

nielsen

NEW ZEALAND YOUTH & SOCIAL MEDIA

The Graeme Dingle Foundation

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RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In 2017 The Philips Family Foundation (PFF), a UK charitable trust funded a Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) research project in the UK.

The PFF therefore approached the Graeme Dingle Foundation to explore the possibility of conducting a similar study in New Zealand.

The RSPH want to extend their international work and engage with partners overseas in areas of mutual interest.

This project examined social media and young people's health and well-being.

The Graeme Dingle Foundation approached the University of Auckland Adolescent Health Research Group (AHRG) to discuss the proposed research project and to explore a research collaboration.

RESEARCH STAGES

Nielsen was commissioned to undertake the research and a **three stage process** was agreed:

STAGE 1

CMI to provide an overview of social media by New Zealand youth



The initial findings from Stage 1 CMI were presented to GDF on **Tuesday 15 January 2019.**

STAGE 2

Qualitative Insights to uncover the emotional perspective on social media usage and its effect on sexuality and relationships



This document covers the findings from the **Stage 2 – Qualitative Insights.**

STAGE 3

Quantitative Insights to deliver the “hard numbers” behind the subject

CORE QUESTIONS

WHO ARE TODAY'S YOUTH
OF NEW ZEALAND?

HOW DOES SOCIAL MEDIA
EFFECT THEIR LIVES?





20% OF NEW ZEALANDERS ARE 13-24
YEAR OLDS WITH INTERNET ACCESS.
THAT IS **780,000** KIWIS!

WHO ARE THEY?



**AVID SOCIAL
MEDIA USERS**



**NON-FANS OF
SOCIAL MEDIA**

Base: All People 13-24 & have access to the internet
Source: Nielsen Consumer Media & Insights Online Fused, Q4 17 – Q3 18, October 18'

HOW THEY THINK & FEEL



AVID SOCIAL MEDIA USERS



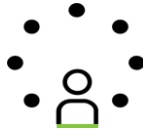
MOST DAYS ARE A STRUGGLE



ALWAYS TETHERED



SOCIAL BUTTERFLIES



PERCEPTION MATTERS



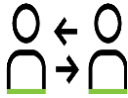
NON-FANS OF SOCIAL MEDIA



STRESS-FREE & HAPPY



ACTIVE & ENGAGED



CONNECT DIFFERENTLY



RELAXED FIT

Base: All People 13-24 & have access to the internet
Source: Nielsen Consumer Media & Insights Online Fused, Q4 17 – Q3 18, October 18'

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUTH



The objectives of the research project overall are to:

RESEARCH



Conduct a similar study in New Zealand with a view to a sister report being prepared from NZ findings, and to make a comparison of the New Zealand and UK findings



Explore questions on social media use in the New Zealand context, and develop questions on social media use, relationships and sexuality related activity



Extend the research into social media and the mental health and well-being of young people, and contribute to a pool of knowledge that will aid the development of safeguards to protect and promote youth health and well-being

SOCIAL MEDIA – THE DICHOTOMY

(16-17 YRS)

“Inevitably, social media causes everybody to feel mental distress. The constant want and need for acceptance causes people to constantly post and talk about their lives on each separate platform, often leading to anxiety if posts don't get enough likes or people don't respond to messages. I have personally felt FOMO from people posting pictures and videos of themselves and others doing fun things, when I was not invited. This has caused me trouble sleeping as the want to check social media is fuelled by the anxiety.”

(19-24YRS)

“Social media is an instant way to pass the time at any time of boredom. It keeps me connected to friends and the family I have overseas. It's a good way to plan events, (mainly on Facebook) and arrange things with multiple people. Even being able to use marketplace on Facebook is useful for second hand things.”

QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Bulletin Boards amongst New Zealand youth were conducted, with 10 participants per Board nationwide. **There was a mix of gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity.**

The sample was **broken down into cohorts in order to accommodate different stages in life** which might impact on attitudes, perceptions and behaviours.

YOUTH BOARD 1

- 14-15 year olds
- Minors

YOUTH BOARD 2

- 16-18 year olds
- All predominantly at school

YOUTH BOARD 3

- 19-24 year olds
- Mix tertiary education & work

WHAT MY WORLD IS LIKE

Focus is family and significant friends

– very home based

14-15 yrs

- School looms large
- NCEA and homework are the main stress points
- Lots of sport and activity – both competitive and for fun
- But gaming also
- Some low key jobs for pin money e.g. baby-sitting
- Believe that they are seen as addicted to their phones and social media – but this is their life and how they communicate
- Big dreams – pilot, astronomer, actress, rower...

“I’m 15, I live with my parents and two siblings (and a dog) I’m at school. The most important people in my life are my friends and my grandparents. A typical week for me is school every day of the week, exercise some days and then book club on Friday.”

“I am most excited about my birthday next week and people being fake to you or not acting normal around other people is what makes me feel down.”

“During the week I attend touch training 4 times a week and play 2 times.”

“At the moment I mostly enjoy hanging out with friends because it gives me a space where I can talk to them about anything without being judged.”

MY WORLD IN PICTURES



Gaming



On social media so much



Life is fabulous!



Please accept my sexuality



I love horse-riding on the beach



Where I live



Rowing is my sport



Bored with school and nothing is happening at the moment

WHAT MY WORLD IS LIKE

Time of change and excitement

– looking forward

16-18 yrs

- At school or about to go to university
- Family & friends most important – and partners coming into the frame
- Less sport but lots of interests – reading, current affairs, financial matters, music
- Clear and relatively grounded sense of what they want to be – actively studying for it
- Stresses relate to family issues, dealing with a drinking father, PTSD, social anxiety, body perception, NCEA internals, complexities of tertiary education, deadlines
- Some self-reflection – who they are and what they want

“I’m 18 years old and about to move away for Uni which will be a change. I currently live with my family who would be super important in my life along with my friends. At the moment I’m really enjoying the summer holidays, spending time with friends and doing stuff like going on road trips and mainly not having to worry about studying”

“I am currently residing with my father, being home with just my father is very difficult because he doesn’t really understand how a woman’s body processes but still provides the best advice when needed. He is quite an alcoholic and it hasn’t been the best upbringing. Mum and dad haven’t been the best parents”

“The most important people in my life are my friends and family as they provide companionship, entertainment, help and support”

“I am about to start my conjoint degree in Law and Business. I have a sister with Special Needs which shaped who I am significantly. I enjoy fitness, Netflix and my dog. I’m currently training to analyse the stock market as well. My sister is my only sibling...it tends to give me a very realistic and somewhat harsh viewpoint of the special needs community. I also feel that it has made me more resilient to life’s curveballs”

MY WORLD IN PICTURES



**Moving between
parents homes**



**Tawharanui Beach – a
favourite summer spot**



Love cars, rally's and views!



18th Birthday Gift



**Spending as much time
as I can with friends
before Uni**



Skiing

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ME



COMMUNICATION

Older participants certainly felt that social media would not replace face-to-face communications – rather the two co-exist



Many said that they tended to prefer face-to-face – personal and closeness

Face-to-Face – build up communications skills, body language, tone of voice, read the situation, address anything that flares up immediately

“I tend to feel more comfortable socialising face-to-face just because I know things won’t be misconstrued.”

(16-18 yrs)

“I find you are able to connect better face-to-face, but enjoy the convenience of social media. However, it does leave room for misinterpretation over a message as you can’t tell the tone. I feel more comfortable with face-to-face communication as I enjoy the company of my friends and it’s more fulfilling”

(19-24 yrs)

HOW MUCH AM I ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

The older participants (17+) seem to have more of an element of control and social media fits into their lives rather than dominating it as with younger

- The youngest ones appear to be on social media the most
- Constant checking during the day and evening
- Between 35-70% of their time on average
- The older ones are a bit more judicious in their use of social media
- 5-50% of their day spent on it
- Some talked about social media having its place, it being a tool and them not being slaves to it
- Also, behaviour change when they feel its getting too much – walk a way from it, take a break, stop logging on/posting etc.
- Management of accounts and limitations e.g. parents only allowed on Facebook

“I use messenger (Facebook) all throughout the day and I find that I use it mainly to communicate with people and make plans. I check Instagram (3 accounts) when I wake up and maybe 1 or 2 times during the day, unless I’m getting notifications and then I’ll check it more, for normally around 5 minutes. I don’t use the actual Facebook app very often, and I hardly use Snapchat. I’d say it’s about 5-20% of my time” (16-18 yrs)

“I use social media daily and usually when I have a chance to sit down on a break at work and mainly before bed at night. I have a Facebook and an Instagram account. Although I do not have either of the apps on my phone in an attempt to reduce how much I go on. The amount of time I spend is often not very long, on average probably about 5 minutes, maximum 10. As a percentage of my day, social media would take up about 6-10%, depending on the day” (19-24 yrs)

“I am not allowed my phone in my bedroom at night but they are not strict other than that, no rules just trust.” (14-15 yrs)

KEY ASSOCIATIONS WITH PLATFORMS



Facebook

- Associated with parents and older relatives
- To keep in touch with people – especially those far away/overseas
- To build and maintain relationships
- Express opinions – political and serious side
- Advertising



Instagram

- Lots of FOMO
- Fuels unrealistic body expectations
- Fake accounts – bullying
- But creativity – photos to represent how you are feeling
- Connecting with people – what I'm doing/seeing now



Snapchat

- To maintain relationships and contacting friends
- Permanent deletion can be good – calming and reassuring
- But can be a safe place for bullies – not get caught



YouTube

- Lifestyle and entertainment
- News, study and information
- Information – how to do things
- Supports my passions



Twitter

- Positive – nice, small community
- But Twitter feuds and war ground

A HELP OR HINDRANCE?

The older you get the fewer issues there are

On the whole **social media is seen by most to be largely positive** – connectivity, supporting friends' accomplishments, maintaining relationships and coordinating meeting with others

“Social media gives me a sense of belonging, belonging with my peers! Bonding with my peers! Positives fun, happy, sometimes sad. I haven't had any bad experiences with social media, I don't put my self in the position to have problems All my family near and far are in mostly only on Facebook and I use Instagram for Friends. I don't mind what my parents see as they know everything that happened to me.”

(14-15 yrs)

The older participants (17+ yrs) seemed to have few overt problems with social media

- ▶ Some learning through experiences – bad situations in the past that they'd had to deal with
- ▶ Now more considered:
 - Ensure a clean digital footprint
 - Choose carefully what post and say
 - Have breaks from it
 - Consider who will see it *“I think about my future boss”*
(19-24 yrs)
- ▶ Most have a sense of social media having its place in their lives and them feeling relatively in control of it – a lot of this is self-taught

A HELP OR HINDRANCE? CONT'D

But most can see the downsides:

- ▶ Addictive nature of it can lead to day-to-day distractions, lack of sleep etc.
- ▶ FOMO – everyone else seems to be leading a more exciting life than you
- ▶ Constant comparisons with others
- ▶ Bad feelings post break-up to see life of ex online
- ▶ Obsession of celebrity culture and creation of unrealistic and unachievable aspirations
- ▶ *“I sometimes mind the need to constantly be posting on Insta a little bit stressful but not very much or very often.” (16-17yrs)*

All this can lead to feelings of inadequacy, hurt, anxiety, isolation, shame, resentment and ultimately depression

For some younger participants it magnified the issues that they are going through – positively or negatively

“Before when I have been addicted, I ignored my family, my real friends, my horse and stopped training as hard and doing my homework. I started falling behind at school and I became selfish and vain. I felt depressed and lazy when things started going wrong for me and I got more and more addicted to social media. I reacted by having a break from my phone and getting my life back on track again and then only going on my phone a little bit a day. Addictive, lazy are words to describe.”

(14-15 yrs old)

“I think it's more common in the ages between 14-17 where you take everything more serious than it actually is on social media and you try get involved for attention that could lead to something bad like fights or insulting.”

(16-17yrs)

When there are negative feelings there is no obvious outlet – especially amongst the younger – they are left bereft and often unable to manage



UNDER PRESSURE

All feel pressure but older ones have a degree of self-management to counter this – different accounts, reminding self of unreality - a degree of rationalization that the younger lack

- ▶ To be seen as exciting, fun and interesting
- ▶ Only show the good things
- ▶ Conspicuous consumption and wealth
- ▶ To be sexy/sexual
- ▶ To be physically perfect/conform to ideals
- ▶ To get lots of likes/followers
- ▶ FOMO/constant comparison

“My thoughts about this is that yes people might look like they are having lots of fun in their big houses with their flash cars but realistically they are most likely having as much fun as you are. a lot of people think that rich people get their money handed to them or their amazing body handed to them but everyone has to work hard in order to succeed take my brother for example her is an intelligent person but he never tried hard in school didn't show up to classes he just thought it would be ok bc he is smart but now he is 23 and works at Maccas what a waste of talent .”

(14-15 yrs)

“Inevitably, social media causes everybody to feel mental distress. The constant want and need for acceptance causes people to constantly post and talk about their lives on each separate platform, often leading to anxiety is posts don't get enough likes or people don't respond to messages”

(16-17yrs)

DEALING WITH SELF-HARM POSTS

There were a number of references to self-harm posts – **young people need to be affirmed that its right to reach out** if struggling and to get help for friends as well as what these sources of help might be

A number had had experiences of people they know on social media posting worrying threats of self-harm

This had clearly perturbed them and caused them concern

Most had reached out and contacted their friend or acted on the call for help

“I reassured my friend that I was there for her and contacted her family about it. It felt like it was in her hands but I feel happy that I was able to talk to her and to get her to seek professional help”
(16-18 yrs)

“It was my friend. She wanted everything to end so I just rang her and we stayed on the phone for hours, with me just trying to take her mind off it. I only got half an hour of sleep that night and had school the next day but it was worth it as she is still here today. I wouldn’t have done anything differently apart from being there when she was feeling down about herself”
(16-18 yrs)

“Multiple times my friend has texted me that she is going to kill herself. It put me in a horrible position. I went and told the counsellor and she hated me for it.”
(14-15 yrs)

“It was my best friend and I immediately started messaging her and slowly got her to tell me what had happened...it was scary and it made me upset.”
(14-15 yrs)

SOCIAL MEDIA & MY SEXUALITY

▶ **All seemed to be very tolerant and open-minded in regard to sexuality, regardless of their personal inclinations**

“Social Media has caused me to not judge those of different sexuality, I have learnt that being in love is a feeling and society shouldn't put a title on what love is.” (16-17 yrs)

▶ **Young teens seemed to be very gender fluid – pans, trans, bi-sexual – and still perhaps on a voyage of discovery and exploration**

▶ **For them social media was valuable in helping them discover their sexuality and connect with like-minded people**

“It helped me figure out who I am by talking to other people that feel the same way as I do. There is strength in numbers, people with similarities in the LGBTQA+ community” (16-18 yrs)

*“For me personally social media helped me through a tough time where I struggled with feeling like I was not accepted and that caused a lot of anxiety and depression which eventually led to *TRIGGER WARNING* self harm and suicidal thoughts but I managed to find people who were like me and who had been through the same thing and when I started high-school and found my friends who were lgbt I knew instantly like I wasn't alone in this crazy over the top world, so yea social media has definitely helped me a lot in discovering my sexuality” (14-15 yrs)*

“I do not at all feel as if I have to present a certain sexual image of myself online, I do what's good for me personally and I do what I want. No it does not impact in any way on how I personally feel about my sexuality. Social media is (most of the time) great with sexuality, you can connect with so many different people all going through the same things you are and get support from people, which you may not get in real life. I am still questioning my sexuality but social media has been more helpful than caused any confusion. Social media has caused me to compare myself and my sexuality with other people, but not in a bad way, I am happy with myself and my sexuality. Social media has definitely influenced my acceptance of my sexuality and others sexualities, because you hear so many stories of people going through struggles and you just have so much more respect for LGBT people who have been through struggles.” (14-15 yrs)



SOCIAL MEDIA & MY SEXUALITY

▶ Older participants were relatively settled in their sexuality, whatever that was, and claimed that social media hadn't particularly shaped them to a great extent or influenced how they viewed their sexuality, although a couple of respondents acknowledged how it had helped and provided validation

“Social media hasn't really caused many problems about my sexuality but I feel like there's a big acceptance for any sexuality and no one really minds. I've personally been straight and that hasn't really changed so it hasn't caused any confusion. I haven't really compared my sexuality with anyone I just know I'm straight and haven't really thought about changing it” (14-15 yrs)

“Social media was a good source of acceptance of my sexuality” (16-18 yrs)

“I have never had any issues with my sexuality so no social media related aspects have effected me either.” (19-24 yrs)

▶ The visual representation of sexuality in social media provide a sense of pressure for some

*“I guess I feel like I have to post photos of myself that I look good in and there is sometimes pressure to post more sexual images, heaps of my friends post images in their under wear etc but its just not really my buzz. I guess occasionally it makes me feel as though I'm not as sexually appealing as them but that generally comes down to a lack of self confidence.”
(16-17 yrs)*

*“I see social media, especially Instagram, as a personal profile to show off to people you meet. I don't think personally that men have to present a very sexual image, but it is more common for women to do so”
(16-17 yrs)*

*“There have been times where I have compared my masculinity to others, wondering whether I am masculine enough in comparison with other people. I have friends who are more stereotypically masculine so occasionally I will find myself questioning whether I look the part.”
(19-24 yrs)*

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



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CONCLUSIONS



Social Media requires tools to support the mental and physical wellbeing of users.



Young people need a broad range of support systems including:

- In platform ways of communicating distress/bullying/or harmful behaviour
- Authorities who have the ability to act on behalf of people experiencing distress and who can police platforms
- Helplines and places to turn to for support and guidance
- A message of tolerance and kindness as a community at large – create the expectation that poor behaviour will not be tolerated and that there is support for those who want it
- Education in schools and in the broader community about how to build emotional and mental resilience – what to do with the feelings and issues raised.



Support Measures should be created for and with the young people in question

RECOMMENDATIONS: QUANTITATIVE STAGE

- Don't use the term safety – or differentiate between physical and emotional safety “I feel uncomfortable, unhappy” or similar
- Don't use the +2 type scale, it was confusing for participants
- Question inclusion of measurement of political views as it didn't feel relevant to this age group
- May be valuable to give people a 'Does not apply' option for Sexting questions
- Consider capturing what is being taught re social media safety in schools
- Do a language check with target audience prior to launch
- Provide links for Helplines at the end

The image features the Nielsen logo in white, centered on a vibrant blue background with a wavy, undulating texture. The word "nielsen" is written in a lowercase, serif font. Below the letters, there are eight white dots arranged in a horizontal line, serving as a decorative underline.

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