“People think it’s a harmless joke”: young people’s understanding of the impact of technology, digital vulnerability and cyberbullying in the United Kingdom

# Details

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## Sample

29 children 11- to 15-year-old

# Abstract

Young people’s technology use has increased exponentially over the
last few years. To gain a deeper understanding of young peoples’
experiences of digital technology and cyberbullying, four focus
groups were conducted with 29 11- to 15-year-olds recruited from
two schools. Interpretative phenomenological analysis revealed
three themes: impact of technology, vulnerability and cyberbullying.
Technology was seen as a facilitator and a mechanism for maintaining
social interactions. However, participants reported experiencing a
conflict between the need to be sociable and the desire to maintain
privacy. Cyberbullying was regarded as the actions of an anonymous
coward who sought to disrupt social networks and acts should be
distinguished from banter.

# Outcome

11-15 year olds report feeling vulnerable as SNS requires relinquishing personal information to fully engage in these spaces. However, some felt that this default expectation of disclosure engendered feelings of their privacy violation. It also meant they wished for greater control over their privacy settings. Participants discussed changing privacy settings but were also aware of the interactional nature- as despite their own privacy settings, others with less stringent settings can make them vulnerable. They also discussed the tension between needing to maintain privacy and yet engage in social media spaces. Despite awareness of potential risks, they continued to use social media as risks were perceived to be low and happening to “other” people. If, however, they did encounter a risk, it would shift how they and used and engaged with platforms.
There was awareness of the permanence and longevity of the Internet and their data use, and its potential for future impact.