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TEENAGE SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE: A PARENTAL PERSPECTIVE

Examining the impact of social media on families in Helsinki, Finland

ABSTRACT

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“Teenage social media usage: A parental perspective” - Examining the parental perspectives of teenage social media usage in Helsinki, Finland

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This research-based thesis was aimed to explore the parental perspectives of teenage social media usage in Helsinki, Finland. This resulted from the rise of social media usage among teenagers, the potential effects, and how parents handle it. The purpose of this thesis was to gain a general understanding of how much of a role parents play in what their children have access to online, and their personal sentiments regarding that.

By conducting an online survey of parents in the Helsinki metropolitan area, through social media and NGO networks like Familia ry, data was collected to show the perspective of parents. Originally planned as part of a workshop, the online survey became the central focus of the thesis, providing the bulk of the data. The survey was written by combining knowledge from academic journals regarding the topic of social media usage with information about the parental role in child development to provide a well-thought out and effective questionnaire. There were 23 respondents, limited by time and the changing environment.

The material was analyzed with a descriptive data analysis method and was used to show the parental perspective of social media usage of teenagers. This limited the amount of inferences that could be made about the data, but rather displayed the variety of methods and opinions parents have regarding this topic.

The main results of this research were that parents in the Helsinki metropolitan area had a variety of opinions surrounding how much their children use social media, what they use it for, and how said parents do or do not monitor their usage. Supervision to varying degrees was a common way for parents to limit or manage their teenager's social media usage, with boundaries and restrictions also mentioned. The responses about how they personally felt about social media ranged from fear and worry to confidence in their boundary-making. The biggest difference in responses was between those who believed their year of birth and generation had impacted their views of social media, and those who believed it did not. The latter were all in the older age groups surveyed.

The goal for this thesis was to be part of a larger push for research and exploration of the prevalence of social media in familial relationships and the effects of social media on the wellbeing of said families.

Keywords: Social Media, Parents, Parental Guidance, Internet, Teenagers, Adolescence, Family

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1 INTRODUCTION

Social media has become the most influential tool of the modern era. It has changed the way we communicate with the world and with one another. Media has grown to be an integral part of how children, especially teenagers, spend their free time and social media is a part of that phenomenon (Janevski, Petkovska Mirchevska, & Angelozska-Dichovska, 2012). The way young adults and teenagers consume social media and the internet has changed. Whether it has been changing for the better or worse is a question that has yet to be answered. Therefore, the guidance of parents is important. Being involved in their child's social media and internet usage may be crucial to their wellbeing.

For our research, we were aiming to connect the usage of social media by teenagers with the parental response, and ideally come up with some solutions to a problem many people have opinions on, but for which there is little to no public consensus. We decided to focus on collecting our data through an online survey for parents of teenagers, which covered many of the topics and questions about social media and their teenager's use of it. The survey provided a channel to gather the parental perspective and provide context for our background research. It was also a feasible method to gather a decent number of respondents and therefore perspectives. The length of the survey and variety of question types provided a significant amount of data to work with.

The proposed benefits of our work were to encourage discussion about the social media usage of teenagers with both parents and social service professionals. Although this can be impacted further by the publication of this thesis, we have gotten positive responses to our chosen topic and survey. As one respondent said, "The topic is important and as a parent it helps to do nothing but support the best of the child. Good luck with your work." Much more can and needs to be done in the research of this phenomenon, so we represent part of the push for further research.

2 KEY CONCEPTS

We are interested in the parental perceptions of the social media usage of teenagers. By teenagers, we mean those between the ages of 13-19. We chose these as they provided a stronger foundation for our further research and data collection process. Social media, being a relatively new phenomenon, has most of the research about it being recent and not as well reviewed. The climate of social media is also constantly updating, so information surrounding it is becoming relatively obsolete quickly. Bringing in the topic of adolescence regarding social media adds a new layer to the topic itself. As far as the parental role in raising teenagers, that is a topic as old as time itself and therefore has many varying opinions, legislation, and a wide pool of information available. By combining these two topics, we aim to bridge the old and the new, while also examining how they impact one another.

2.1 Adolescence and social media

Social media and adolescence are concepts that for both our purposes and for the general population, are deeply intertwined. The main concepts regarding social media that will be explained are a general breakdown of social media usage, motivations for social media usage among adolescents, the potential impacts on adolescent well-being, and the conflicting opinions surrounding these. These varying perspectives, from different experts, provide a broad background for our own research.

Instagram and Facebook have been the face of the social media boom for over a decade and their influence continues to grow. Facebook had over 2,9 billion active monthly users in April 2022 (Kemp, 2022). According to Statista (2022c), 8.9 percent of worldwide Instagram users are teenagers. Of those, 45 percent are female, and 55 percent are male. While the popularity and impact of social media has only been rising for the past decade, the pandemic boosted the usage of all the popular apps including Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook; and the most popular app amongst all demographics, especially teenagers aged

13-18, was TikTok (Statista, 2022b). The pandemic gave TikTok a 180 percent boost, and it continues to grow (Statista, 2022a).

According to nationwide surveys performed in the United States by Pew Research Center in 2015, 24% of teens aged 13-17 said they were online “almost constantly.” 92% said they go online daily, and 73% owned a smartphone. Compared to the same survey in 2012, when only 1/3 of teenagers asked said they owned a smartphone, there was an obvious and drastic increase in the presence of smart phones and arguably social media, in teenage lives. (Armitage, 2015). Given the drastic increase in smartphone usage in the period of three years from 2012 to 2015, and the pandemic increasing time indoors, one can safely assume those statistics of teenage smart phone and social media usage have increased until the current year, 2022.

As we must examine all aspects of the connection between social media and adolescence, Jarman, Marques, McLean, Slater, and Paxton wrote for the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* about the motivations for social media usage by teenagers. According to Erikson (1968), and Neinstein and Anderson (2002), “Adolescence is characterized by an increase in peer influence, a desire for a sense of belonging, and exploration of the self and identity.” (Jarman et al. 2021.) In a sense, social media allows both of those concepts and more to be further explored, both negatively and positively (Jarman et al. 2021). As it has been identified, social media can have an even greater impact on adolescent minds because of the mental turmoil they might be going through.

2.1.1 Conflicting perspectives on social media usage

Screen time can be defined as the amount of time spent in front of a screen during a given time. Over the past decade or so, technology use and screen time has shifted from TV-watching to smart phone usage, which can include streaming services, gaming, and social media browsing. Orben (2020) shows the significance of social media when it comes to adolescents, saying “The diversity of social media, and its inherently social nature, makes it attractive to younger generations.” (Orben, 2020.)

Through review of over 80 presentations of data examining the possible correlations between social media usage and adolescent well-being, Orben was only able to find a small correlation between increased technology use and screen time and negative effects on adolescent well-being. However, this does not mean that such correlation does not exist, rather that there is not enough data currently to back it up. Orben made it abundantly clear that the limited amount of research on this topic as well as the lack of transparency in studies that do exist leaves a gap in knowledge and statistics that would be useful to make a stronger determination. (Orben, 2020.)

Teenagers have a quite evenly varied view of how social media impacts their lives, including positive, neutral, and negative responses (Anderson & Jingjing, 2018). In the scientific and mental health practice communities, according to Michelle O'Reilly (2020), a researcher and psychology expert, social media usage is recognized for the exacerbation of already-present mental health issues and as a present danger especially if used without any parental guidance or supervision (O'Reilly, 2020). According to Monica Anderson, an associate director of research center at the Pew Research Centre (2016), parents are limiting their teenager's internet social media use, but they are not using tech-based limitations. So, parents understand that it is their responsibility to monitor and be aware of their children's online activity. It is an ongoing struggle for some because they are undecided on the amount of monitoring they should do. (Anderson, 2016.)

Michelle O'Reilly, associate professor of Communication in Mental Health at Leicester University, highlights the differences in opinion on social media usage between psychologists and adolescents. While according to Lee et al. (2015) psychologists worry about potential negative impacts on mental health by social media over-use and suggest age limits for smart phone ownership, O'Reilly mentions, referring to O'Reilly, Dogra, Whiteman et al., (2018) that adolescents themselves may have differing views, including a need for autonomy and choice. By following the recommendation of the United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child, adolescents should be taught through self-empowerment, in this case regarding their screen time and social media usage. (O'Reilly, 2020).

In a journal about family therapy, Kristina Keuhlen Dingus and others explore the available literature about managing social media usage. There are three main strategies mentioned: mediation, monitoring, and collaboration (Dingus et al. 2020.) Depending on the parenting style, internet literacy, and the age of both parents and children, different methods are more effective. Mediation, according to Lee B. Erickson and others (2016), requires some internet skills, and without them, parents may feel helpless (Dingus et al.) Mediation includes consistent communication between parent and child, rather than a static set of rules, according to Symons et al. (2017) (Dingus et al.) Monitoring, another method for managing social media usage, is heavily influenced by the gender and age of both the parent and child and the family income, says Padilla-Walker et al. (2012) (Dingus et al. 2016). Monitoring happens during social media use as well as after the fact. Collaborative communication, the final method mentioned, is a “protective factor against cyberbullying,” according to Elsaesser et al. (2017). This is possible because of the collaborative nature which allows the adolescent to take part in boundary-setting and are therefore more likely to follow the rules and stay safe. (Dingus et al. 2020.)

Evidently, diverse discourse is being had about the potential effects of social media usage on adolescents. While the public, especially older populations, worry about the negative impacts, adolescents themselves have mixed opinions, leaning toward positive. However, it is also clear that this discourse cannot replace academic research and studies, which are unfortunately few and far between. Therefore, it is necessary for further research to be done, and it is why we are focusing our thesis on this topic.

2.2 Parental role in raising teenagers

The role of the parent is important in the family and family life, especially when it comes to teenagers who are going through significant changes. Their perception and response to social media as whole is necessary to have the full context throughout the research process. In this chapter, the discussion will be surrounding the importance of the parental role during adolescence and their opinions regarding social media.

The importance of parental presence in the lives of their children has been emphasized repeatedly throughout history. We must examine what role they should have in their children's lives, and their activity on the internet and social media. They are the decision makers in most instances, without regard to the size of the decision being made (Helminen, 2019).

Many experts and professionals have emphasized how big of a difference it makes when the parents are actively present in a child's life. For example, the involvement of the parents in their child's education increases their academic success (Benner, Boyle, & Sadler, 2016). When parents are more vocal about voicing their support of their child's learning and achievements, it increases their confidence, and they are more encouraged (Brooks, 2019). There is a delicate balance between being actively present and showing interest in their lives, and going overboard, which can lead to being labeled a helicopter parent. This can make the child fold into themselves and avoid being open and communicating with their parents.

2.2.1 The importance of perception

A research study by Procentese, Gatti, and Di Napoli (2019), proved that it is beneficial for parents to manage and control the amount of time spent on social media. Since children in this era are starting to have issues with the limits of how much internet or media is good to consume, the responsibility lies with the parent to set boundaries and teach alternative ways of spending time, while moderately spending time on social media. (Procentese et al. 2019).

The parental perception of social media has a role in how the household regarding screentime and the internet. Procentese et al. showed parents may have conflicting feelings about social media use, the impact it has on their household, and the relationship they have with their adolescent children. It is important to have dialogue about when and how it should be used. It is crucial for the parents to create the time and space where they can relay and explain the need for those rules. (Procentese et al. 2019).

Naturally, the responsibility falls on the parents to share their knowledge and be more understanding. Procentese showed that when the parents had a positive or at least not outright negative perception of social media, it led to the family having more open communication. This also led to the acknowledgment of ways families could collectively promote and talk about the other ways social media is used, and how it should be used for it to be a valuable experience for everyone. At a time where adolescents are trying to achieve autonomy and strongly want people to acknowledge them as individuals it would be good to show them the positive aspects of social media. So that rather than rebel, they can be open with their parents, because they can trust the reaction will not be automatically negative. Adolescents will be open and receptive when the parents do want to set some limits, because they will genuinely believe they are not coming from a place of control, but rather warmth and care. (Procentese et al. 2019.)

In this day and age, millennials who grew up as the first users of these social media apps when the internet was reaching popularity may have fallen victim to being engrossed with everything happening in the world of social media, therefore lessening the interactions they have with their children. This has caused the children to be not as open with their parents about various aspects in their lives including online activity. When parents are open to using social media or have a neutral outlook on it, the children in the household tend to be less guarded about their own habits and experiences. (Lahikainen, Mälkiä, Repo, & Arminen, 2017.)

According to Lahikainen et al. (2017), teaching that technology usage is a privilege, and requires finishing certain tasks like chores around the house or homework, eliminates the feeling of entitlement to technology and screen time. This teaches boundaries and limits, which are important life skills and children grow up. Digitalization of family life, the meshing of technology and family, happens in many households. Overt digitalization, which is the over usage of technology and screen time to the point that it limits family time, can lead to “individualization and privatization,” which causes isolation within the family. Instead, teenagers strengthen their online relationships whether it be with friends or strangers. In the end, an important part of the family dynamics, togetherness, is lost. (Lahikainen et al. 2017.)

2.2.2 Comparisons of the parental experience with social media

Lahikainen et al. focused mostly on the feeling parents have and how that affects the entire family's idea of how social media should be used. They go further into how it changes the dynamics of the family and the willingness of children to complete their tasks. They also mention the digitalization of family life and free time. Where Lahikainen et al. focused on the effects of digitalization on the entire family, Procentese's main point was about the parent's perception of social media. They then explain how that perception can affect how teenagers might react when they are presented with boundaries. There is also a secondary response, when and how the parents respond to their teenager's reaction to rules being set.

While the main points were similar, the focal point of each of the studies was different. This is useful for our thesis, because our focus is about how parents manage their adolescent's social media usage, so everything ties in together. Having different focal points will help us view the data through a variety of lenses and help the analysis process.

3 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE

The purpose of our research goes along with the rising prevalence of social media and adolescence and the parental role in managing it during the teenage years. To summarize, our research question is: How do parents in the Helsinki metropolitan area perceive and handle the social media usage of their teenagers? This would ideally be answered through questions about what parents know about social media, their teenager's use of it, the potential consequences for that use, and what, if any, role they play as parents.

This topic is relevant because of the rise of social media, and the potential impacts on adolescents. While working in the social service field, especially with families or youth, a knowledge of the current environment and factors that could influence their wellbeing is important. This knowledge can ensure that the help provided is factually backed and effective.

Our goal for the research was to provide insights into the opinions and potential methods of moderating social media consumption used by parents in the Helsinki metropolitan area. We wanted to investigate if the demographics of the parents impacted their views of social media. To achieve our overarching goal, we had several objectives. These were to find an appropriate working life partner, decide on a method of data collection, and analyze said data. This was through the research-based thesis process. We collected that data through a survey distributed through NGOs and social media to parents of teenagers in the Helsinki Metropolitan area. The data was then analyzed to determine if any patterns could be found in the data. Ideally, this can be further researched in the future.

4 BACKGROUND AND PARTNERS

When doing a thesis, working life partners are a big part of the journey and helping the individual or team achieve their objectives and goals. For that reason, in this chapter we will discuss our working life partner and their background. This includes what we asked for, the support they provided us, and the results of that help.

The research environment and context for our work starts out with our theoretical background in studying at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. We also have personal interest and experience with the focus of our research, it being that we are from generation Z and were adolescents and teenagers during the meteoric rise of social media. For the purposes of our research, we will define millennials as being born between 1981-1996, and generation Z as being born from 1997-2012. We felt as though these factors would aid us in researching and finding the necessary information effectively. This would further allow us to answer our research question.

Our research environment is local, focusing on the Helsinki metropolitan area, which includes Espoo and Vantaa. Since we wanted our survey respondents to be parents of teenagers or adolescents in said area, it was natural to connect with an NGO like Familia ry, as they work with parents and multicultural families in Helsinki. Through the course of our conversations about collaboration, they informed us that most of their service users are younger families and therefore do not have teenagers, but they offered to reach out to their partner organizations and NGO network to reach our intended audience. This was a great help, as we did not necessarily know of or have connections to all the relevant organizations.

Familia ry is a non-governmental organization that focuses on providing guidance to intercultural families with integration in Finland. In the Finnish context, Familia ry defines intercultural families as “families in which at least one family member has a different cultural background” (Familia ry, 2022). Familia ry offers and organizes different activities to aid the integration process. Familia also actively works to make the social and legal systems more inclusive, so that they can better support people who are

from multicultural backgrounds or other vulnerable groups who are often overlooked. Familia ry has been a stable presence in the social work community and NGO network in Helsinki for decades. It has been in operation for over 30 years, when the immigration in Finland started to boom in the late 1980's. Familia is a part of a larger company/network called the Diverse Families network. This consists of 10 different family associated organizations that all have different aims and focal points.

Our focal point throughout the thesis process shifted and evolved to fit what was conceivable and useful for us. This did make things more complicated and at points difficult, but Familia ry and our thesis supervisor were there to support us along the way. Familia ry helped us distribute the survey. We turned to social media and contacting NGOs and schools with our survey link. We also realized this shift meant the focus of our thesis was no longer project development, so we also switched to a research-based thesis.

5 DATA COLLECTION, DATA AND ANALYSIS

Data collection, data and analysis are an integral part of conducting a thesis and writing a research paper. We will be explaining our research environment and target group, how we collected the data, the validity of the data, and the analysis process. The data we collected was done in the most ethical way possible, respecting all the sources used and the participants' wishes.

5.1 Research environment and target group

To summarize, the influential factors on our research environment were our personal background, the physical boundaries of our intended participants and later survey respondents – the Helsinki metropolitan area, our connection and collaboration with Familia ry and other NGOs around Helsinki, and the possible limitations of this being Bachelor-level research. The research was being done as students at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, which is located in Helsinki. The Helsinki metropolitan area has a population of 1.52 million and is one of the most multicultural areas in Finland (welcome.helsinki. About the City, 2021).

Our target group was parents of teenagers in the Helsinki metropolitan and tended to be multicultural or immigrants due to the demographics of the service users of our NGO partners. The latter was not intentional initially, but we gradually began to see that that was a factor. We were able to measure this because several questions on our survey inquired about ethnic background, where the participants lived, and their age. The number of respondents was 23, as could be expected from the short amount of time our survey was public. Our survey was distributed on Facebook (Appendix 3) and email, and due to the far-reaching nature of social media, we reached a wider audience.

Our reasons for choosing our target group were manifold. We chose parents of teenagers rather than teenagers themselves, for example, because they play an important role in the raising of said teenagers. In this day and age, social media is part of that process, so

parents have a direct connection to it. There is generally a lack of consensus in public knowledge about how to deal with the social media usage of teenagers. We hoped with our workshop, to come up with some solutions for how to deal with this issue, while taking the parental perspective into account. Later, with the survey, we were also able to receive unadulterated responses from parents, whereas including both teenagers and their parents could have caused conflict and therefore less truthful answers. On a purely practical level, it also made sense to focus on the parents, as dealing with minors comes with many more hoops to jump through and we have not been trained extensively in working with teenagers. For the best of our research as well as the participants, we chose to go with the parents as our target group. As for the location of our target group, being the Helsinki metropolitan area, this was also a practical choice. Our studies have been conducted in central Helsinki, we both live in the general area and thus know it well, and our partner NGOs are situated here.

5.2 Execution of data collection

Since our data comes from the responses to our online survey, we had to ensure our questions would provoke the information in an effective way. We started with our research question: how do parents in the Helsinki metropolitan area perceive and handle the social media usage of their teenagers? While creating the online survey and preparing for the collection of data from said survey, we had to fine-tune our questions to ensure they were clearly communicated. There were some advantages to an online survey, as it was anonymous so respondents may have felt able to be more honest. Practically, we were able to reach more people and hear their opinions. (Connor Desai & Reimers, 2018.)

Our chosen platform for hosting the survey was Google Forms. This was for a multitude of reasons, beginning with ease of use and our experience with this platform. It is a well-known and trusted platform as well, which may have helped respondents to feel comfortable visiting a familiar webpage. Google Forms also allows for some data compilation and graphs to help visualize the data. We used a mixture of types of questions; however, most were closed-ended questions. Although while in person and

during discussion open-ended questions may be ideal for more information, they may increase the number of unfinished surveys. (Connor Desai & Reimers, 2018.)

To reach potential survey-takers, we used the snowball sampling technique. This included our original query posted to social media platforms and shared to NGO service users via our contacts at the NGOs. Snowball-sampling included telling the respondents we reached out to, to forward this survey to people they knew to fit our target group: parents of teenagers in the Helsinki metropolitan area. (Bolarinwa, Olagunju, Babalola, & Saed, 2020.) That way, we got more respondents through word-of-mouth and sharing on social media and private messages.

5.3 Original plan

Initially, we were essentially developing a framework (Appendix 4) in which to gather qualitative data – being the perspectives and opinions of parents of teenagers – and then analyze said data. As we moved forward with our thesis process, we started to plan our workshop which would be our main source of information. The workshop participants, with our target group being parents of teenagers, would be gathered from various NGOs around Helsinki. Despite our efforts, reaching out to schools and other NGOs with new information, printable and digital flyers (Appendix 1), and having a bit more time, it again resulted in no participant registration. This resulted with us changing our plans from conducting a project-based thesis to a research-based thesis. We then put our energy into modifying our survey to be most effective online, as this was different from our original plan of conducting the survey in person. As far as advertising and distributing the online survey, we had Familia ry share the link to our survey within their network. We appreciated Familia's willingness to work with us despite the changes in plans. Ultimately, most survey respondents came from the social media advertisements we had personally posted in neighborhood Facebook groups.

5.4 The quality and extent of collected data

The data collection was and is a crucial part of creating and drafting our thesis. As a collective we started this thesis journey thinking about what it is that we were trying to convey, and what type of information we wanted to present to the reader. The nature of our topic relies on the data, as without the proper data the objectives cannot be reached, and the goal cannot be met.

The data collection we planned was first through background academic research with the help of databases like EBSCOhost and Sage Publications. We went forward with that by deciding on key words, that were the most important and necessary for us to find the suitable data to incorporate in our thesis. These keywords included screen time, parents, adolescence, adolescent well-being and social media. We then went on to create an online survey, which was our chosen method of data collection. This was as opposed to face-to-face surveys or paper surveys as it was the most realistic given our time restraints and the limitations of finding participants. This was also because of our experience and struggle of finding participants for an in-person workshop.

There was an extensive process to write the survey, which included meetings with our supervisor and ensuring the survey had the necessary context to allow for the most accurate responses. It was important to make sure the survey was interesting, concise, cohesive and that the questions were engaging. The goal was to distribute the survey as many different outlets as we could. This ranged from international schools from the Helsinki metropolitan area, non-governmental organizations, and online communities on different social media platforms. The response rate started to grow after distributing the survey to the online communities, while it was a struggle to hear back from the schools. Overall, we managed to get 23 responses to the survey, which is what we managed, with time limitations and having to distribute the new survey quickly.

5.5 Methods used to analyze data

For the analysis of our data collected from our Google Forms survey, we used descriptive statistics and data analysis to analyze our dataset. Descriptive data analysis, simply put, describes what the data shows through statistics, simple graphs, and statements. This differs from inferential data analysis, which allows conclusions to be made. We are only presenting the data as is, using charts and graphs to illustrate the data. (Trochim, n.d.)

First, we had to gather and compile the data from the survey (Appendix 2). This process was aided by the fact that Google Forms does data compilation and charts automatically. We used these charts to help us, but also created our own tables as shown in the results section. Having multiple ways of presenting the data throughout the process allowed us to see it from multiple perspectives. Then we described what the data, tables, and charts showed, in terms of percentages, numbers, general patterns.

The next step was to go over the responses to the survey and find any patterns. This process was tedious but insightful. We chose a common response to a specific question to focus on, and then combed through the data to see if there were demographic similarities, shared opinions, or anything of note. We repeated this process a few dozen times, many times coming up short, with nothing to note. However, we also found telling similarities in the responses, which allowed us to come to some conclusions about our data set. Despite the relatively small number of responses to our survey, we found that our data provides insight into the opinions about and methods for managing teenage social media usage in the Helsinki metropolitan area. During the analysis, it was important to keep an open and critical mind to notice any shortcomings, the potential impact on the data and suggest how they could have been prevented.

6 RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the survey will be presented. Accompanying the different tables and figures will be text describing the results. Criticisms of potential shortcomings are also mentioned. Why the shortcomings happened is explained in detail in the upcoming paragraphs sectioned in order.

6.1 Demographics

Table 1 shows the demographics of the survey takers. Due to our survey being conducted in English and distributed amongst Helsinki residents with a variety of backgrounds, we believe our data was significantly impacted by the presence of multicultural families and therefore provides a wider representation of the residents of Helsinki. Survey takers responded to the question asking about their race or ethnicity with a variety of answers. This included “White European”, “Caucasian”, “Finnish”, as well as “Somali” and “Middle eastern”. While this does not give a clear quantitative look at the demographics of the participants, we chose to leave this question open-ended rather than multiple-choice to allow participants to identify themselves as they wished. More than half of all respondents were between the ages 35-44, with none being over 55 years of age.

This question regarding where the participants currently live was added after a few responses had been recorded, hence the number of responses being 15 rather than 23, the actual number of respondents to the whole survey. An overwhelming majority (14) of the respondents lived in Helsinki, while 1 respondent lived in Vantaa.

The table shows the number of children in each family was quite evenly split between 1, 2, and 3 children, with a surprising 6 respondents having 5 or more children. On the other hand, most respondents reported having just 1 teenager in their household, with an even number of both 3 or 4 teenagers in the house, and one outlier of 7 teenagers in one household. Four participants reported having no teenagers in the household. Despite this not quite fitting our target group, presumably, their children are pre-teens or over 18 years

old. This question was open ended, which led to some confusion since some participants responded numerically, e.g., “1”, while others wrote their responses out, e.g., “one”. We had one participant write “One almost”, but to ensure our data was as accurate as possible, we moved that response to the “0” category as their child was not a teenager at the time of survey. This could have been avoided by clarifying in the question itself what our definition of a teenager was, giving a specific age range, and further asking for the response to be answered numerically.

Finally, with the last question in Table 1, the responses amounted to over 100% as it was not multiple-choice, but rather “check all that apply”. Many respondents had more than 1 child, so they checked more than 1 option. With that being said, the table shows many survey takers had children in primary, secondary, and upper secondary school, with a decent percentage having adult children as well.

Table 1. Demographics of survey respondents

Variable	N = 23
Where do you live?	
Helsinki	14
Vantaa	1
Espoo	0
Other	0
How old are you?	
25-34	3
35-44	12
45-54	8
55+	0
What's your race or ethnicity?	
Somali	3
Caucasian	18
Middle Eastern	1
How many children do you have?	
1	5
2	4

3	5
4	2
5+	6

How many of them are teenagers?

0	4
1	9
2	4
3	4
4	1
7	1

What grade are your children currently in?

Primary school	13
Secondary (middle) school	12
Upper secondary School	12
Already an adult	7

6.2 Information about children and cell phones

Table 2 shows the data pertaining to the respondent's views of social media, when their children got their first cell phone, general information about their child's cell phone usage and habits, and their personal views about raising a child in this generation. Information about social media specifics or opinions were gathered and will be explained further on.

The first two questions asked about when their children got their first cell phone had a majority of respondents reporting 5-8 years as the age range. This is supported by the culture in Finland surrounding kids' independence and that cell phones allow for "indirect care" by parents (Stevenson, 2017). There were two questions in case the age varied amongst respondents' multiple children. For that reason, it was not required to answer both questions, in case it was not relevant. This could have caused confusion, as multiple respondents had reported having more than 2 children. At this point, it was at the respondent's discretion to answer as accurately as possible. To avoid this confusion or potential inaccuracy, we could have added more optional questions, one for each child.

There may have been confusion because of the lack of clarity in the question, as we should have clarified again that if it was not relevant it could be skipped. We had one response [sic] “currently 3 [years old] and no celly.”

When asked if the responding parents allowed their children to use social media, 15 respondents said “yes”. We also received 4 responses in the “other” category, including answers specifying their child only uses TikTok, one parent specifying their child was not allowed to use social media until age 13, with supervision. Supervision was mentioned by another parent as a requirement. One respondent suggested they cannot control their child’s social media usage, and that “my teen is [definitely] addicted to some” social media. 4 respondents said they do not allow their children to use social media at all.

Survey respondents were asked, to their knowledge, how much time their child spends on their cell phone per day. This question and the responses were quite straightforward and clear, with all respondents choosing one of the multiple choices. Over half of all respondents indicated their child spends 2-4 hours per day on their phone, with a significant percentage indicating less than 2. Only a few responses indicated more than 5 hours.

The final 2 questions shown on Table 2 were more opinion-based, with the first asking if the respondents believed that the year and generation, they were born in affects their views and restrictions of social media. 15 out of 23 of respondents indicated they do believe it has an impact on their opinions regarding social media. The final question is quite a wordy one, but it was important to gauge the context of how respondents were answering. For example, they may have answered or reacted differently with their older children if the social media boom had happened when they were younger parents. This question was optional, so participants for whom this question was not relevant either checked “not relevant” or skipped the question altogether. Only 4 participants responded with “yes”, 6 answered “no”, 1 “I don’t know”, and 9 responded “not relevant”. There were also 3 participants who did not respond, presumably because the question was not relevant.

Table 2. Children and cell phones/social media

Variable	N = 23
In what age group was your child when they got their first cell phone?	
4 or younger	0
5-8 years	19
9-12 years	4
13-16 years	0
17+	0
Child #2	
4 or younger	0
5-8 years	13
9-12 years	2
13-16 years	0
17+	0
Do you allow your children to use social media?	
Yes	15
No	4
Other	4
To your knowledge, how many hours per day does your child spend on their phone?	
Less than 2	6
2-4	14
5-7	1
8+	2
Do you believe the year and generation you were born in affects your views or restrictions when it comes to social media?	
Yes	15
No	7
If you have more than one child, do you find yourself paying more attention to the current teenager than when your adult child was a teenager years before?	

Yes	4
No	6
I don't know	1
Not relevant	9

6.3 Knowledge of and reactions to social media

This question allowed all participants to check as many answers (social media platforms) as they were aware of, so percentages are not relevant here. The most important knowledge gained from this is that Snapchat was the only platform checked by every single respondent, while Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter were known by most participants, and Jodel (a Finnish version of YikYak) was only known by one respondent. The response about Jodel was written in, in the “other” category.

Check all social media platforms that you are aware of
23 responses

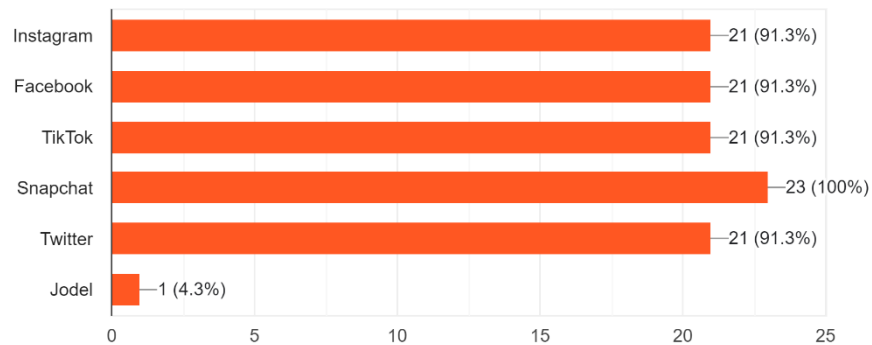


FIGURE 1. Social media platforms (via Google Forms)

When discussing parents chose all the options that applied to their children; therefore, the percentage exceeds 100%, as shown in Figure 2. According to the data, many parents do feel like social media has made the lives of their children more complicated, while very few felt that it made them safer. All other describing words had a variety of responses. The two phrases at the bottom of the chart were written in by respondents in the “other” category, and due to the length, are not visible in their entirety. For clarity, the first is

“more aware of the world and issues before they need to be” and “The issue is not black and white, social media brings both [positive] and negative things equally”.

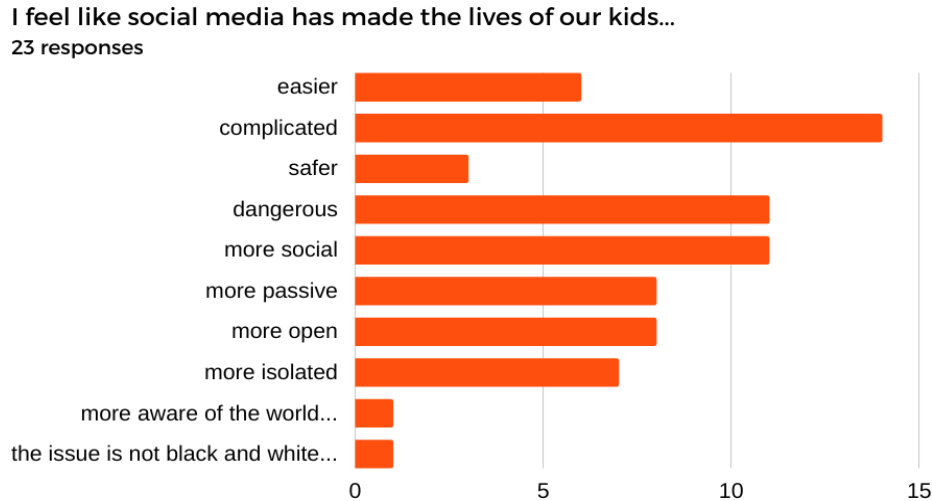


FIGURE 2: Reactions to social media

When asked if they know what their child uses social media for, many respondents wrote about keeping up with friends, watching videos or entertainment, following trends or their specific hobbies, as well as sharing about said trends. There were also several responses that their child does not use social media, which matches earlier questions about whether they allow their children to use social media. A few parents mentioned that their teenagers use social media to keep up with world events. One respondent seemed to have an overriding negative perception of social media as when discussing their teenager’s use of Instagram and TikTok, they said it is “99% totally [dangerous] and totally inappropriate”.

6.4 Matrix questions regarding screen time, social media, and online safety

The following 3 figures were gathered from the same data set – a matrix of statements presented to survey takers, in which the choice of responses included “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “neutral,” “agree,” “strongly agree,” and “unknown.” (Appendix 2) Respondents were asked to answer as accurately as possible and leave the question blank if it was not applicable to them.

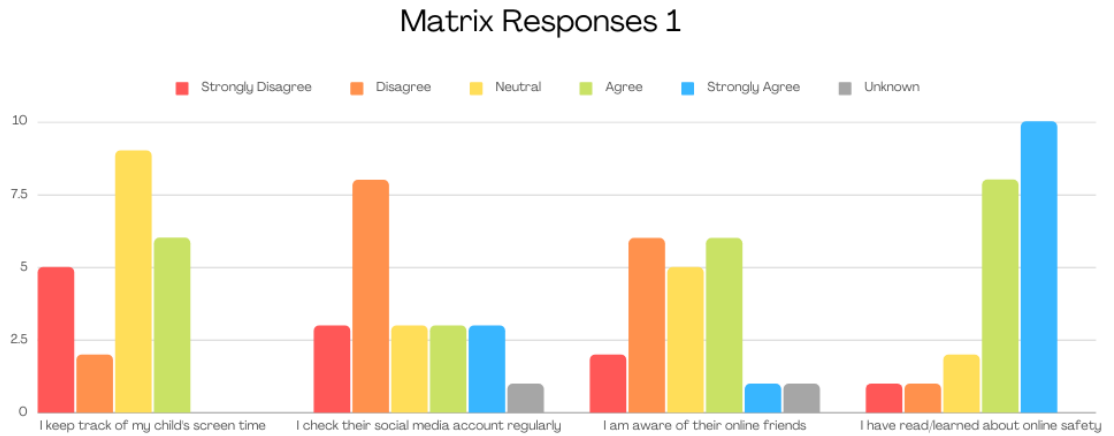


FIGURE 3.1 Matrix Responses 1

When presented with the statement “I keep track of my child's screen time,” many parents agreed, so they are presumably aware when their child using their phone. 5 respondents disagreed with the statement, and 0 strongly disagreed. A large number of parents answered that they do not check their child’s social media account regularly. When it came to being aware of their online friends, on the contrary, this was split evenly between parents who are aware of their children's online friends, those who are not aware, and a neutral response. It makes sense that if parents are not checking their child's social media account regularly, they would not be aware of their online friends. On the other hand, parents may feel they are aware of their child's online friends because they know their friends in real life. An overwhelming majority agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I have read/learned about online safety.”



FIGURE 3.2 Matrix Responses 2

This chart shows that parents have made a priority to inform their children about online safety with 11 answering strongly agree and 8 answering agree. The results were quite evenly split, skewing towards agreement but with many neutral responses, when it came to the topic of excessive cell phone use. The question regarding excessive social media use was split evenly between across all options. This may be because several respondents mentioned that their children do not use social media, so although they may spend excessive time on their cell phone, it is not on social media.



FIGURE 3.3 Matrix Responses 3

Online safety, which might be one of the most important questions in this entire survey, provided some eye-opening conclusions about how parents view online safety. Evidently, they don't believe online spaces are safe, as only 2 of all respondents answered in the affirmative, believing that it is safe. When presented with the statement "I am aware of who my child follows on social media," the responses were quite evenly distributed. Interestingly, most answers landed on the simple "agree" or "disagree," instead of statements which included "strongly." Most parents surveyed reported that they do not check their child's private messages.

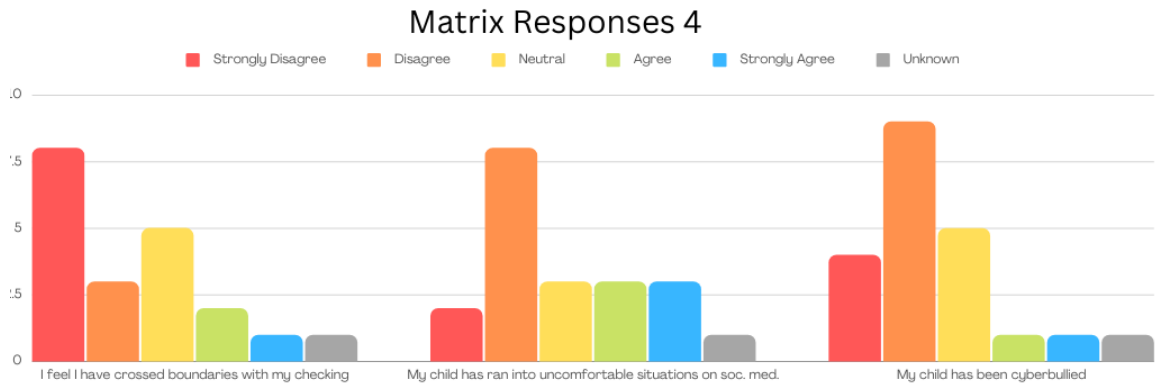


Figure 3.4 Matrix Responses 4

Because of the response from Figure 3.3 when asking if responses check their child’s private messages, the data for the statement: “I feel as though I have crossed boundaries with my checking,” may have inaccuracies. Parents may have chosen “strongly disagree” because they do not check their child’s private messages rather than what the statement suggested, which was that they felt they had crossed boundaries by doing said checking. Most respondents did not believe their child has run into uncomfortable situations on social media. Respondents generally felt stronger reporting that their child has not experienced cyberbullying, however there was also a large number of neutral responses.

Please answer the following as accurately as possible. If not applicable, leave blank.

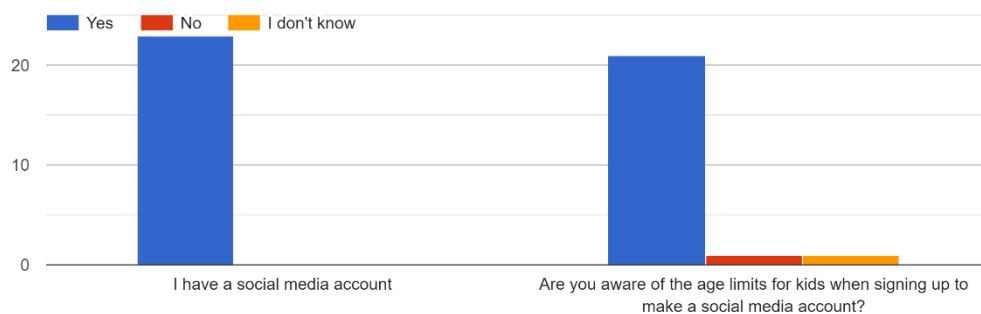


FIGURE 4. Respondent’s social media accounts and awareness (via Google Forms)

Figure 4 presented quite straightforward data, showing all respondents reported having a social media account, and most knowing about the age limits for social media sites.

6.5 Comments and questions

This was the last question on the survey (Appendix 2) that provided data for us to analyze. It was open-ended, optional, and phrased “Comments and/or questions.” There were only 6 responses to this question, which emphasizes the point made earlier that on online surveys, people often do not answer long-form or open-ended questions. With that said, the responses we did receive were informative and detailed. Attitudes ranged from worries about the dangers of social media to the positives and benefits of it. The connection between those was communication, or the lack of it.

One parent explained their system for dealing with social media, saying:

“I feel that it is important to have a level of trust, especially with teenagers. I won’t go into their private messages unless [there] is reason to believe there is true concern (cyber bullying). We do set rules. No using the phone in the middle of the night etc. If these rules are not respected, the phone will [be] stored outside their room during the night. Same with excessive phone use. If it becomes excessive, we will set limits. But if [they] manage fine, they can have free use of their phone. The more they can carry the responsibilities of a phone, the more they can have the privileges that come with it. But it makes no difference if they bought the phone themselves, the rules still apply. The most extreme measure (if guidelines/expectations are not respected) is that the phone is taken away for the day/several days/week. But rarely do we have to go [to] that extreme.”

Another parent compared social media to real life, emphasizing balance, saying:

“Social media brings all the things that normal life brings, good and bad. You need to learn to live with social media, learn to enjoy and learn great things from it, but also learn critical media approach and safety, just like in other parts of your life. We have a lot of fun times together discovering things [on] social media as a family, too. I believe that teaching good ethical values and behaviour such as kindness and empathy and right and wrong will go a long way in life and the same things apply to social media, too.”

A parent mentioned that all rules do not work for every child, saying:

“My teenagers have Asperger's so normal rules [don't] apply, I trust them and I know what they do on social media.”

Finally, one parent asked about how to set boundaries with social media and expressed worries:

“How to get a teen to agree to limit cell [phone and social media] use at least during nighttime and school classes? How to get a teen not to post personal stuff with real name? I [definitely] would like to check on [my teenager's social media], since lots of it [is] inappropriate, but teens are extremely good [at] blocking parents and having numerous "private" accounts. My teen blocks me from everything.”

They also highlighted the dangers of social media, saying:

“The amount of sexual and violent stuff [sent] to a teen by adults and teens trying to sell [vapes, drugs, and alcohol] is really disturbing. All the cyber bullying directed to my teen has been either sexual and/or racist.”

These comments show a firsthand parental perspective of social media and their teenage children, while providing the qualitative data we had originally hoped to gain from the workshop. In this way, despite the low number of responses to this particular question, we have a broader view of what parents think about social media.

6.6 Patterns and observations

One question we found telling was one asking if the respondent believed their year of birth or generation affected the way they view social media. We had a variety of responses, but there were patterns amongst those who disagreed: those who believed their

birth year and generation had not impacted how they view social media. First, all respondents with that opinion were 35+, while the age range for our entire dataset was 25-54. Most of that population reported that they do not check their children's social media accounts or private messages. They also were the group who reported not having talked about online safety with their children. This is an interesting combination and suggests that the older population surveyed took more of a hands-off approach regarding social media management.

Collaborative communication, while not being mentioned by name, was implied by parents who stressed the importance of open communication and trust between them and their teenagers, especially regarding social media usage. Those who talked about communication seemed to have a more balanced view of social media, not overwhelmingly positive or negative. The negative responses reported having little to no effective communication with their children about social media.

As far as screen time went, the most common number of hours per day reported was 2-4 hours. The only respondents who reported that their children use their phone for 8+ hours per day were from the oldest age group surveyed, which was ages 45-54. This may be because the older population had older children who were more independent or not restricted as much with screen time. To clarify, we had an option for 55+ on the question asking about the respondents' ages, but we had no one in that age group respond. Therefore, the oldest age group in all our data is the 45-54 age group. When asked for adjectives describing how social media impacted their children's lives, given a list of describing words and phrases, the only people who checked the option that social media had made their child's life "safer," were those who reported their child having screen time for 4 or fewer hours per day. No one who reported a higher number of hours marked "safer" as an option. Further, those who didn't mark any negative adjectives were also those who reported not checking their child's social media accounts regularly. This may suggest that not having knowledge about their child's social media usage causes a false sense of security.

Despite the background research which included surveyed teens who claimed they were online "almost constantly," according to Armitage (2015), the parents we surveyed had

mostly reported 2-4 hours being spent online by their children. This could be for several reasons, the most obvious being the difference in who was reporting. For example, parents may not be aware of how much time their child really spends online; teenagers may be more honest, while parents may be embarrassed and under-report. There is also a difference in that Armitage's surveys took place in the United States in 2015, while ours took place in Finland in 2022. While Orben (2020) could only find a small correlation between increased social media use and negative effects on teenage wellbeing, we noticed that the more hours of screen time per day reported by our respondents, the less likely they were to mark any positive adjectives about how social media had impacted the lives of their children.

When asked whether their child had run into an uncomfortable situation on social media, the only respondents who said yes were also part of the oldest age group surveyed: 45-54. This may be simply because their children are older and have had more time spent on social media, increasing their chances of an uncomfortable encounter. However, it is still noteworthy. Parents who reported their child being cyberbullied were also part of the 45-54 age group, and all had at least one child in secondary school at the time of the survey.

7 ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES AND INTEGRITY

This section discusses our work from ethical perspectives, describes the consent process, our research integrity, and our personal backgrounds to examine potential influences on our data and research. This is important to back up our work and provide an honest look at the context and influential factors. This is to supply the reader with the necessary information about the research process while making sure to provide the full context with any disclaimers.

7.1 Overview of thesis process

As has been mentioned previously, our thesis went through considerable changes throughout the process. What began as a project-based thesis aiming to host a workshop to hear parental perspectives and facilitate discussion about social media and their teenagers, evolved into research about said parental perspectives through a survey (Appendix 2) on an online platform. Originally, we had also planned to follow the workshop with a brainstorming session aimed at coming up with solutions and new methods for management of teenage social media usage.

Since that is not possible in the same way online, we decided to focus on what was achievable within our timeframe and with our resources, which was gathering data through a survey. This included gathering data and doing research with academic journals and books. Also, structuring relevant and non-invasive questions that would serve purpose to our thesis and research question.

As a team, we usually were either dividing the workload or going through each step together, while planning our next steps. Preparation was key in drafting this thesis, so as a team made sure to prepare diligently enough so we could execute it in a way that matched our vision. Thankfully, spreading the survey to different online websites and social media helped us to get responses which became the base of our thesis.

7.2 Consent process

When conducting any research with participants, one must practice ethical communication and ensure consent. This allows the data to be relied upon, and all involved are either positively or neutrally affected. The process began by ensuring our questions did not invade the respondents' privacy, while still getting the needed information. When advertising the survey (Appendix 3), the web link was accompanied by an explanation of our thesis, research focus, purpose, and ensuring that the data collected would only be used for our research purposes. The survey (Appendix 2) was easy to leave and could be quit at any time, with the data not being saved unless the survey was submitted.

As has also been mentioned in the results, the first question asking about the respondent's race or ethnicity was not directly influential on the results of our survey; that being specifically about the parental view of social media management, but rather helped us gather the demographics of our participants. Therefore, we felt comfortable leaving the question open-ended, as well as not required, to allow the respondents to answer in the way they wished to identify.

There was a question posed at the end of the survey asking if we could reach out with further questions, with a yes or no response. This was then followed by a question with a space to write the respondent's email address. This was not required, and it was clearly stated that it was up to the respondent's wishes. Most participants did check "no" and did not provide their email address. We did not end up contacting anyone who had provided their email address.

7.3 Research integrity

Research integrity is a big part of conducting and writing a thesis. Research integrity is showing and proving to the reader that the research was conducted in a manner that allows them to have trust and confidence that the right methods were used to gather data and that the findings were processed in an ethical manner (The University of Edinburgh.

Edinburgh Research Office. Research Integrity. What is research integrity? 2021). As a team we made sure that the methods used were appropriate and helped us process the information in an academic way and without putting the integrity of the authors on the line. All the sources used were reliable, from academic databases when possible, and were carefully researched. We also made sure the references were cited according to the guidelines, principles and framework provided by our university from the Finnish National Board of Research Integrity Tenk (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK. Advice and Materials. 2022).

From the beginning of our thesis process we planned to utilize a survey method, initially in person during our workshop, and later online and it provided the bulk of our data. This was to see how this topic fares in Finland, specifically with parents in the Helsinki Metropolitan area. A survey (Appendix 2) was the easiest to access from the respondents, i.e., parents' perspective, and having a direct web link online was the most straightforward way of reaching the respondents. It also prevented issues that may have resulted from using something newer and not familiar to everyone, like QR codes. We designed a simple survey with a simple layout, for ease of use. Since the survey saved and compiled the answers upon submission, we were able to analyze it in real time.

The survey was an important learning process for us since it required us to be as professional as possible while protecting the information of our survey takers. We had to change the questions in the survey (Appendix 2) multiple times, because of notes we got from our supervisor and working life partner. For example, the question asking for the respondents' city of residence was added after some responses had already been recorded. This resulted in some clarity issues when analyzing and presenting the results, and a more in-depth explanation of this has been written in the results section.

The survey was a mix of multiple choice, select-all-that-apply, open-ended, and matrix questions. For the multiple-choice questions, we gave quite detailed options to aid in analysis and categorization of the result. The matrix, elaborated on in the results section, allowed respondents to answer if they agreed or disagreed with certain statements, on a spectrum. We determined it was necessary to have differing question and answer layouts throughout the survey, to keep the respondent's attention and ensure more responses.

Some questions were quick, aided with choices, and others required more thought. However, open-ended questions which naturally require the most time and effort, were limited. The few we did include, at the end of the survey, and optional, provided us to hear directly from the participant.

One issue with our data is the low number of respondents to our survey. This was partly because of the limited amount of time and constantly shifting focus of our thesis. In total, we received 23 responses, although we had aimed for a lot more. Despite this, we have done a thorough analysis of what we do have, and believe it has value.

7.4 Personal background

Despite our personal background and experience as generation Z young people who grew up during the rise of social media giving us the interest in this topic, we had to exercise compartmentalization and not allowing our individual experiences or opinions to impact the research. It was and is our duty to conduct the research and present results as they are, while providing appropriate context. Since our research focused on the parental perspective, it was a new perspective for us to witness and was very informative. While we have a personal connection to our thesis topic, we tried to be subjective since our background and customs are quite different from the average Finnish family. So going into this with an open mind was key.

Since we had no experience in writing a thesis or working with something on this big scale, we had some doubts and insecurities which translated into our text and worked against us in a way. That is why being in frequent contact with our supervisor helped us immensely. With her detailed comments and constructive feedback, we were able to look at our research through a new lens and understand how to better present our findings.

8 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, we will be discussing whether we achieved our goals and objectives. This includes discussing what our thesis means in the wider scope, including self-evaluation and criticisms. We also discuss what professional skills and competencies were practiced and gained during the thesis process, and what we recommend for future action regarding this subject.

8.1 Achieving goals and objectives

The goal of our thesis was to see how parents especially in Finland see social media use of their teenagers, and how they manage it, if at all. This was also while providing additional information about teenage social media usage, the effects of it, and how to upkeep a healthy relationship with the consumption of it. Our goal and objectives, while they remained relatively similar, had to be adjusted after changing our thesis from project-based to research-based. The objectives have been reached in the way that was possible, through conducting a survey (Appendix 2), analyzing the parents' answers, and doing research of our own. We did not, however, have the chance to share information directly to parents about how to manage social media usage, as that would have been distributed during the discussion in the in-person workshop.

Our first objective was to find the proper information that suits our topic and the direction we wanted to steer our thesis in. This would have been information that we presented during the workshop with parents that was the original plan. The information ended up not being used for that purpose, but rather to inform our survey-making and data collection. We reached this objective by making it a priority to do extensive research before doing anything else and with the help of using different research analysis methods. This included re-familiarizing ourselves with the quantitative research methods that would be used for a literature review, but in our case, as background research.

The second objective we wanted to reach was to make an effective survey for distribution to get data directly from the source, which for our purposes was parents of teenagers in the Helsinki metropolitan area. We successfully reached this objective by drafting questions with an informed perspective and ethically. We made effective use of the SWOT analysis, which includes analyzing our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to our process. This was done through discussion between us. By identifying these, it allowed us to adapt to changes when they had to be made, choose the most effective resources and communication styles, and ensure we were meeting our goals. Before we changed our thesis from project- to research-based, we wanted the readers of our thesis to gain information from the workshop participants, but that is now from survey respondents.

8.2 Discussion

We hope that our thesis will provide some perspective and allow people to reflect on how they manage social media individually or within their families. This could go further by helping them make some necessary changes if they see harmful patterns that could evolve into something more serious. If those changes happen, compromises can be made between parents and their children, so that everyone can have a healthier relationship with social media.

The results of the survey and our research showed that parents who have discussions about the world of social media and its potential impacts and therefore, more open communication with their teenage children, had a more neutral view of social media. We can see this by the fact that the outliers on either side; viewing social media and screen time as either horrible and non-negotiable, or positive but without much in-depth knowledge about the effects: tended to have the least amount of communication with their child, including some monitoring of their social media usage. If they did not already have a negative view, it seemed to be replaced by ignorance. Having conversations about online safety and monitoring earlier on in childhood seemed to be a prevention method for many. This would be perhaps more effective than implementing rules later on, when teenagers tend to have an independent streak. If a foundation of healthy and collaborative

communication is not set earlier, it may feel like authoritative control when the parent tries to set boundaries. This may lead to the teenager feeling isolated and at more risk for cyberbullying or unsafe behavior online.

Kickstarting this conversation through our research was important to us since we see this as an increasingly relevant topic that needs to be reflected on and discussed by parents and professionals, with the insight of teenagers themselves. Even though we are not parents ourselves, we understand how difficult it can be when so many areas of a child's life demand attention and management. With the help of the survey questions and answers, parents in Finland can make their own judgments and make social media awareness an important part of modern-day parenting. The relationship between parents and teenagers can be improved by having open dialogue and using this thesis as base for deciding on rules or boundaries regarding social media.

8.3 Professional development

During the course of our thesis, we gained and honed many skillsets that will increase our professional competence in our future. First, we experienced project work, what that includes in terms of networking, working with a non-governmental organization, advertising, materials and budgeting, as well as plans falling through and failure. The latter tested us and meant our plans for our thesis had to evolve to what was plausible given the time and resources. Advertising was a significant part of our data gathering process, as we first had to advertise our workshop (Appendix 1) and later the online survey (Appendix 3). It was essentially what our work depended on, as without proper and effective advertising, we would not have any data to work with.

We also gained experience working with our target group, which was parents of teenagers in the Helsinki Metropolitan area. Despite not working in-person with said target group as originally planned with the workshop, we had contact through the survey with more individuals than would have been possible with the workshop alone. Part of working with a specific target group includes learning the most effective ways to communicate, and we

practiced that through the writing of our survey questions as well as the advertisements for the original workshop (Appendix 1) and later online survey (Appendix 3).

Social media played a big role in our work, both theoretically and practically. Since it was an essential part of our research, we had to find and study academic sources pertaining to it in order to conduct our survey in an informed way. This included ensuring each of our survey questions had a theoretical basis or reason. We also used social media for the advertising of our workshop and later online survey, with the latter being much more successful given that it had a direct link, and the survey (Appendix 2) could be completed in around 10 minutes. To reach our intended audience, we had to find community- and family-oriented groups on Facebook to share our survey link with (Appendix 3). These groups were not familiar to us at first, so we did a lot of exploring on social media to find the best places to share the survey. This was in addition to our NGO contacts, specifically Familia ry sharing our survey link with their service users and other NGOs. This came with plenty of non-responses as well. Social media is something we both are familiar with, having grown up as it was developing, but this gave us an academic and more holistic view of it. Finally, as we stressed in the introduction and background research, social media is only becoming more relevant, so having this experience will benefit us in our professional futures.

Adaptability was an important theme throughout our thesis process. We have mentioned switching our focus from project- to research-based work, but we also were in contact with dozens of organizations including NGOs, schools, both private and public, and other community contacts. We faced many setbacks ranging from finding no participants for our workshop to the impacts of the pandemic limiting in-person communication and had to persevere with what we could.

Our research skills were tested and honed during this process, as detailed in the research integrity section. To summarize, finding reputable information and citing correctly to back up our work helped inform our own research conduction, and we fine-tuned much of our process by referring to academic and reputable studies.

Working with a partner during this process really kept us on track, as we used our personal strengths to balance each other out, with Luul being the timekeeper, in track of deadlines and momentum, while Anna used her background in writing academic English research papers to organize and perfect the text written.

Where all these specific experiences intersect is where we see the most benefit to our professional futures. Anna plans on working with children and families in social work, and social media can play a big role in family dynamics as well as cause issues. The NGO we chose to work with, Familia ry, is also very relevant in this case. Luul plans on working with a variety of people including families, single parents and children so this will benefit her in facilitating conversation whether it be through consultations or discussions.

8.4 Future recommendations

We have, self-admittedly, been only a small part of what we believe needs to be a push for more academic and community-centered research into the impacts of social media, but also how parents can deal with it. We recommend more in-depth surveying, with more participants and perhaps on a larger scale, as well as implementing something similar to our original plan for the workshop. The workshop would allow parents to not only share their opinions but participate in a discussion and problem-solving session, and this would allow them to leave with more. This may include a changed perspective, techniques to use with their children, or simply arm them with information to share with others and use to guide their parenting.

We recommend more media to be distributed to the public in the Helsinki metropolitan area with factual information about social media, and opinions and directives from medical, social, and technological professionals. Importantly, this information should be available in English and other languages, as there tends to be a gap between information for native Finns and other language speakers. In order to bridge the gap, efforts have to be made to reach different communities. This will allow more people to have access to the potential service channels, and ultimately, build a closer community.

While all the technical recommendations are very important because they are backed by professionals, honest conversations within the family are also very much recommended. Creating that open space and healthy environment in the household allows for dialogue to be had about any potential issues or influences on the family. This helps build trust between both parties and can be a preventative measure as well.

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APPENDIX 1. Social Media Workshop Invitation Flyer



The flyer features a warm, yellow background with scattered orange and brown dots. At the top, the title 'Social Media' is written in a large, bold, brown font. Below it, the main question 'How much is too much, and can parents do anything about it?' is in a smaller, bold, brown font. To the right of this text is a small illustration of a smartphone with a message icon. Below the question, the text 'We want to hear your perspective!' is written in a bold, brown font. To the left of this text are several icons: a plus sign, a hashtag, a heart, and a play button. In the center, there is an illustration of a hand holding a smartphone, with a speech bubble coming from it. To the right of the hand is a video call interface showing three participants: a man with red hair, a woman with dark hair, and a woman with red hair. Below the video call interface are icons for a microphone, a phone, and a video camera. The text 'Join us for a workshop to discuss your opinions and methods of managing your teen's social media usage.' is written in a brown font. Below this text is a large, rounded rectangular box with a brown border and a light brown background. Inside the box, the date and time 'Saturday, April 9th 13:00 - 16:00' are written in a bold, brown font. To the right of the box are three star-like icons. Below the box, the address 'Lintulahdenkatu 10, 00500 Helsinki' is written in a brown font. At the bottom of the flyer, the text 'Hosted by Familia ry in collaboration with Diak AMK students' is written in a brown font.

Social Media

How much is too much, and can parents do anything about it?

We want to hear your perspective!

Join us for a workshop to discuss your opinions and methods of managing your teen's social media usage.

Saturday, April 9th
13:00 - 16:00

Lintulahdenkatu 10, 00500
Helsinki

Hosted by Familia ry in collaboration with
Diak AMK students

APPENDIX 2. Print Version of Online Survey

7/27/22, 12:15 PM

Social Media Questionnaire for Parents

Social Media Questionnaire for Parents

Supported by Familia ry

* Required

1. Where do you live?

Mark only one oval.

- Helsinki
- Vantaa
- Espoo
- Other

2. What is your race or ethnicity ?

3. How old are you ? *

Mark only one oval.

- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55+

4. How many children do you have ? *

7/27/22, 12:15 PM

Social Media Questionnaire for Parents

5. How many of them are teenagers? *

6. What grade are your children in currently ? *

Check all that apply.

- Primary school
- Secondary (Middle) school
- Upper secondary school
- Already an adult

7. If you have more than one child, do you see yourself paying more attention to the current teenager than when your adult child was a teenager years before?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Not relevant

8. In what age group was your child when they got their first cellphone ?

Mark only one oval.

- 4 or younger
- 5-8
- 9-12
- 13-16
- 17+
- Other: _____

7/27/22, 12:15 PM

Social Media Questionnaire for Parents

9. Child 2

Mark only one oval.

- 4 or younger
- 5-8
- 9-12
- 13-16
- 17+
- Other: _____

10. Do you allow your children to use social media ?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Other: _____

11. To your knowledge, how many hours a day does your child spend on their phone?

Mark only one oval.

- Less than 2 hours
- 2-4 hours
- 5-7 hours
- 8+

7/27/22, 12:15 PM

Social Media Questionnaire for Parents

12. Do you believe the year and generation you were born in affect your views or restrictions when it comes to social media?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No
 Other: _____

13. Check all social media platforms that you are aware of

Check all that apply.

- Instagram
 Facebook
 TikTok
 Snapchat
 Twitter
 Other: _____

7/27/22, 12:15 PM

Social Media Questionnaire for Parents

14. Please answer the following as accurately as possible. If not applicable, leave blank.

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Unknown
I keep track of my child's screen time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I check their social media account regularly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am aware of their online friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have read/learned about online safety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have talked to my children about online safety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel as though my teenager(s) spend excessive time their cell phone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel as though my teenager(s) spend excessive time on social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel my child is safe online	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am aware of who my child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1m6O5YpnD4LMcqW9YX6OM7qk1xBKLomuyjw-OGg4IKic/edit>

5/8

7/27/22, 12:15 PM

Social Media Questionnaire for Parents

**follows on
social media****I check my
child's
direct/private
messages**

**I feel as though I
have crossed
boundaries with
my checking**

**My child has ran
into
uncomfortable
situations on
social media**

**My child has
been
cyberbullied**

15. Please answer the following as accurately as possible. If not applicable, leave blank.

Mark only one oval per row.

	Yes	No	I don't know
I have a social media account	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you aware of the age limits for kids when signing up to make a social media account?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. I feel like social media has made the lives of our kids

Check all that apply.

- easier
- complicated
- safer
- dangerous
- more social
- more passive
- more open
- more isolated
- Other: _____

17. Do you know what your child uses social media for? If so, what? *

18. Comments and/or questions

7/27/22, 12:15 PM

Social Media Questionnaire for Parents

19. Can we reach out for further question if necessary? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

20. If yes, please provide an email or phone number.

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Google Forms

APPENDIX 3. Online invite and link to survey



A screenshot of a Facebook post by Anna Wuollet, dated May 20. The post is a text-based announcement for a survey. It includes a profile picture, the name 'Anna Wuollet', and the date 'May 20'. The text of the post explains that she is a Bachelor's student at Diakonia Ammattikorkeakoulu and is looking for parents of teenagers to complete a Google Form survey. The survey is anonymous and in English. She provides a link to the survey and asks for help in spreading the word. The post shows 5 likes, 3 comments, and 1 share. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'Like', 'Comment', and 'Share'.

 **Anna Wuollet**
May 20 · 

Remove if not allowed: I am a Bachelor's of Social Services student at Diakonia Ammattikorkeakoulu and together with my thesis partner we are looking for parents of teenagers to answer our survey. It is about social media usage, your opinions and views surrounding it, whether positive or negative.

Attached is a link to the Google Form survey, it is anonymous and no contact info needs to be given. It IS in English only unfortunately , as we are writing our thesis in English.

It would help us greatly if you could fill this out, and send to your friends if they are also parents of teenagers. Our target group is mainly the parents in the Helsinki Metropolitan area, but others are welcome as well.

Thank you!

<https://forms.gle/hfvRe1DJQ7KojQV9>

 5 3 Comments 1 Share

 Like  Comment  Share

APPENDIX 4. Original full plan

We were essentially developing a framework in which to gather qualitative data – being the perspectives and opinions of parents of teenagers – and then analyze said data. We wanted to get our research straight from the source. The immediate idea that came into mind was to host a workshop, as Familia ry has many service users and established groups. Therefore, we presented our workshop plan to our contact at Familia ry. We explained how we were going to execute the workshop, our aims, which included having 10-15 participants, and explained what we needed from them. The workshop participants, with our target group being parents of teenagers, would be gathered from various NGOs around Helsinki.

The form of the workshop we aimed to have was conversation-based and would include a chance to brainstorm possible solutions to the proposed issue. The issue being the possible dangers of social media and managing teenagers' use of it. First, we planned to implement a pre-survey to gauge the level of knowledge surrounding this topic. We aimed to present the importance of our topic through an introduction to ourselves and some basic background information about social media and the parental role. We would then facilitate a discussion to help understand the opinions and knowledge of the participants. Ideally this would be audio-recorded, but only with the express permission of the participants and a promise that this data would only be used for research purposes. A natural conclusion to the discussion, facilitated by us, would be a problem-solving session in which we could gather parental opinions on how to manage adolescent social media usage. This would emphasize the fact that at this point, our thesis plan was project- or implementation- based. Finally, we would conduct a post-workshop survey to evaluate whether the participants had learned new information or if any opinions had changed.

In order to ensure a successful turnout, we had to advertise. We decided on a digital flyer (Appendix 1), that could be printed if necessary. It was made to be eye-catching to keep the attention of potential participants. Although most participants would be from other NGOs, Familia ry offered to host the physical workshop. This ended up being somewhat unnecessary, as leading up to and on the actual day it became clear no participants, if any,

would make it. Frustrating as this was, we decided to move forward with a new date, and a better idea of how to advertise successfully.

Despite our efforts, reaching out to schools and other NGOs with new information, printable and digital flyers (Appendix 1), and having a bit more time, it again resulted in no participant registration. We still attended Familia ry on the intended day to make sure no one showed up – if they had, we would've hosted the workshop anyway – but no one did. We had had a conversation with our thesis supervisor prior to this as well, where we decided to focus on the survey (Appendix 2) distribution as a source of qualitative data instead of a workshop with a different kind of output.

This resulted with us changing our plans from conducting a project-based thesis to a research-based thesis. We then put our energy into modifying our survey to be most effective online, as this was different from our original plan of conducting the survey in person. As far as advertising and distributing the online survey, we had Familia ry share the link to our survey within their network. We appreciated Familia's willingness to work with us despite the changes in plans. Ultimately, most survey respondents came from the social media advertisements we had personally posted in neighborhood Facebook groups.