Social Media and Mental Health

Content of the session

- ▶ Key themes from the literature
- ▶ Emerging data

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

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**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 responsibil
- Digital resilience
- Digital literacy
- Parents
- Social media companies
- Schools

Whole school approach

Public Health England. Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing: A whole school and collage approach. Public Health England. 2015.

School Mental Health Award – Leeds Beckett University

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