



UNIVERSITY OF WALES  
**Trinity Saint David**  
**London**

**Course: BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care**

**Module: Independent Project (BMHP6020\_LON)**

**Component 1: Element 1 - Project Proposal**

**Student ID:** 2325813

**Student Name:** Angie Camila Vasquez Sanchez

**Date of submission:** 11 July 2026

**Word count:** 500 words

# Element 1 – Project Proposal

## **My project title:**

The Influence of Social Media Peer Communities on Young Adults' (18–29 years) Perceptions of Mental Illness and Self-Diagnosis in the United Kingdom.

### **1) Aim:**

To critically examine how social media peer communities influence young adults' (18–29 years) perceptions of mental illness and self-diagnosis in the United Kingdom, and to evaluate the implications for mental health literacy, professional diagnosis, and help-seeking behaviours.

### **2) Objectives:**

- To critically evaluate how mental illness and self-diagnosis are represented and discussed within social media peer communities accessed by young adults in the United Kingdom.
- To examine the psychological, social, and cultural factors that influence young adults (18–29 years) to engage with and trust mental health self-diagnosis content on social media.
- To critically analyse how social media peer communities influence young adults' perceptions, understanding, and mental health literacy regarding mental illness.
- To evaluate the potential benefits, risks, and ethical implications of social media-driven self-diagnosis and develop evidence-based recommendations for healthcare professionals, policymakers, educators, and social media platforms.

### **3) Background/Rationale:**

In the digital era, social media has transformed how young adults (18–29 years) in the United Kingdom access, interpret, and discuss mental health. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Reddit, and YouTube provide spaces for information sharing and peer support but have also contributed to the growth of self-diagnosis culture, where individuals identify with symptoms or diagnostic labels without professional assessment (Di Cara et al., 2022)

Young adults are among the highest social media users in the UK, increasing their exposure to online mental health content and peer discussions (Office for National Statistics, 2024). While digital platforms can improve mental health awareness and reduce barriers to support

(Mental Health Foundation, 2023), concerns remain regarding misinformation, inaccurate representations of mental illness, and their influence on mental health understanding and help-seeking behaviours (Mansfield et al., 2020).

Although online peer communities may provide validation and shared experiences, limited evidence has explored their influence on young adults' perceptions of mental illness and self-diagnosis within the UK context. Therefore, this critical literature review aims to identify knowledge gaps and provide evidence-based recommendations for mental health practice and policy (NHS England, 2023).

#### **4) Methods:**

This study will adopt a secondary research design using a critical literature review to synthesise and critically evaluate existing evidence on how social media peer communities influence young adults' (18–29 years) perceptions of mental illness and self-diagnosis in the United Kingdom. A critical literature review is appropriate as it enables the systematic identification, appraisal, and synthesis of existing evidence, while highlighting research gaps and supporting evidence-based recommendations (Snyder, 2019). The literature search will be conducted using academic databases including PubMed, ProQuest, CINAHL (via EBSCOhost), and Google Scholar. keywords will include 'social media', 'peer communities', 'online communities', 'mental illness', 'mental health', 'self-diagnosis', 'mental health literacy', 'help-seeking behaviour', 'young adults', 'United Kingdom', 'TikTok', 'Instagram', 'Reddit', and 'YouTube'.

#### **Inclusion Criteria**

- Peer-reviewed journal articles.
- Published between 2016 and 2026.
- Published in the English language.
- Studies involving young adults aged 18–29 years.
- Studies examining social media, online peer communities, mental illness, self-diagnosis, mental health literacy, or help-seeking behaviours.
- Studies conducted in the United Kingdom or international studies relevant to the UK context.

#### **Exclusion Criteria**

- Non-peer-reviewed publications (e.g., editorials, blogs, opinion pieces, magazine articles, dissertations, and conference abstracts).
- Studies published before 2016.
- Publications in languages other than English.
- Studies involving participants under 18 years or over 29 years.
- Studies not related to social media, online peer communities, mental illness, or self-diagnosis.
- Studies with no relevance to the UK context.

## **5) Resources:**

The resources required for this project will include access to academic databases such as PubMed, CINAHL (via EBSCOhost), ProQuest, and Google Scholar to identify relevant peer-reviewed literature. Additional resources will include university library services, academic journals, books, UK health and social care reports, and relevant mental health publications.

## **6) Timescale:**

| Type of work | 1/08/2026 | 20/08/2026 | 3/09/2026 | 3/10/2026 | 3/12/2026 |
|--------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Chapter 1    |           |            |           |           |           |
| Chapter 2    |           |            |           |           |           |
| Chapter 3    |           |            |           |           |           |
| Chapter 4    |           |            |           |           |           |
| Chapter 5    |           |            |           |           |           |

## **7) Self-reflection as researcher:**

| <b>Strength</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Challenges</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• My academic background in Health and Social Care has provided me with an understanding of health inequalities, person-centred care, and mental health-related issues.</li><li>• My experience volunteering with British Red Cross at Charing Cross Hospital has developed my communication skills and understanding of individuals' health and wellbeing experiences.</li><li>• I have developed research skills through academic study, including searching databases, evaluating sources, and critical analysis of evidence.</li><li>• I have a strong interest in mental health, which will support my motivation and engagement throughout the research process.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Managing a large volume of academic literature and selecting the most relevant evidence may be challenging.</li><li>• Maintaining objectivity and avoiding personal bias when analysing sensitive topics such as mental illness and self-diagnosis may require careful reflection.</li><li>• Accessing sufficient UK-based research specifically focused on social media peer communities and self-diagnosis may be challenging due to limited available evidence.</li><li>• Balancing dissertation work with personal and other commitments may require effective time management and planning.</li></ul> |

## References

- Mansfield, R., Patalay, P. and Humphrey, N. (2020) 'A systematic literature review of existing conceptualisation and measurement of mental health literacy in adolescent research: current challenges and inconsistencies,' *BMC public health*, 20(1). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-08734-1>.
- Di Cara, N.H. *et al.* (2022) 'The mental health and well-being profile of young adults using social media,' *Npj mental health research*, 1(1). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44184-022-00011-w>.
- Mental Health Foundation (2023) *social media and mental health*. Available at: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk> (Accessed: 25 June 2026).
- NHS England (2023) *Digital technologies and mental health: Opportunities and challenges*. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk> (Accessed: 25 June 2026).
- Office for National Statistics (2024) *Internet access – households and individuals, Great Britain: 2024*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk> (Accessed: 25 June 2026).
- Snyder, H. (2019) "Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines," *Journal of business research*, 104, pp. 333–339. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>.