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Adolescents' Perceptions of Social Media's Impact on Mental Health and Well-Being During their Transition to University

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Research Results Summary

Within this thesis, foundational definitions of adolescence, mental health, and a description of social media were provided. The literature review used these fundamental definitions and expanded on them providing comprehensive overviews of adolescent mental health and well-being, adolescent social media use, the transition from high school to university, and the interactions between the three topics. Previous literature indicated that adolescence is a crucial stage for social and emotional development (WHO, 2021; WHO, 2022); however, social media use has transformed adolescent development as it has changed the ways in which people communicate and interact with one another. While social media offers numerous benefits, it also raises significant concerns regarding social development, mental health, and well-being. Social media use and mental health have been researched together; however, there is a gap in the literature regarding how social media has impacted adolescent mental health during the transition from high school to university. Using Social Influence Theory (SIT) and Affordance Theory lenses, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight first- and second-year university students. The data was analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, which was conceptualized by Braun and Clarke (2021). After completing the analysis, five overarching themes emerged: 1) Knowledge and Understanding; 2) Changes in Social Media Use; 3) Coping During Difficult Times; 4) Mental Health and Well-Being During the Transition to University; and 5) Problematic Social Media Use. Unique individual findings were also discussed. While some participants noted that social media was a distraction and hindered their well-being during the transition from high school to university, other participants indicated that social media use was instrumental in their transition to university and increased their mental health and well-being. The themes, results, and discussion within the study encompassed the unique lived experiences

that participants had while using social media and how it has impacted their mental health and well-being during their transition into university. Limitations of the study include a small sample size, a heavy reliance on self-report measures, and the time commitment required of participants to complete the interview.

References

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