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Psychology

Higher level

Paper 3

7 May 2026

Zone A morning | **Zone B** morning | **Zone C** morning

1 hour

Instructions to students

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Read the passage carefully and then answer all the questions.
- The maximum mark for this examination paper is **[24 marks]**.

The stimulus material below describes a study in which the aim was to understand young people's use of strategies to cope with the negative impact of using social media.

Most of the previous research on social media use has focused on users' psychological well-being. Some studies have reported on the positive effects on people's well-being. Other studies have found that users can experience a number of negative effects, such as cyberbullying, body image issues and social isolation. However, there has been limited research into the ways in which social media users manage or reduce possible harm from the negative effects of social media use.

The researchers in this study focused on the use of harm reduction strategies by young people. The participants were aged between 15 and 24 years, and the sample included a similar number of females and males. They all lived in the same Asian country and represented five different ethnic groups. The researchers began by asking two young people that they already knew if they would like to take part. After that, all participants were asked to recruit other 15–24-year-olds until the desired sample size of 100 was reached.

All participants were fully informed about the aims of the research and gave written consent before taking part. Participants were not required to provide any personal information that could identify them, such as their names or phone numbers. They were also given details about how their data would be safely stored until it was time for it to be destroyed.

Data for the study was collected by the lead researcher. She used online video calls to talk to each participant one at a time. The method used was a combination of pre-planned open questions with follow-up questions that allowed for further exploration of any answers of interest. The lead researcher was trained and experienced in carrying out this type of research.

The audio from the video calls was recorded, then transcribed and analysed. The lead researcher identified general patterns for the ways that participants manage or reduce possible harm. After detailed discussions with the full research team, a high level of agreement was reached on how these general patterns could be organized into themes.

The researchers agreed on the following themes for harm reduction strategies used by young people:

- Filtering content and being selective of who they follow
- Taking breaks and managing time spent on social media
- Changing unrealistic expectations and unhelpful thinking patterns

The participants were given an opportunity to check the researchers' conclusions before the report was published.

Answer **all** of the following three questions, referring to the stimulus material in your answers. Marks will be awarded for demonstration of knowledge and understanding of research methodology.

1. (a) Identify the research method used and outline **two** characteristics of the method. [3]
 (b) Describe the sampling method used in the study. [3]
 (c) Suggest **one** alternative **or one** additional research method that could be used to investigate the aim of the original study, giving **one** reason for your choice. [3]
 2. Describe the ethical considerations that were applied in the study and explain if further ethical considerations could be applied. [6]
 3. Discuss how the researchers could ensure that the results of the study are credible. [9]
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References:

Samari, E., Chang, S., Seow, E., Chua, Y. C., Subramaniam, M., van Dam, R. M., Luo, N., Verma, S. and Vaingankar, J. A., 2022. A qualitative study on negative experiences of social media use and harm reduction strategies among youths in a multi-ethnic Asian society. *PLoS ONE* [e-journal] 17(11). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0277928>. Source adapted.