“You take fifty photos, delete forty nine and use one”: A qualitative study of adolescent image-sharing practices on social media

# Details

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35 children aged 13-17 years recruited from three schools in North Yorkshire, UK, who
were taking part in psychology taster days at a local university.

# Abstract

There has been an exponential increase in the number of images created, shared and viewed across
social media. Using exploratory qualitative methodology, the present research seeks to understand
image-sharing on social media amongst adolescents; an important social media user group. Thirty five
adolescents (Age M = 14.75; SD = 1.34; Female N = 21) from the UK, participated in semi-structured
focus groups. Recordings from focus groups were transcribed verbatim and analysed using inductive
thematic analysis. Three themes were derived from the data: (1) Presenting and Viewing Socially and
Physically Attractive Selves, (2) Maintaining Offline Relationships, and (3) The Importance of Visible
Quantifiable Feedback. These themes encapsulate the diversity and complexity of adolescent imagesharing practices, which must be considered within the context of adolescent identity and relational
development, and peer-group/cultural norms. The implications of these findings are discussed within.

# Outcome

“Throughout the focus groups, image-sharing was constructed as important to most adolescents, who invested substantial time and effort in creating, sharing and viewing such social media images. Through the process of thematic analysis, three overlapping themes were developed that encapsulate the diverse and pluralistic nature of adolescent image-sharing practices, the motivations underpinning them, and the function image-sharing serves within the broader context of adolescent identity and social development” (Bell, 2019: 68).