

BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care

Module: Introduction to Independent Research Skills (BMHP5019)

Assessment title: Assessment 1 - Research Proposal

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Research Proposal

Topic: Impact of Social Media on UK Young People's Mental Health

1) **Review question:** What does current research reveal about social media's effects on the mental health of young people in the UK?

2) **Objectives:**

- Explore research on social media use among UK youth.
- Identify its influence on outcomes like anxiety, depression, and wellbeing.
- Examine both positive and negative effects.

3) **Rationale:**

Social media has become an important part of everyday life, particularly for young people. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and Facebook are widely used for communication, entertainment and information sharing. In the United Kingdom, many young people use social media daily and often spend several hours online. While social media can offer opportunities for connection and self-expression, research has raised concerns about its potential impact on mental health (Khalaf *et al.*, 2023). NHS guidance also suggests that increased social media use may contribute to issues such as anxiety, low self-esteem and cyberbullying among children and young people (Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust, 2024).

Studies indicate that excessive social media use may be associated with higher levels of anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and poor sleep among young people (Khalaf *et al.*, 2023). UK policy research also suggests that spending longer periods on social networking sites may be linked to higher emotional difficulty scores among adolescents (Adcock, 2016). However, social media may also provide benefits, including social support and access to mental health information (NIHR, 2023; Royal Society for Public Health, 2017).

Understanding the relationship between social media use and mental health is important for health and social care professionals. This research will review existing studies to explore how social media affects the mental health of young people in the UK.

4) **Methods:** This research employs a scoping review of academic literature, analyzing three peer-reviewed articles on social media and young people's mental health in the UK, sourced from Google Scholar, UWTSD Library, PubMed, and ProQuest.

Keywords: Social media, mental health, young people, UK.

Inclusion criteria and exclusion

Inclusion criteria

- Peer-reviewed journal articles
- Published after 2016
- UK-based research
- Focus on social media use
- Focus on young people or adolescents

Exclusion criteria

- Books, reports and websites
- Publications before 2016
- Non-UK studies
- Research unrelated to social media or young people

Data analysis: Thematic analysis will be used to identify patterns related to social media and mental health.

5) **Ethical considerations:** The research utilizes secondary data, minimizing ethical risks. Ethical practices, including Harvard referencing and using credible sources, will ensure research integrity.

References

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British Journal of Social Work (2022) 'Do social media impact young adult mental health and well-being? A qualitative study'. Available at:

<https://academic.oup.com/bjsw/article/52/8/4664/6574635> (Accessed: 3 March 2026).