

Parenting in a Digital Era: A Narrative Review

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DATE

19th June 2025

FUNDER

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Rising concerns about the impact of digital technologies on **well-being**



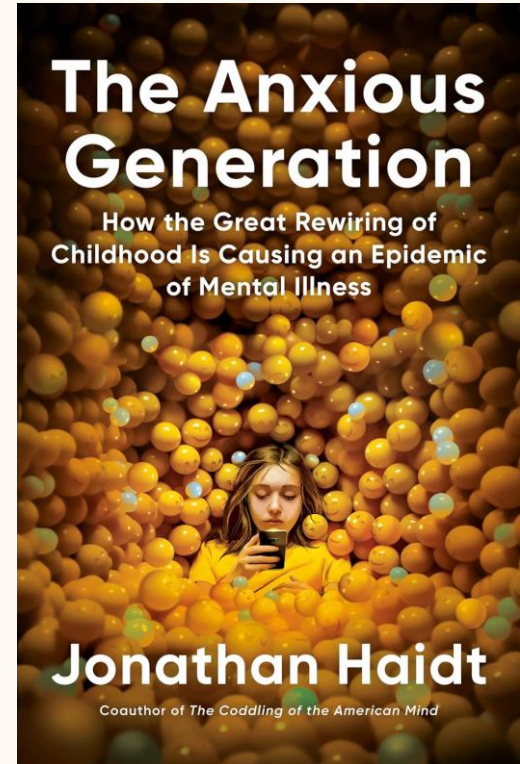
9-year-olds in Ireland:
Tablets
Smartphones
Gaming consoles

McNamara et al. (2021)

nature

The great rewiring: is social media really behind an epidemic of teenage mental illness?

Odgers (2024)



Global response to public concern about digital technologies



PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP

Minimum age for social media access to protect Australian kids

sky news

TikTok sued by 13 US states for 'harming young people's mental health'



Digital Services Act
2022



Coimisiún
na Meán

To develop effective policy, we need to understand...

1. Do digital devices negatively impact children's **well-being**?

2. What is the role of **parents** in protecting children online?

Narrative Literature Review



Academic literature

Grey literature

Non-academic literature

} **297**
articles

The effect of digital technology on children's well-being



The impact of online social networking on adolescent psychological well-being (WB): a population-level analysis of Korean school-aged children

Harris Hyun-soo Kim

Young Adolescents' Digital Technology Use and Mental Health Symptoms: Little Evidence of Longitudinal or Daily Linkages

Michaeline Jensen, Ph.D.¹, Madeleine George, Ph.D.², Michael Russell, Ph.D.³, Candice Odgers, Ph.D.^{4,5}

Does time spent using social media impact mental health?: An eight year longitudinal study

Sarah M. Coyne  , Adam A. Rogers, Jessica D. Zurcher, Laura Stockdale, McCall Booth

Associations between screen time and lower psychological well-being among children and adolescents: Evidence from a population-based study

Jean M. Twenge^a,

The Longitudinal Association Between Social-Media Use and Depressive Symptoms Among Adolescents and Young Adults: An Empirical Reply to Twenge et al. (2018)

Taylor Heffer¹, Marie Good², Owen Daly¹, Elliott MacDonell¹, and Tessa Williams¹

Review

Social media use and its impact on adolescent mental health: An umbrella review of the evidence

Patti M. Valkenburg¹, Adrian Meier² and Ine Beyens¹

The impact of digital technology use on adolescent well-being

Tobias Dienlin, PhD; Niklas Johannes, PhD

Are Social Media Ruining Our Lives? A Review of Meta-Analytic Evidence

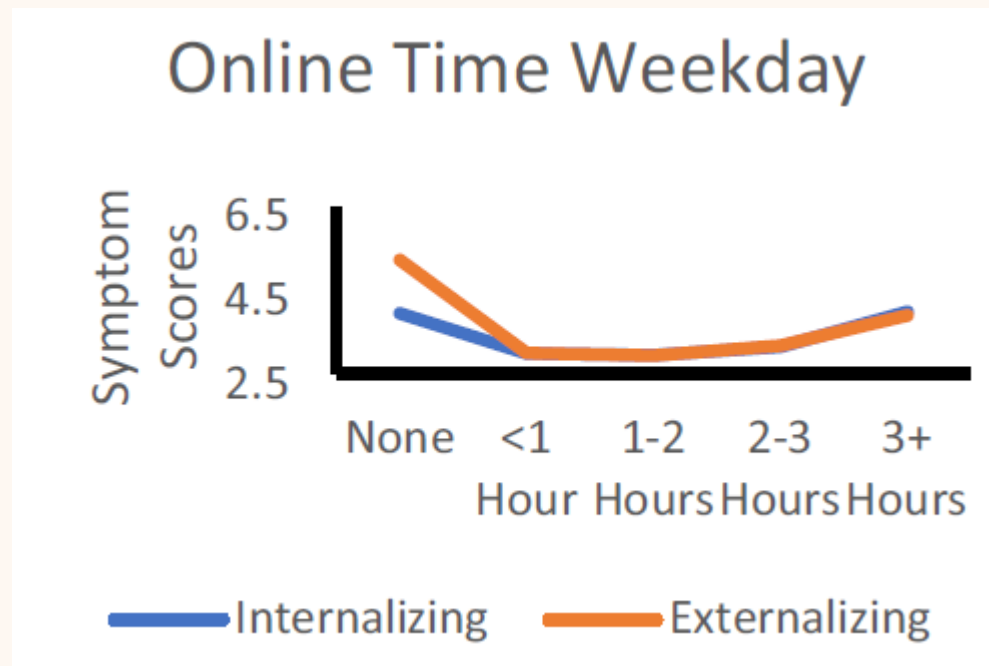
Markus Appel  , Caroline Marker, and Timo Gnams  [View all authors and affiliations](#)

Annual Research Review: Adolescent mental health in the digital age: facts, fears, and future directions

Candice L. Odgers,¹  and Michaeline R. Jensen² 

The effect of digital technology on children's well-being is **NOT** clear-cut

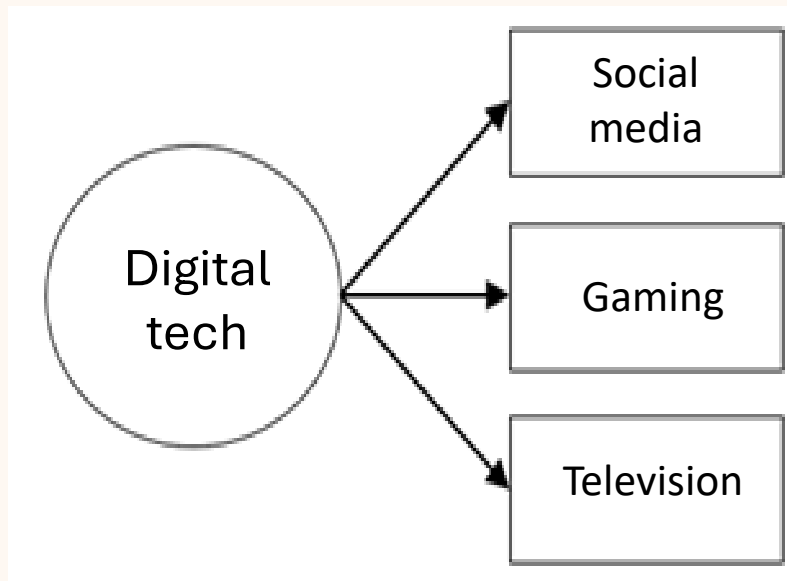
Non-linear relationship



Brannigan et al. (2023)

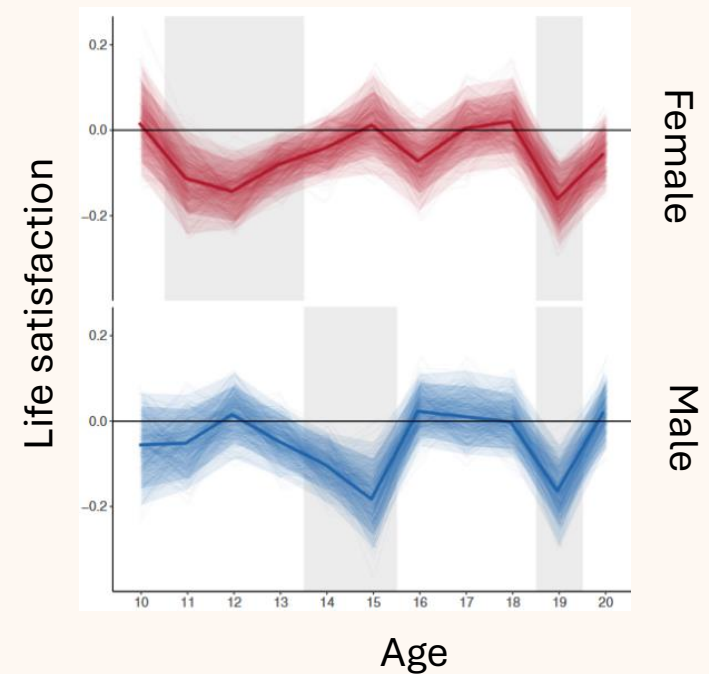
The effect of digital technology on children's well-being is **NOT** clear-cut

Type of activity



Twenge et al. (2022)

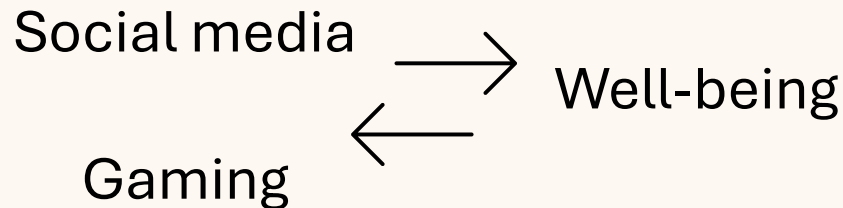
Developmental stage



Orben et al. (2022)

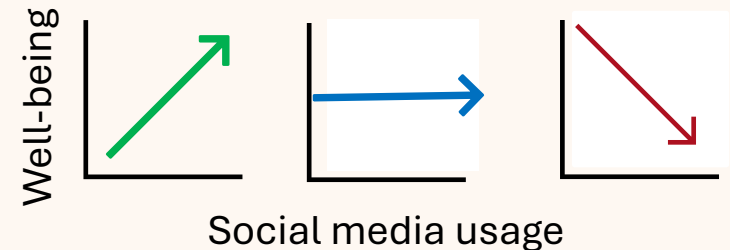
The effect of digital technology on children's well-being is **NOT** clear-cut

Bi-directional



Orben et al. (2022)
Vasconcellos et al. (2025)

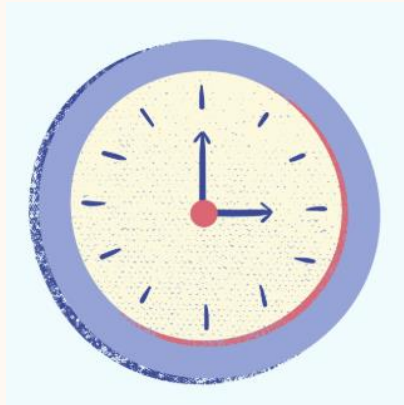
Within-person variability



Beyens et al. (2022)

Future research

Digital tech



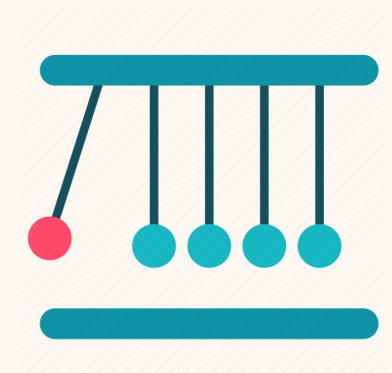
Ernala et al. (2020);
Andrews et al. (2015)

Well-being



Kross et al. (2021);
Dienlin et al. (2019)

Causation



Przyblyski et al. (2021);
Davis & Goldfield (2025)

How do digital technologies cause harm?

- The design of digital platforms
- Specific online safety risks

The **choice architecture** of digital platforms

Push to refresh

Infinite scrolling

Push notifications

Unpredictable rewards

Time pressure

Recommender
systems

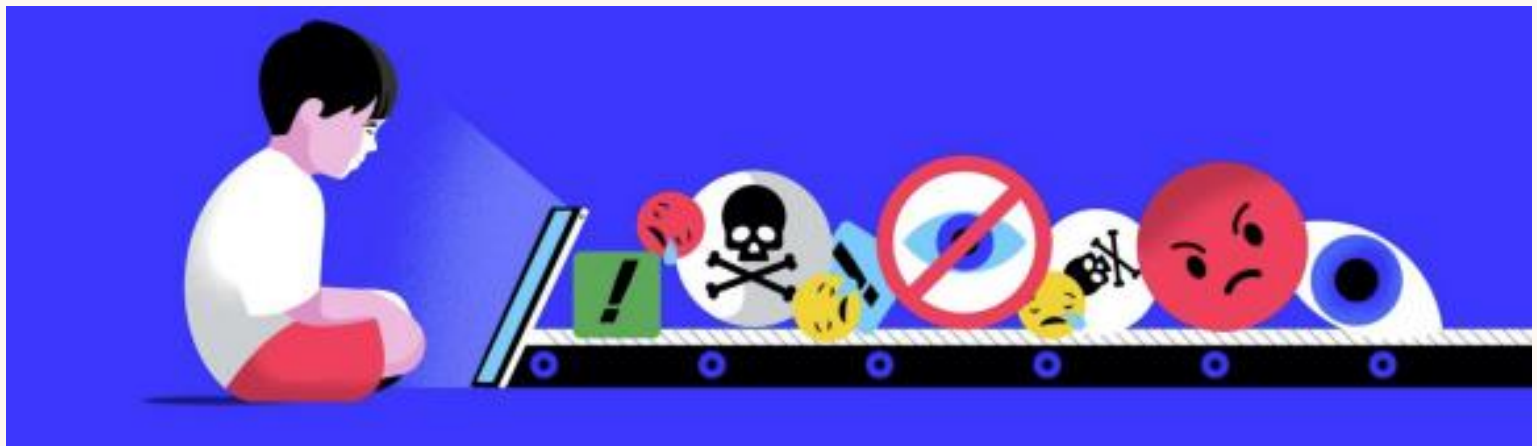
Social pressure



Children are exposed to various **online safety risks**

1. Content

- Illegal & harmful (e.g., violent, sexual, ...)
- Image-based
- Fake news

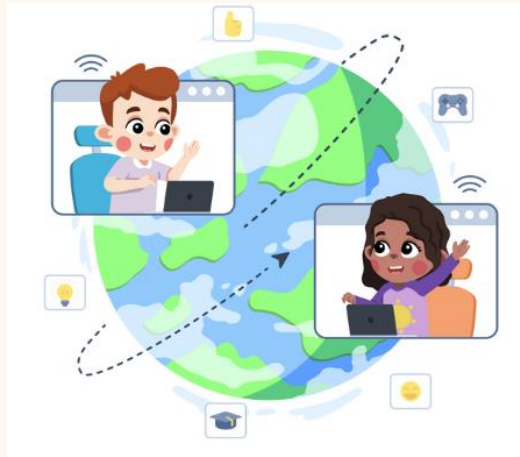


Livingstone & Stoilova (2021)

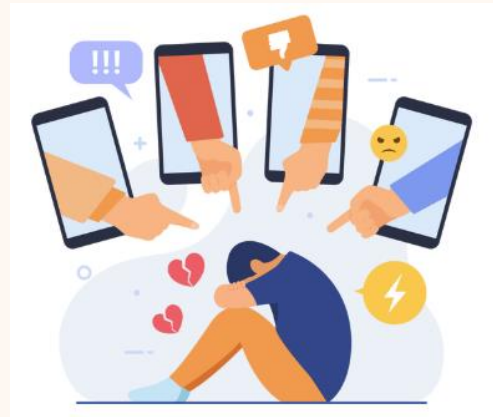
Image source: 5Rights Foundation

Children are exposed to various **online safety risks**

2. Contact



3. Conduct



4. Contract



Livingstone & Stoilova (2021)

What can **parents** do?

Parental **mediation** strategies

- Screen time limits
- Technical controls



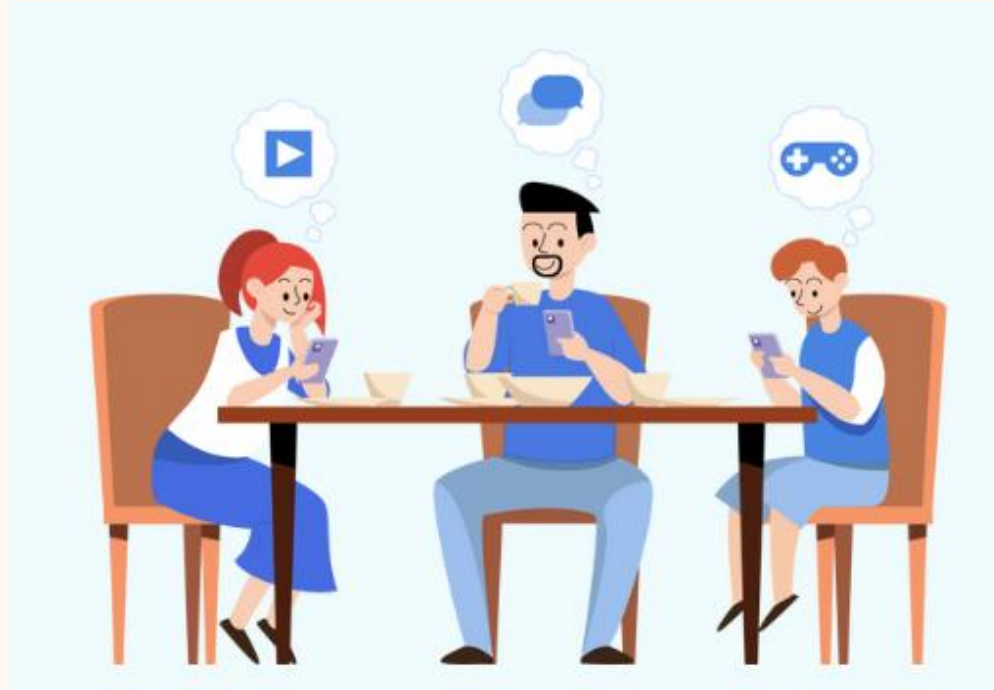
Active discussion-based mediation (with rules)



Knowledge
Safety
Maturity
Resilience

Chen & Chng (2016); Koch et al. (2024);
Shin & Ismail (2014); Geržičáková et al. (2023); Cerna et al. (2016)

Parents' **own behaviour** can be more important than the rules they set



Intergenerational screen time

Domoff et al. (2012); Lauricella et al. (2015);
Matthes et al. (2021); Chemnad et al. (2023)

Liu et al. (2012)

Parents' device usage can disrupt the parent-child relationship



Increased risks to physical and emotional health

Hiniker et al., 2015; Lemish et al., 2020; Radesky et al., 2014; Vanden Abeele et al., 2020; Wickens et al., 2021

‘Phone snubbing’ by parents → problematic internet usage for children

Geng et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2024; Niu et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2022

Support available to parents

There is a need for research into parenting interventions that are...

Effective

Scalable

Accessible

...But parents cannot safeguard children alone

Public health interventions:

Legal and regulatory frameworks

Bans



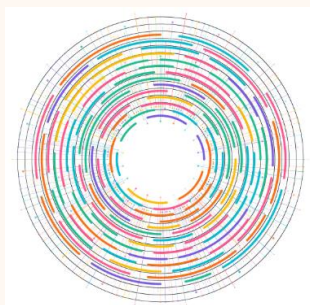
Standardised reporting



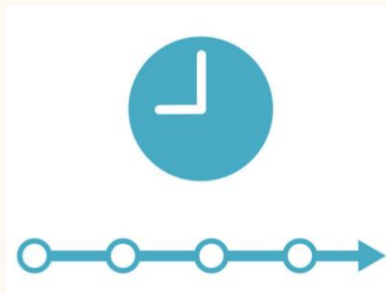
Age verification



Data access



‘Child Rights by Design’



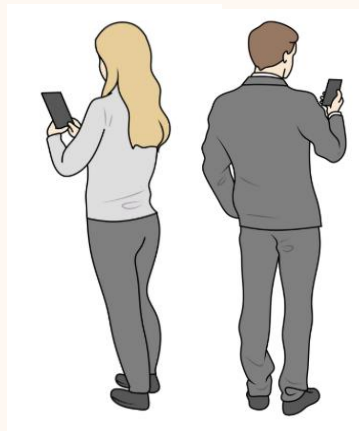
Mystery shopping



Conclusions



Child face
online **risks**



Parents can consider
mediation strategies



Online dangers
are **systemic**

Promoting children's safe, balanced digital use requires
collective action across individuals, families, and society.

Thank your listening!

Questions?

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