

Course: BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care

Module: Independent Project (BMHP6020_LON)

Component 1: Element 1 - Project Proposal

Student ID: 2244194

Student Name: Benedicte Ngoy

Lecturer: Bianca Sanfilippo

Date of submission: 13th of March 2026

Word count: 500

Element 1 - Project Proposal

- ***My project title: The impact of social media on children's mental health in the UK***

- ***1) Aim:***

This project aims to critically examine the effects of social media use on the mental health and well-being of children in the UK, assessing both potential risks and protective factors in modern digital environments.

-

- ***2) Objectives:***

- To conduct a comprehensive review of UK-based literature regarding children's use of social media.
- To investigate the relationships between social media engagement and anxiety, depression, self-esteem, and concerns related to body image.
- To explore potential protective effects, such as peer support and identity formation.
- To identify implications for health and social care practices and policies, and provide relevant recommendations.

3) Background/Rationale:

Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat are central to the daily lives of many UK children. According to Ofcom (2023), most 8–15-year-olds have at least one profile, while the NHS reports rising levels of anxiety and depression among young people.

Although some studies link heavy use to distress, cyberbullying, and negative comparison, others find only small effects, often shaped by pre-existing vulnerabilities. Overall, the relationship between social media and mental health is complex rather than purely harmful.

Moreover, digital platforms may provide marginalised young individuals with essential social capital, emotional support, and avenues for self-expression.

Therefore, a critical evaluation is imperative to prevent oversimplifying this intricate issue and to acknowledge the complexity of children's digital experiences.

Given the professional responsibilities of health and social care practitioners in safeguarding and early intervention, it is vital to understand these dynamics. This project is warranted by the need to synthesise current evidence from the UK and to promote balanced, evidence-based practice.

4) *Methods:*

This study will employ a qualitative systematic literature review design. We will conduct searches in electronic databases such as PubMed, CINAHL, and Google Scholar for peer-reviewed articles published between 2014 and 2025. The search will utilise combinations of keywords including “social media,” “children,” “adolescents,” “mental health,” “UK,” “anxiety,” “depression,” and “cyberbullying.”

The inclusion criteria will focus on UK-based studies involving participants aged 8 to 18, as well as empirical or systematic research. Conversely, we will exclude non-English publications and opinion-based articles. The findings will be analysed using thematic synthesis to identify recurring themes, contradictions, and gaps in the research.

5) *Resources:*

The resources needed for this project include access to the university library, academic databases, a personal computer with internet connectivity, and the Cite Them Right Harvard referencing guide. Since no primary data will be collected, formal ethical approval is not necessary; however, ethical research principles will be maintained, including the accurate representation of evidence.

6) *Timescale:*

Type of work:	25/03/2026	15/04/2026	07/06/2026	30/07/2026	21/08/2026
Chapter: 1 introduction					
Chapter 2: background					
Chapter 3: methods					
Chapter 4: results and decisions					
Chapter :5 recommendations and conclusions - proofreading					

7) Self-reflection as a researcher (any strengths or challenges):

My strengths include strong motivation and prior academic experience in safeguarding and child wellbeing. A potential challenge is maintaining critical distance given the emotive nature of the topic. To address this, I will prioritise high-quality empirical evidence and remain reflexive throughout the research process.

References

- Kelly, Y., Zilanawala, A., Booker, C. and Sacker, A. (2018) *Social media use and adolescent mental health: findings from the UK Millennium Cohort Study*, *EClinicalMedicine*, 6, pp. 59–68. Available at:
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eclinm.2018.12.005>
- Royal Society for Public Health (2017) #StatusOfMind: Social media and young people's mental health and wellbeing. Available at:
<https://www.rsph.org.uk/our-work/publications/statusofmind/>
- Ofcom (2023) Children and parents: media use and attitudes report 2023. Available at:
<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/children/children-and-parents-media-use-and-attitudes>
- NHS Digital (2023) Mental health of children and young people in England 2023. Available at:
<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2023>
- Royal College of Psychiatrists. "Young People's Mental Health." *RC PSYCH ROYAL COLLEGE of PSYCHIATRISTS*, 2019,
www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/parents-and-young-people.
- Livingstone, Sonia, and Peter K. Smith. "Annual Research Review: Harms Experienced by Child Users of Online and Mobile Technologies: The Nature, Prevalence and Management of Sexual and Aggressive Risks in the Digital Age." *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, vol. 55, no. 6, 2014, pp. 635–654,
acamh.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jcpp.12197,
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12197>.
- Children's Commissioner for England (2021) *The big ask: The lives of children and young people in England*. Available at:
<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/the-big-ask/>

Booker, C.L., Kelly, Y.J. and Sacker, A. (2018) 'Gender differences in the associations between age trends of social media interaction and well-being among 10–15 year olds in the UK', *BMC Public Health*, 18, 321. Available at: <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-018-5197-4>