

Critically consider the extent to which social media impacts upon health and well-being of children and young people in the United Kingdom.

With the developing world and the changes that we have seen it is clear that the use of a digital devices within day to day life is paramount. It is accepted that digital devices will have at least one social media app being located on that device. According to a document released by the House of Commons (2019) adult and children are increasing the amount of time they are spending online. Globally it is estimated that every 60 seconds there are around 156 million emails being sent, Google are receiving 3.8 million searchers, and two million minutes being used on Skype. The average person will now spend around 6 hours a day using the internet, devices and services.

The new school curriculum by Donaldson 2020 states the new digital competency aspect for children, it is now clear that a significant number of children will be fully equipped to use a digital device (BBC, 2016). Although this may be seen as a positive, according to experts we must now monitor the screen time in which children and young people are spending on these devices to ensure it does not affect their health and recommends that they aren't used an hour before bed (Therrien, Wakefield. 2019). According to Pantic, (2014) over the last decade the way in which we communicate as well as the way we interact, has changed this is due to social media and the way it is used and the popularity of different apps. It is also noted that the symptoms of depression have also been linked with the long-term use of social media sites like Facebook. OFCOM (2017) noted that children between the age of twelve to fifteen 83% have their own mobile phone and 55% have their own tablet. It was also noted that children between eight to eleven 39% had a phone and 52% had a tablet.

It is important to consider the benefits and drawbacks of children and young people's use of social media. Do the benefits outweigh the drawbacks, this will be the focus of the next part of this assignment?

In this assignment there will be critical consideration upon the key points in which social media impacts children and young people's well-being. The key points discussed throughout this assignment are the impact social media use has on body image, self-image and the view the world. There will also be a discussion on the use of social media within schools and the impact this has within the digital divide and upon those who are still facing poverty and the key points that will be discussed within this assignment will be how social media impacts children and young people on their self-image.

To begin we must understand the definition of both 'social media' and 'well-being'. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2019) the definition of social media is a computer-based program or a 'app' that allows you to communicate with others or to share the relevant information over

the internet. The definition of well-being' noted by the Department of Health (2014) wellbeing is the feeling you get when you are feeling good and that you are functioning correctly this means that when you have this it will impact that individuals' experiences within life. This means that with the contribution of life and social values and what's expected this will impact well-being.

The digital divide within society today and the implications social media leaves and how that's being brought into education (i.e. bullying, the use on the school yard and isolation).

It is clear that the world we live in is changing with relation to the use of social media. According to The London School of Economics and Political Science (undated) in 2017 there was a world population of 7.511 billion people, there are 3.811 billion internet users, 2.895 billion social media users. With this in mind it is clear that the trend for social media and internet use is on the rise. We must now understand why so many are choosing to use social media and what is its purpose. Social media is used on a daily basis by all types of users. Whether this is for work purposes, part of your daily routine or for catching up with friends or family or simply looking at someone's latest photo upload. However, what is the research that suggests this is doing us harm? Uploading a photo is not as straight forward as people may think, especially for the younger generation. It is about taking a photo numerous times, from figuring out the angle and the lighting to then choosing a filter that enhances their features and an edit here and there before we can even begin to think about uploading it, and even then, we still cannot bare the sight of ourselves. This is because the perception of what we see on social media is fake, yet we still want to be like what we see on screen and through our phones. We see these perfect bodies with zero percent body fat, defied lines and everything in the right places and this isn't the case (James, A. 2019).

With the new found term 'social media influencers/ vloggers' being among the most popular to do this to their photos one reality tv star and social media influencer is now on the mission to get her voice out there on the reality of doing this and what dangers it brings.

Mitchell, C, Glazzard, J. (2018, p.9) states that young people within secondary schools use social media as a form of fitting in and bonding. It notes that by them being able to keep in touch with friends then they are keeping up to date with the latest going on's and are not missing out. Some use their social media as a support from their peers.

Vicky Pattison a reality tv star who faced this pressure is now using her platform in order to try and change the way we think. She has now taken to her social media and has recently shared a photo stating that she was fat when actually she was at a UK woman's smallest clothes size. This in itself shows how the perception of what we see in the media can still make us unhappy even when we have accomplished what we have aimed to be like from viewing social media.

Since this Vicky has now gone on to share more natural un touched photos of herself however this has faced scrutiny. Due to the scrutiny she faced she posed a photo captioning "Please don't judge, don't body shame, don't troll. We've all got bits! Just love your bits." See appendix 1 for further reading.

Although social media is a new found concept the way we view our bodies and the concept of us viewing our flaws did not just appear when social media began it has been around for years and was even a problem when magazines were the new found trend and social media wasn't even around. After viewing a YOUTUBE video on Jo Frost (see appendix 2) helping a young girl who had low self-confidence due to wanting to look like what she saw in the magazines. After participating in a photoshoot in a well know magazine company and finding out the truth behind the photo that get published, e.g photo shopping, air brushing and thinning of angles the young girl soon began to realise the images she is seeing is fake and altered. This has the same concept as social media.

According to Swerling G (2019) it notes that children are unhappy with their friends. The article notes that there are various reasons for this and some maybe due to bullying, unable to hang out with friends in their spare time or the use of social media and the time they spend on this. But a surprising factor is loneliness. The article also notes that teens are now unhappy with their appearance and the gap between how unhappy girls are with their appearance usually being quite high it is now found that the gap between boys and girls is now getting closer together, and that boys are now also feeling the pressure of looking good. The article by (Swerling, 2019) notes that one in twelve boys or 180,000 are unhappy with their appearance. It also notes that children over the age of thirteen are increasingly unhappy in comparison to children between the age of 10-12.

Within the article a Director named Tom Madders from the charity 'YoungMinds' a children's mental health charity described the decreases in happiness but also within friendships as 'worrying'. He notes that there are complex reasons behind this and also multiple reasons however he does state that young people are facing a range of issues and pressures which can contribute to a young person's poor mental health. The problems that seem to be popping up ever more are bullying, body image, stress at school and various pressures including friendships.

The director also noted that childhood factors and the experiences or challenges you may face will also have an impact and leave lasting effects. Children are now facing evermore childhood experiences such as neglect, poverty or bereavement.

In conclusion of this aspect of the assignment it is clear that self-image and social media have a connection. Although research is still being conducted on this matter a study conducted in 2016 noted that sites where you can publish photos were the problem affecting poor self-confidence and negative thoughts on self-image (Oakes K, 2019). The article also states that when conducting a survey, it was found that women compared their appearance with those they saw and also celebrities on social media. With this being said it is clear that there is a connection between self-image and social media and due to this it is impacting on mental health and the way we view ourselves as a whole. In a survey conducted by Mental Health Foundation (2019) that surveyed 4,505 adults (18+) and 1,118 teenagers (13-19). The study showed that one in five felt shame about their body, 34% felt down or had a low mood and 19% felt a sense of disgust with their image in the last twelve months. 3Teenagers also stated that they felt upset (37%) and 31% noted they were ashamed of the body image they saw. with regards to mental health over a third of adults noted they felt anxious or depressed with depression being the highest at 35% with regards to body image. To conclude one in five adults resulting in 22% and 40% of teenagers noted that social media was the cause for them to worry about their image and body image resulting in poor self-esteem (Oakes K, 2019).

Another angle we must now consider is the digital divide and how this impact's upon society today. Children who are facing poverty or are in poorer homes are falling into the 'digital divide' as their access to the internet is decreased (Ward, L. 2005). It is noted that the parents of those who are in poverty or facing poverty have poor skills when using the internet and therefore are unable to help their children not only use the internet but to use it as effectively as those who come from wealthier backgrounds (Ward, L. 2005). The article looks at a study conducted by the London School of Economics, which looks at 1,500 young people and looked at the way they used the internet. It noted that children who came from good backgrounds including household income and therefore meaning a 'well off' home noted that those children were not only had better access to the internet but they were also make full use of all resources the internet provided.

Within schools today teachers are facing and ever more battle between trying to educate the children within their care but also offering ever more pastoral care. Not only this they are also facing new barriers to trying to educate children. Children are coming from even more complex backgrounds and are facing fresh issues that may impact upon their learning. One of these being the ever more growing children being faced with poverty (Walker,2019).

A new documentary on channel 4 'Growing Up Poor: Britain's Breadline Kids' (2019) notes the new found challenges children are facing within their day to day life. Children are not only trying to concentrate on their education but they are also being faced with new challenges that even they shouldn't know. The document focuses on a family who have recently moved due to domestic violence and due to universal credits, they are forced to use a food bank. Although the young girl found the concept of going to a food bank as quite 'exciting' these are issues children of today should not be worrying about (Mangan, 2019).

Within an article written by Swerling, G (2019) for the telegraph noting the issues children are facing today mentioned a comment made by a spokesman for the Department of Education. He noted that he wanted children in Britain to feel confident to understand and to tackle issues that life may throw their way. He noted that they are now giving teachers the power to deal with these sorts of problems and the chance to deal with issues raising from bullying to bad behaviour. He noted that there are billions being invested within the support for mental health services for young people. He also states that with the new compulsory 'health education' being added children will now taught about mental health and how to spot the signs with relation to mental health but they will also be given the skills to stay safe online being taught about the dangers and use of social media.

From the following statement made by the Department of Education there are many questions that arise for this. These being firstly how can we expect our teachers to educate children on these issues when they aren't educated in the issues themselves. Secondly as much as we can prepare the children of today for the future and want them to feel confident to tackle issues that are arising it isn't fair of us to ask them to feel confident to tackle such strong subjects such as bullying and money. Why can't we ensure our children are children for as long as possible with out growing up to quick and facing such problems even us adolescents worry over, what good is that worry and stress doing to a child? Thirdly aren't our teachers faced with enough pressures with out the added pastoral care for our children, without a our teaches must have some duty with regards to pastoral and safeguarding but how fair is it that we now ask them to take on this new added aspect of 'health education' why can't we have a designated pastoral officer in primary's and secondaries who are quipped with the knowledge to tackle these aspects.

Although we may not find a solution or an answer to these questions, they are questions that must stay in mind during the duration of this assignment.

Bronfenbrenner ecological system theory 1979 notes that the child is in the centre of the theory and that external factors that are around the child will have an impact on them and the relationship they have within the wider community. This being said if a child is in poverty, and

the external factors aren't doing anything in order to tackle poverty then the child will remain within that poverty circle. With relation to this, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory also corresponds with Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1943-1954). Maslow states that there is a triangle and within this there are different levels of requirements a child must have in order for them to learn adequately. At the bottom of the triangle there are the psychological aspects or the 'basics' such as food, water, somewhere safe and secure and warmth. Without this then children aren't at the same level as those who do receive those things in order to begin to learn. With this now being in mind then we can now go on to discuss the digital divide in depth.

With this being said almost a third of the poorest pupils (2013) are still without access to internet. These are some of the big issues children and young people are facing today. Poverty is still a clear factor within society today and the aspect of digital learning there is a clear link between the two and therefore these can not be ignored. And now with the new found change within the Curriculum for children and the added Digital Competency aspect implemented by Donaldson and homework not being set online we must understand this digital divide and find strategies that we can do in order to prevent children from feeling left out and also to ensure none is getting left behind.

With this being said there are now homework clubs being set up in order to help children who are unable to access their internet at home and are unable to do their homework. Ward (2005) notes that 90% of children and young people who go online weekly is to use the internet for their homework.

In a survey conducted by ONS Family Spending Survey in 2013 with the data being collected in 2011, looking at the income spending of over 11,000 households within the UK. The data was then analysed by a charity E-Learning Foundation and it looked at the data following computer ownership within these homes but with focus to families and children under the age of 18. These figures and data were published in a report by Burns, J 2013 in an article written for the BBC. The overall data shows that 89% have internet at home and can access this through a computer however this does now show the divide within those who are in poverty. The article then goes on to state the following statistics that note that those who are in poverty 29% have no access to a computer, 36% have no internet and 43% have no internet access with their computer. Meanwhile 99% of children in the richest (10%) of families having access to the internet. This means that according to E-Learning quote by Burnes 2013 this is around 750,000 school children without internet and 650,000 without a computer. In 2019 Howes notes that child poverty is increasing and this is worrying for schools. This means that by experiencing poverty at home it is the strongest statistic of how well a child will do academically

and within education. Children who face poverty have poor cognitive ability, behaviour, physical and also mental health. With schools now being faced with these issues they have now had to come up with a plan and one being homework clubs.

There are also breakfast clubs being implemented and after school clubs to ensure that children who are coming from disadvantaged areas are not losing out because of where they come from and financial situation. However due to the ever more growing budget cuts within schools there are slowly becoming impossible to do so. It is known that teachers have always gone the extra mile for their students but teachers are now being faced with providing these products for their pupils and their families out of their own pocket. Howes (2019) notes that a member of the NEU a teacher noted that the clubs and trips they offer within their school has been cut. Schools and teachers/teaching assistants are providing a range of products for their pupils from school uniform, sanitary products and personal hygiene products and providing stationery for pupils termly.

To refer back to one of the quotations stated above by the Department of Education page 5, it notes that teachers are now being equipped to deal with a range of matters from bullying to behaviour. With this being in mind and to add with the teachers now having to face such issues as poverty and home life before they can even begin to teach the class has anyone sat down and thought of the mental health of our teachers and how we can help them and take some of the pressure of them. How can we ask them to provide for their student, lesson plan, mark 30+ books and remain a healthy life balanced? It is simply unfair of us to ask our teacher to take this on. What good is this doing to the children, as it's known children feed off the vibe given in the class. If children are around anxious people, they become anxious themselves (NHS, 2015).

Ward (2005) also notes that young people are even more relying on the internet for their information, help with relation to homework, help with careers and further education choices and it matters as there are young people getting left behind. She also noted that by not knowing how to use the internet then it will impact upon their education and life opportunities.

To conclude this section even though there have been a few various points discussed within the digital divide with some being upon the peripheral they all interlink with each other and bring us back to the key points that is the digital divide with children and young people is increasing.

This next part will focus on the implications social media brings and how these issues are affecting children and young people. Social media it's positives such as helping people keep in touch, work purposes however it does also present a lot of dangers and worries. Ward (2005) notes that parents underestimate the negative experiences that can happen with social

media. When conducting a survey, the results were found to be alarming noting that a third of daily of internet users aged nine to nineteen had received either harmful, nasty or sexual messages wither online or through text message. Only 7% of those parents were aware that their children had received this type of messages. Only 4% knew that their children were being bullied online.

Parents are increasingly becoming worried about their children's internet use and a fifth of those parents noted that they didn't know how to help their children use the internet safely (Ward,2005) in order to solve this, it's noted that internet literacy support should be available highlighting the possible risks of internet use. Parents should be aware of the risks that are online due to 57% of users being exposed to sexual content that they have accidentally come across due to 'pop up's'.

Children young people are having exposure to cyberbullying even more with social media now at an all time high. The NSPCC defines cyberbullying as bullying that happens online. With this type of bullying children now find that they have no where to go and can not hind from it. This means there can be detrimental consequences from cyberbullying. These consequences can include, self-harm, poor mental health or even suicide. Even though the thought of social media is still new to many the impact social media has on children and young people's well-being needs to be better understood (centre of mental health, 2019). An article written by Siddique (2019) notes that social media and the concerns it brings is being talked about daily and how it impacts well-being. While the article note's that's its hopes of discovering the impact of social media on young people it does note there has been a new disorder by the NHS where children ages 11-19 were likely to use social media daily. It also notes that females within this age range will view their social media and will them began to compare themselves to others they see on social media which connects to the first point noted at the beginning of this assignment. The implications this has on children and young people can be all sorts of things from having low self esteem to, mental health and depression but can also lead to eating disorders.

An article written by the BBC (2018) notes that social media firms are failing to tackle cyberbullying on their sites. A survey that was conducted for a 'Safety Net report' spoke to 1,089 children and young people aged 11-25 ad half of those notes that they had experienced threatening or nasty messages via these social media sights or through email/text and 83% stated that they wanted social media sights to do more in order to tackle this. It was noted within the article that people fell there is a lack of consequences for such behaviour but also when this is reported to these companies it can take days for them to investigate the problem, with young people calling for action to be taken immediately.

It is clear that social media has now become a new regime for children and young people however are they being exposed to inappropriate context? It has already been noted above that children and young people have been exposed to sexual content however are they also being exposed to content that may lead to fears over their safety or could even lead to death. In one article published February 2019 by the BBC it stated that teenager Molly Russell took her own life due to what she was able to access via her social media. Self-harm and suicide are openly talked about on social media and can even be easily accessed with no filter or warning stating what you are now going to be viewing. Therefore, due to this and the death of Molly and the work of her family the UK Government have now stated that social media should take responsibility for this type of content that is being posted online. Since this social media sites have now taken action to hide such content but to remove harmful content, it also provides a message stating what you are about to view and if you would still like to view it.

Although this assignment focuses on the negatives of social media it does note that on these sites people often talk about mental health and the issues, they are facing are more honest but they can also help people towards their recovery. Therefore, some are now questioning whether a responsible way to view self-harm and suicide is acceptable. Within the article a director for Time To Change is asking for the way people think about mental health to be changed but also for the way we act towards this subject. She said that she viewing this content is not only triggering but that we shouldn't have it on social media. However, what she does state by using these social media sites people are able to talk more openly about their experiences and problems. With this being said Kelly (2019) is campaigning and writes about her mental health and is a volunteer for Time To Change. She notes that she found blogging and social media helpful when suffering and began remission for her eating disorder. She notes that by blocking negative posts and the hashtags that are available then we will begin to reduce the amount of harm that is available for children and young people to access on these sights.

An important key point to note is that all social media sights have age restrictions. This is because the content that is on them and they would like to reduce of children and young people being exposed to these things. With most social media being age restricted to 13+ and WhatsApp being at 16.

### Conclusion.

With the data and research that's currently available it is clear that the implications social media has on children and young people's health and well-being are still unknown however what we do know from the research for the purpose of this assignment is that there are dangers in which social media can bring and therefore we must monitor those. However, there

are bigger issues that have arisen throughout this assignment. These being the issues children are now worrying about and the complicated issues children of today are being faced with. Children are now being faced with the issues of mental health, poverty, digital divide bullying along with pressures for school and their future. Winther-Kardefelt (2017) notes in a paper written for UNICEF that the outcomes of using a digital device is a positive as it helps children with their social relationships, and helps keeps the relationships formed within society, she states that more research is however needed to understand the negatives. There is currently a mixed message of the implications that social media does bring and can be confusing for parents on knowing what is best to do for their child/young person. However due to the changes and the subject of mental health now being discussed more by children and young people social media can be seen as a positive's due to them being able to voice their feelings and to get help or to interact with others who are currently facing the same issues as them. What can be agreed on within this assignment is that there are certain things social media show, such as self-harm that does need to be removed and social media need to do more in order to tackle these images being shown online for others to view. We must not let a case like Molly Russell happen again. Social media also need to take cyberbullying more seriously. We must now look at the wider issues and problems first and see if we can tackle these before blaming social media.

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Appendices:

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