than three minutes, the TikTok algorithm started showing videos promoting dangerous behaviors, such as extreme dieting and self-harm. These videos may begin with aspirational images but quickly escalate to promoting harmful practices like extreme dieting and self-harm.

3. Impact on Vulnerable Users:

- What's truly alarming is how the algorithm targets vulnerable users based on their interactions and interests. For example, an account with a name like 'Lauren Lose Weight' received significantly more self-harm content than a regular account. It's a stark reminder that the algorithm doesn't care about the well-being of users—it's solely focused on engagement and addiction.

4. Lack of Regulation and Oversight:

- The algorithm's relentless pursuit of engagement poses a serious threat to the mental health and safety of young users. Yet, there's a lack of regulation and oversight to hold social media companies accountable for the harmful content they promote.

In light of these concerns, I would like to understand the Federal Trade Commission's position on the harmful practices of Meta, TikTok and other social media companies that target children with addictive content. I call upon the FTC to investigate TikTok and Meta's algorithms thoroughly, implement stricter regulations, and advocate for safeguards to protect children from exploitation and manipulation online.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. I trust that the FTC will prioritize the well-being of children and take meaningful steps to address the harmful impact of algorithms targeting children on social media platforms.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]