

Empowering Rangatahi: Amplifying Youth Voices on Smartphone and Social Media Use in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract : The uptick in social media users during the COVID-19 lockdowns has accelerated concerns about cellphone addiction, cyberbullying, and exposure to harmful content, particularly mis- and disinformation and extremist content. The validity of these concerns is synthesized for media technologists to expose the strategies behind social media and search platform technology and explain why they restrict their children from using it. Banning cell phones in schools, increasing age limits on social media accounts, and putting warning labels on social media are some of the solutions proposed to protect young people from smartphones and social media. Largely missing from these conversations are the voices of young people (rangatahi). Instead, their lived experiences are being told and managed by adults. This presentation will outline my research that amplified the voices and lived experiences of young people by positioning them as experts. Using The Social Dilemma as a discussion prompt, the focus groups of rangatahi in Aotearoa, New Zealand, provide a space for young people to articulate their own lived experiences and respond to the dominant narratives on their generation's use of smartphones and social media.

Keywords : social media, smart phones, young people, social dilemma

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