

SW340 In-Class Discussion

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Read the report below, and consider the application of research methods in your discussion and respond to the questions below:

Please read the short reports: “We are totally exposed”: Young people share concerns about social media’s impact on privacy and mental health in global survey
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/02/children-young-people-social-media-survey-2/>

Instagram, TikTok and other social media have become daily fixtures in the lives of children and young people around the world, with 59% of young people surveyed by Amnesty International now spending more than two hours of their average day on social media. Yet research on young people’s experiences on social media remains overwhelmingly focused on North America, Europe and Australia. Amnesty International collected responses from 550 children and young people between the ages of 13 and 24 across 45 countries to better understand their lived experiences, concerns and attitudes towards social media. Amidst praise for the diversity of ideas, users’ creativity and opportunities for activism that young people find on social media, two major concerns stand out: the toll harmful content and what many young participants describe as “addictive” platform design take on young people’s mental health and their feeling of powerlessness in the face of global companies’ constant nudging to participate in a vicious cycle of personal data sharing and content consumption.

Reflecting the concern many young people expressed in relation to social media’s impact on their privacy, many respondents chose to share their stories and information with us anonymously to help guide our research but did not want their answers to be published. The following quotes and statistics relate to the 112 respondents who consented to the publication of their responses but are representative of trends observed in the full dataset. These 112 respondents referenced a combined total of 15 different social platforms they are actively using. The five most popular platforms are Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat and Facebook. Whilst YouTube and TikTok dominate as sources of entertainment, Instagram, Snapchat and BeReal are the platforms most widely posted on by young people.

Against the backdrop of the constant rise in time spent by young people on social media, a staggering 74% of respondents report checking their social media accounts more than they would like to. Respondents bemoaned the “addictive” lure of the constant stream of updates and personalized recommendations, often feeling “overstimulated” and “distracted”.

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would like to. Respondents bemoaned the “addictive” lure of the constant stream of updates and personalized recommendations, often feeling “overstimulated” and “distracted”. I feel kind of stuck and unconsciously obliged to check it way more than I want to(22-year-old woman, France.

Young people equally voiced a sense of a loss of control in relation to their privacy: Three-quarters of our respondents found social media’s terms of service hard to understand, criticizing the often “technical language” and the take-it-or-leave-it approach social media platforms apply, forcing young people to choose between the perceived threat of social exclusion or signing up at the cost of their privacy. Amnesty has previously called for a ban on targeted advertisement, which relies on the invasive tracking of users. Only the EU has thus far passed regulation to stop large platforms’ profiling of minors for advertising purposes.

Once on the platforms, more than half of the surveyed children and young people had bad experiences, encountering “racism, violence and bullying”, forms of political persecution ranging from “red-tagging” in the Philippines (a tactic used to delegitimize political opponents and incite violence online) to antisemitic campaigns, as well as unwanted sexual advances by other users. 93% of the participants in Amnesty’s survey said they had encountered mis- or disinformation. 86% have previously blocked users in response to content they did not want to be exposed to and more than half of our respondents had reported content on Instagram (the most popular platform in our survey). Many felt however that their reports made across all platforms were either ignored or they continued to be exposed to posts “similar to the reported ones”. The outcome of most reports I have made has been unsuccessful despite blatant bias-tainted information or straight-up racism/general bigotry (18-year-old woman, United States).

Beyond social media’s “addictive” nature, a significant number of respondents across genders and continents reported feeling that social media’s promotion of social comparison and the amplification of harmful content had a negative impact on their mental health. Young people reported feeling “anxious” and “self-conscious” about “unrealistic [body] images” viewed in their feeds and told us of their “over-sexualizing” of their body “at a young age” in response.

Another participant shared her concern that platforms’ recommendation “algorithms pick up” on mental health issues and expose users to ever more related content. Some young people attributed their lack of self-esteem, depressive thoughts and eating disorders to their use of social media, with some saying they had since sought out unspecified body-positive websites and platforms.

Asked about their vision of an ideal social media, our respondents shared clear ideas about how social media must change to respect their rights, from greater privacy protections to changes to algorithmic recommendations: More transparent and less intrusive privacy policies(21-year-old man, Argentina).

A world where ideas, positive entertainment, educating content & creativity are embraced, proper dissemination of correct information without malice or hate. 1(9-year-old woman,

Kenya)" No PhotoShop, no pornographic content, no violence or suicide glamorization, just real people doing real things".(18-year-old woman, Portugal).

As part of its programme, Amnesty Tech is going to conduct further research into the human rights concerns raised by the young survey participants. We will also continue working with children and young people in focus countries such as Kenya, Argentina and the Philippines to develop campaigns for regulatory change.

Problem: What is the concerned problem here?

Sample: The study collected responses from 550 children and young people around the word. Is this a good sample? What information would be helpful for you to evaluate the quality of the sample?

Question: Based on the information or your knowledge of social media, please propose a research question. (sample research question: Is youth social media use time related to anxiety?)

Data: To answer your research question, how would you collect you data? What may be the potential bias given your proposed data collection manner?

Outcome: Based on your research question, what is/are you most concerned outcome(s), and how would you measure it/them? (e.g., anxiety, Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale)

P-value: Suppose you data allow analyzing the correlation between an anxiety scale and number of hours used for social media, and suppose the correlation = 0.2 and p-value = 0.07(alpha was set at 0.05). Given the results from the sample, which interpretation is correct?

- Anxiety level and social media time are positively correlated because the correlation = 0.2 is larger than 0. (1)
 - Anxiety level and social media time are not related to each other, because the p-value = 0.07 is larger than the alpha cutoff of 0.05 and thus the underlying null hypothesis that anxiety and social media use time is not correlated cannot be rejected. (2)
 - Anxiety level and time used in social media are related to each other because the p-value = 0.07 is larger than the set cutoff of 0.05 and thus the underlying hypothesis that anxiety and social media use time is not correlated should be rejected. (3)
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