Adolescent girls, social media and educational psychology

Dr Caroline Butler
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Researcher: How long do you spend on social media each day?

Amy: Instagram probably about six hours. [...] Facebook is only a couple of hours. [...] YouTube maybe 2 to 3 hours. I am on social media a lot, yeah!
Aims and objectives...

1. Outline the research process
2. Outline the main findings
3. What next for research into social media?
4. Tips and tricks for research
About me…

• Bachelors in Psychology and French from Swansea Uni.
• Experience from working with young people with Autism in a residential setting, children looked after and children with severe learning needs in a specialist primary setting.
• Assistant EP for Hampshire Educational Psychology Service.
• Doctorate at Bristol Uni
• Placement with Gloucestershire and Somerset
• Current role with Somerset - SSE
Why social media, adolescent girls and educational psychology?

- Personal experience of using an iPhone and social media.
- Social media headlines in the media.
- Gap in the research
- Wanted to explore relevance of EP role to social media use amongst young people and their understanding of this topic.
The research process...

1. Literature review
   The search
   ・ Initially overwhelmed by number of papers.
   ・ With help from my supervisor, ended up with 16 key papers.
   
   The write up
   ・ Areas covered: Theoretical perspectives of SM use on mental wellbeing, SM mental wellbeing and learning, adolescence, UK based research into SM use and SM use amongst adolescent girls.
The research process

2. The methodology; sample recruitment
   › Ethics board - paperwork
   › 8 adolescent girls aged 14-15
   › One rural secondary school
   › Random sampling technique
   › 6 EPs
   › One EP service
   › Convenience sampling technique
The research process...

3. The methodology; data collection
   › Interviewed the girls
   › Focus group for the EPs
   › All data was collected by February 2018
The research process...

4. Data analysis
   › Thematic Analysis, Braun and Clarke (2013) process.
   › Took ages!
   › Supervision helped me to keep it simple.
   › Family members and colleagues read over this chapter.
5. The write up
   › Numerous drafts of each chapter, especially the literature review.
   › Full draft given to supervisor in July, hand in was in September 2018.
   › Easier to edit once it came together as a whole.
The research process...

6. The viva

- Despite preparation and practice, different questions came up.
- It was a chance to discuss my research with 2 academics who had read my research!
- Challenging but rewarding process.
- Minor amendments
The following research questions guided the data analysis:

- What are the reported experiences of SM use by adolescent girls?
- What are the advantages of using SM as perceived by adolescent girls?
- What are the disadvantages of using SM as perceived by adolescent girls?
- How do adolescent girls manage the disadvantages of SM?
What were my main findings? Adolescent girls

The six overarching themes were identified:
• Theme 1: SM use varied amongst the girls.
• Theme 2: SM plays a positive and negative role in relationships
• Theme 3: Problems occur on SM due to a lack of boundaries, a lack of consequences for behaviour and increased anonymity.
• Theme 4: Growing up and living with SM as an adolescent.
• Theme 5: Too much of a good thing.
• Theme 6: Protective factors within SM use.
What could these findings mean?

Advantages:
1. The role of SM in relationships
2. SM as a helpful tool

Disadvantages:
3. Time displacement theory
4. Disinhibition effect, cyber bullying
5. Social comparison theory
6. Wider societal and cultural influences on SM use
The following research questions guided the data analysis;

• Why may adolescent girls behave as they do on SM?
• What may be the potential impact of SM use on adolescent girls?
• How can the EP profession support young people, families and school staff to safely navigate SM?
What were my main findings? EP focus group

The four overarching themes were identified from the data analysis:

• Theme 1: Adolescence is a unique developmental period.
• Theme 2: SM use has divided the generations.
• Theme 3: The potential impact of SM use on mental wellbeing.
• Theme 4: EPs have a lot to offer to support young people and their SM use.
What could these findings mean?

- EPs suggested SM use has led to a generational divide.
- Gaps in EP knowledge
- EP practice can support SM use amongst young people.
Limitations

- Large topic covered.
- Limitation of EP focus group data.
- One school, 8 girls.
- One EP service, 6 EPs.
What next for research into social media?

- Younger sample and expanding on the sample number.
- Longitudinal design.
- Further exploration of the subtleties of SM use.
- Exploration of what constitutes as a ‘healthy’ use of SM.
- Research with parents.
- Young people centred research.
Tips and tricks for research

• Chose a topic you are interested in.
• If possible, try to find your key papers from the literature before you chose your topic– this may help to narrow your focus.
• Collect data early.
• It is normal to draft and re draft and re draft and re draft and re draft chapters (although it is painful!).
• Make it easy for the examiners to read.
• Keep it simple
• Be kind to yourself
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