



Social Media and Mental Health

PROF JONATHAN GLAZZARD

Content of the session

- ▶ Key themes from the literature
- ▶ Emerging data
- ▶ Conference planning



YOUNG
HEALTH
MOVEMENT

RSPH
ROYAL SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH
SCALE UP THE HEALTH

#StatusOfMind

Social media and young people's mental health and wellbeing



Social media and children's mental health: a review of the evidence

Emily Frith

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EDUCATION
POLICY
INSTITUTE

Research area:
Children and
Young People's
Mental Health



Literature

- ▶ 16-24 age group are the most active users of social media
- ▶ Adolescence and early adulthood is a critical and potentially vulnerable time for social and emotional development.
- ▶ Research suggests that young people who spend more than two hours per day on social networking sites are more likely to report poor mental health, including psychological distress.
- ▶ ‘Compare and despair’ attitude in young people.
- ▶ Numerous studies have shown that increased social media use has a significant association with poor sleep quality in young people



Body image

- ▶ Studies have shown that when young girls and women in their teens and early twenties view Facebook for only a short period of time, body image concerns are higher compared to non-users.
- ▶ Body comparisons
- ▶ Rise in younger generations opting to have cosmetic surgery to look better in photos, due to social media
- ▶ Low body-esteem, leading to body surveillance
- ▶ Males are also affected



Cyberbullying

- ▶ Seven in 10 young people have experienced cyberbullying, with 37% of young people saying they experience cyberbullying frequently.
- ▶ Victims of bullying are more likely to experience low academic performance, depression, anxiety, self-harm, feelings of loneliness and changes in sleeping and eating patterns



Fear of missing out

- ▶ FoMO has been robustly linked to higher levels of social media engagement
- ▶ Can lead to anxiety
- ▶ Can lead to sleep deprivation
- ▶ Can make people feel their life is inadequate compared to others



Other issues

- ▶ Live streaming – self-harm ; suicide
- ▶ Time spent online has been associated with a decline in academic achievement
- ▶ Each additional hour of viewing increases the likelihood of experiencing socio-emotional problems



Methodology

- ▶ Focus groups – 13 to 18 year olds (50 young people)
- ▶ Survey (500 young people)



Emerging themes (positives)

- ▶ Social media as a source of support
- ▶ Social media as a form of communication
- ▶ Social media as a form of entertainment
- ▶ Social media as a way of connecting with others
- ▶ A way of getting compliments
- ▶ Useful for business



Emerging themes (negatives)

- ▶ It affects your body image
- ▶ It makes you feel jealous
- ▶ Cyber bullying
- ▶ Sleep deprivation
- ▶ It causes pressure
- ▶ Fake pictures



Ways forward

- ▶ Digital citizenship / digital responsibility
- ▶ Digital resilience
- ▶ Digital literacy
- ▶ Parents
- ▶ Social media companies
- ▶ Schools

