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**The influence of social media on transgressive behaviour among
young people in Nottingham, United Kingdom.**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of
Leeds Beckett University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

December 2024

By

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis titled “**The influence of social media on transgressive behaviour among young people in Nottingham, United Kingdom**” is a presentation of original work, carried out by me, the sole author. This work has not been submitted or presented for an award at this University, or any other institution previously. All sources referred to in this thesis are acknowledged as references.

Hannah Fabiyi

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I would first like to thank the Almighty God for giving me the strength and grace to begin and complete this study.

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Abbreviations

CJS	Criminal Justice System
CMC	Computer-mediated communication
FoMO	Fear of Missing Out
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NYC	(Nottinghamshire Youth Commission
ONS	Office for National Statistics
SIT	Social Identity Theory
SLT	Social Learning Theory
SNS	Social Networking Sites
TA	Thematic Analysis
VRU	Violence Reduction Unit

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Abstract

As previous research suggests, young people continue to use the digital environment to explore important life experiences. With a lack of support from the immediate offline environment, research indicates that young people may try to gain recognition, acceptance and a sense of belonging from engagement with the online environment. As the offline space has always played a vital role in the history and life span of peer influence, the online environment continues to provide young people with virtual space to explore and construct behaviours. Although it has been acknowledged that young people are influenced by their immediate environments, there is a dearth of literature exploring social media use, features and affordance and its relationship with transgressive behaviour among young people in Nottingham.

Consequently, the gap this research sought to address is whether exposure to or engagement with social media platforms and activities influences online and offline transgressive behaviour amongst young people in Nottingham. To examine, this study investigates the influence of aggressive peer interaction, behavioural construction and use of social media platforms among young people in Nottingham. Using a multiple qualitative method and a thematic analysis approach, this study presents the findings of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with young people aged 18-25 years in Nottingham.

Findings from this study suggest that social media features such as comments, tags, location settings, video streaming and image and video sharing heighten threats on SNS, thereby increasing the likelihood of perpetrating transgressive behaviour offline. Findings also suggest that young people can exercise self-control and make rational choices regardless of their existing ability to construct Identity and learn the methods and motives to become offenders from their online and offline environment. Findings further indicate that the fear of missing out and the fear of social exclusion impacts and determines young people's continuous use of social media and their response to transgressive behaviour among peers online and offline.

Finally, this study concludes that critical consideration should be given to the evolving and continuous use of SNS and how harmful materials and activities online can shape and influence transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

The digital media in general and social media in particular have become central to the lives of young people and due to its rapid growth, it has become increasingly difficult for families, guardians, law enforcement, and other professionals to keep pace (Densley, 2020). As the Internet tends to provide an environment that is less monitored than most offline areas of young people's lives, there is a growing concern about the influence of this space on transgressive behaviours among young people in the UK (Boyd, 2013; Patton et al., 2014). According to Koziellecki (1987), the phrase to transgress can be explained in two ways, on one hand, it means to break a law or violate a norm; and in social psychology, the term means 'to go beyond a boundary' (Madsen, 2014). Both meanings are central to this study as 'transgressive behaviours' act as an umbrella term, encompassing harassment, bullying, suicide, cyber-bullying, discrimination, stalking, taunting, trolling and violence in all forms. As a result, behaviours and actions that violate a moral law, rule of behaviour or challenge socially accepted standards of behaviours are referred to as transgressive behaviours in this study.

In its long history, the empirical study of violence and crime committed by offenders has been a central focus in criminology. Although the emergence of a common view exists among criminologists and policymakers that the Internet may have some influence on criminality in general. Despite this, there is little agreement as to the role the Internet, more specifically social media plays in shaping criminality and transgressive behaviours among young people (Goldsmith and Wall, 2022; Irwin-Rogers and Pinkney, 2017; Wall, 2005). Descriptive analysis of the nature of criminal offending has led to important discoveries about the age, gender, race, and proportion of individuals who offend, the volume of their offending, their participation within and across several types of offending, patterns of recidivism and the cessation of offending (Kazemian, 2021). For this reason, various positivist criminology studies have long shown that the influence of criminal behaviour among young people can be conditioned by psychological, biological, economic, and social characteristics (Brookes, 2021; Ling et al., 2019). This study notes that social conditioning also includes the ever-evolving online and digital media environment.

Following this, the criminal justice system (CJS) in recent years, has continued to develop efforts to understand the causes of these transgressive behaviours amongst young people

and work towards its prevention. Although there is a growing literature on social, biological, and psychological explanations of transgressive behaviours, much of its studies regarding violent and offending behaviours of young people which have emerged from academic research, are limited in scope by their sample composition, data source, observation period (Piquero et al., 2012) and evolving online and digital environment.

According to Statista (2023), there has been a steady increase and growth among social media users, with more than five billion Internet users worldwide, which accounts for 65.7% of the global population. Of this total, 4.95 billion or 61.4% of the global population were social media users (Zhou, 2023). In recent years, the nature of young people's development has evolved majorly due to the rapid increase of information and communications technology. Evolving Internet or social networking platforms have been increasingly suspected in a growing number of unlawful activities and transgressive behaviours, ranging from gang violence to assisted suicide, sex offences and even homicide (Yardley and Wilson, 2015; Whittaker et al., 2020). There have also been several cases involving groups of young people in various parts of the UK taunting each other on the Internet through music videos and social media activities, which sometimes develops into physical and violent revenge and retaliations offline (Densley, 2020). Examples include reports of the London revenge gang attack on 17-year-old Tanesha Melbourne in 2018 and 14-year-old Jaden Moodie from Nottingham who was killed after he appeared in a Snapchat video with an imitation weapon in 2017.

In Nottinghamshire, of all its larger towns and cities, Nottingham city has an overall crime rate of 114 crimes per 1,000 people in 2021, and 425.1 crimes per 1,000 people in 2022, most of which were made up of anti-social behaviour, violence, and sexual offences. There have been cases of young people taking their own lives due to harassment and cyberbullying on the Internet (Apollo, 2007; Halligan, 2006), an occurrence termed cyberbullicide (which refers to suicide deaths directly or indirectly influenced by experiences with online aggression) (Hinduja and Patchin, 2010). As such, Pinkney and Robinson-Edwards (2018) believe that tackling this increase in crime among young people is now more complex because current research argues that criminals including street gang rivalries, may have advanced to digital media platforms. Thus, where such is the case, affordances and features of social media could be used to enable and precipitate the communication of transgressive intentions and the deliberate harming of others (Goldsmith and Wall, 2022).

While these incidents do not necessarily represent the norm in illicit and offensive activities, their seriousness begs a deeper inquiry and understanding into the influence of the online environment among young people. Consequently, this study addresses the gap in the literature by focusing on digital platforms, expanding what is recognised about the relationship between transgressive behaviours and social media by also exploring any progression to physical aggression and violence among young people in Nottingham, UK.

1.2 Digital social media

Social Networking Sites (SNS) have significantly changed since their origination during the mid-1990s (Morselli and Décary-Héту, 2013). The emergence and growth of the digital media environment have also significantly transformed people's ability to communicate and gain access to immediate information and connections that span cities and continents (Defede et al., 2021; Goldsmith and Wall, 2022; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). According to the Internet World Stats (2024), there are 8 billion people in the world, with at least 5.3 billion Internet users worldwide, which amounts to 65.7% of the world's population (Internet Usage and World Population Statistics estimates are for June 30, 2022). Of this total, 4.95 billion, or 61.4% of the world's population, were social media users. This undoubtedly means social media platforms in numerous ways are used by a high percentage of people in the world. In the United States of America, the existence of the Internet is a normal part of everyday life, with three-quarters of the population online, (Lenhart, 2015), and similar trends are also noticeable in some developed and developing economies (Brewer et al., 2018). A recent report by Pew Research Centre (2021) showed that 71% of American adults under 30 years of age majorly used Instagram, with 65% using Snapchat and 55% using TikTok.

According to Khalaf et al. (2023), individuals are naturally social species that depend on the mutual support and community of others to develop and progress in life. Thus, as human beings are social creatures by nature (Baumeister and Leary, 2017), social media very much taps into this primary need with search engines like Google and other social networking platforms granting users quick access to information thereby promoting digital connectedness (Brewer et al., 2018; Pyrooz et al., 2013; Winstone et al., 2021). As Stephens-Davidowitz (2017, pp. 4-5) notes, "people sometimes don't so much query Google as confide in it . . . people tell the giant search engine things that they may not tell anyone else". This indicates the ease and convenience with which many Internet users can turn to the Google search

engine for anything and everything, almost making it an irresistible relationship between the user and the platform (Goldsmith and Wall, 2022).

1.2.1 Defining Social Networking Sites

In broad terms, Social Networking involves social relations amongst people who have and desire some type of relationship or association with others (Light, 2014; Winstone et al., 2021). Ellison and Boyd (2013) described SNS as:

“a networked communication platform in which participants: (1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-provided data; construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others, and (3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site” (pp.152).

This definition by Ellison and Boyd (2013), is primarily based on the use of the term ‘network’ rather than ‘networking’ because the authors argue that SNS are not concerned with the commencement of new connections often between strangers, but rather that they enable users to express and showcase their existing social networks. While networking is possible on these sites, both authors argue that it is not the main focus for many of them, nor is it what distinguishes them from other forms of online communication (Ellison and Boyd, 2007; 2013; Light, 2014). Boyd and Ellison (2007) also point out that these emerging SNS have several similar features and some significant differences. In response, Beer (2008) criticised this definition asserting its general scope and minimal analytical value. This is because, the definition involves too many matters and it is intended to cover a high percentage of the analytical work, and therefore makes the analysis and comparisons of these various SNS more complex. Again, this definition according to Beer (2008), could make the online environment more difficult to comprehend and navigate, as the number and range of SNS in the online environment continues to expand.

Social media and SNS have been defined in several other ways. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (pp. 61). According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), social media is an interactive platform, which encourages individuals, groups and communities in developing, creating, sharing and

interacting with online content and materials through their mobile devices or other online platforms. Essentially, social media refers to specific social platforms, where people communicate and interact with one another, such as discussion forums, blogs, and multi-media sites (Bradley et al., 2019). Some of the most popular platforms include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, Snapchat, and YouTube (See Glossary of terms for a brief description of these platforms). Researchers have noted that the affordance of the Internet has features just like all other information technology tools available that can be used positively or negatively (Anderson and Rainie, 2018; Goldsmith and Wall, 2022; Turan et al., 2011). With the less regulations and freedom on SNS, it can be argued that these platforms may provide opportunities for both positive (e.g., maintaining friendships, forming new relationships, connecting with others) and negative (e.g., abuse, harassment, threats, and violence of other users) activities (Wood et al., 2023).

1.2.2 Utilising Social Networking Sites and their technological benefit

Since their development and inception, SNS have attracted millions of users, many of whom have incorporated these SNS into their daily lives (Defede et al., 2021; Ellison and Boyd, 2013). At the time of writing this thesis, there are numerous SNS, offering various technological advantages and supporting a diverse and extensive range of user experience. Most of these SNS support the maintenance of already existing offline social networks among its users, but others encourage individuals to connect and interact based on shared similar interests, culture, political views, or activities (Boyd and Ellison, 2007; Defede et al., 2021). As such, they can be described as virtual communities, where individuals can create personalised private and public profiles, interact with previously established offline relations, and connect with other people based on shared similar interests (Can and Naya, 2016). Scholars from diverse fields have examined SNS to understand the practices, implications, culture, influence as well as users' engagement with them. As such, the multiple aspects, features, affordances, and description of SNS and the user's extended participation acknowledges our deepest needs to be seen as social beings (Baumeister and Leary, 2017; Goffman, 1959), which in turn appeals to the rapid increase in social media use among young people.

Digital media and social networking platforms are available and accessible in almost any community and can be regarded as a great resource for anybody, including children, young people, and adults. Thus, for every year that passes by, SNS continues to witness a surge in number and popularity (Can and Kaya, 2016). Especially during the COVID-19 lockdown 2020

- 2021, social networks encouraged and strengthened communication with peers and the continuity of activities such as school and work programs (Bozzola et al., 2022). As of February 2022, the total number of social media users in the UK had reached over 57.6 million, which translates to a social media penetration of 84.3% of the UK's population. Between 2010 and 2020, 88% of young people aged 16-24 years had launched a social media profile in the UK on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, WhatsApp and TikTok. Statistics like this are now familiar and despite the digital gap (Sanders and Scanlon, 2021) that still exists in the world today, the dominance and growth of the Internet is here to remain and is still expanding (Miller, 2011; Statista, 2022). As a result, with its constantly evolving space, social media platforms now serve as a crucial environment upon which narratives and behaviours are constructed, shared, reflected upon, and potentially revised. In other words, a large part of some young people's social, emotional, and psychological development today, may be occurring while on the Internet (McDool et al., 2020; Undiyaundeye, 2014).

Accordingly, this shift in young people's social media use is just one illustration of how the digital media landscape has grown over the years for young people (Anderson and Jiang, 2018). In other words, with consistent and ongoing concerns about youth population and transgressive behaviour (see Section 1.3), a high percentage of young people having access to smartphones and online social media platforms with unprecedented freedom, issues concerning the safety, influence and offending of young people have equally increased (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). It is possible that when young people offend generally, they will most likely have been influenced by a range of factors and according to Branley and Covey (2017), many of these young people have possibly been subjected to abuse, grown up in local authority care, been excluded from school and bullied, some others are in the constant need of validation from close knit of peers and social media provides them with the environment to connect with others regardless of the risks and circumstances surrounding them. As such, these young people could be subject to the social pressure to engage or not in positive and/or negative social media practices that may find expression offline (Elsaesser et al., 2021; Goldsmith and Wall, 2022).

In his study of hate crime, Williams et al. (2020) argues that theoretically, it is possible that hate speech posted on social media may influence the frequency of offline hate crime. On the other hand, it was further argued that it is more likely that other contributing community factors as well as the freedom and less regulation enjoyed on social media platforms act as part of

the mechanism in estimating these offline transgressive behaviours (Brady et al., 2021). Thus, as much as there could be other contributing community factors which may influence these offline transgressive behaviours, it is important to continue to explore the role of social media, peer relation influence, and the possible relationship with transgressive behaviour among young people.

It is particularly noteworthy that features on SNS provides its users with affordances sometimes capable of responding to their needs (Goldsmith and Wall, 2022). According to Prieto Curiel et al. (2020), millions (or perhaps even billions) of posts and activities on social media have been used to detect social media activism (Xu et al., 2014), to assist emergency responders (Avvenuti et al., 2018), to analyse the spread of a disease (Lampos and Cristianini, 2012), to detect the role of different users in the network and their behaviour (Cresci et al., 2020), to quantify media coverage (Prieto Curiel et al., 2019), to provide indications for tourists (Barchiesi et al., 2015; Muntean et al., 2015), to detect road traffic (D'Andrea et al., 2015), access to political information (Himmelboim et al., 2013) and political participation (Ausserhofer and Maireder, 2013), perception on social issues such as migration flows (Coletto, 2017), and even to detect the popularity of different types of food (Amato et al., 2017) and to construct a real-time measure of happiness or hedonometer (Dodds et al., 2011). This indicates that social media posts to an extent incorporates real-time information that has the capacity to be utilised to predict diverse social trends for all its users online and offline. As such, it is evident that technical features for example, location settings and status updates afford users the possibility of locating and connecting online thereby responding to each user's needs (Goldsmith and Wall, 2022; Karahanna et al., 2018).

1.3 Integration of youth crime and the Internet

Crime is an expression or indication of the evolving nature of social life as violence committed by and against young people ranging from knife crimes to hate crimes, has attracted considerable public and scholarly attention since 1990 (Muncie, 2009; Wikstrom and Treiber, 2016).

Crime itself is a complex experience with many unanticipated social behaviours, which are sometimes difficult to understand, measure and, manage (Helbing et al., 2015; Prieto Curiel et al., 2020). For example, enforcing prolonged prison sentences or harsher sentencing might not reduce crime rates or encourage recidivism; allocating more enforcement authority might not decrease crime via deterrence (Kleck and Barnes, 2014), and a city with higher levels of

crime might be perceived as being more secure (Prieto Curiel and Bishop, 2020). It is possible that recent or up-to-date criminal activities on social media may not necessarily be the true mirror or expression of the current crime and security situation of a city, but it is also known that some up-to-date transgressive activities and posts are broadcasted live from the location of the harm or attack. Victims and witnesses of transgressive behaviours might be encouraged to share their experience after experiencing a crime (Cresci et al., 2018, Goldsmith and Wall, 2022) and by doing so, social media may be able to provide to its users with a version of the criminal reality encountered. Nonetheless, these behaviours and activities are immediately or subsequently posted on social media, and they become readily available and accessible for young people to view and share with their peers (Elsaesser et al., 2021; Goldsmith and Wall, 2022). Therefore, due to the transformation in how young people communicate, establish and maintain relationships and the recent increase in offending behaviours among young people, issues on the effect and influence of the Internet, particularly SNS, remains a prime concern for parents and enforcement authorities (Undiyaundeye, 2014; Densley, 2020). Potentially, social media may just have become a powerful tool for detecting transgressive behaviour trends and patterns (Prieto Curiel et al., 2020).

Furthermore, according to Catch 22 report by Irwin-Rogers and Pinkney (2017), the adoption and incorporation of the Internet into the daily lives of young people has left online and offline boundaries increasingly unclear as it raises some serious challenges and creates a cycle of aggressive and violent behaviours. Nesi et al. (2018) describes adolescence as a period of transition between childhood and adulthood, where formation of identity, peer relationships, sexuality and self-worth are constantly being explored. In this case, for young people, the Internet acts as a new social environment where their concerns and identities are constantly being examined. Thus, transgressive behaviour is not only growing in occurrence, but also as a percentage of all crimes. Whatever the cause, crime is now evolving and growing into the online realm, (Caneppele and Aebi, 2019; Curtis and Oxburgh, 2023).

According to Statista (2019), 95% of young people aged 16 – 24 years also reported owning a smartphone and these mobile connections are in turn encouraging relentless online activities some of which could be positive or negative. As smartphone access has become more prevalent, a growing number of young people, according to Anderson and Jiang (2018), are using the Internet regularly with 45% online consistently. Thus, with the rise in percentage of young people constantly engaged in communications, interactions, and socialisation on social

media, one may question the role of social media activities in relation to transgressive behaviours among young people and their peers.

This study aims to understand the role of social media and peer relations on transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham. This study explores how the increased use of social media platforms may influence the ways transgressive activities take shape and how these activities may construct identities and enhance behaviours and capabilities among young people. In doing so, this study builds on related literature which will provide discussions on current literature, historical evidence and statistical data on emerging digital media, cultural and leisure criminology, online and offline identity of self, presentation of self, social interaction and learning theories, consequences of these online events offline, online peer relations and 'cyber banging' that may influence transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham.

1.4 Research aim and objectives

This research aims to explore if social media instigates or aids offline transgressive behaviour among young people. To achieve this aim, the following research question was addressed: What role does social media play in the influence of transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham?

Furthermore, to achieve the aim and subsequently address the abovementioned research question, the following objectives were met:

1. To understand the attitude of young people towards aggressive peer interaction on social media.
2. To investigate how young people, address online and offline identity and self-representation of peers on social media.
3. To explore ways in which social media may influence transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham.

1.5 Research motivation

The initial seed from which this thesis germinated was my interest in the understanding of risk that encourage criminal behaviour and the role social media plays (if any) in instigating violence among young people in the UK. From early childhood, the concerns of criminal

behaviour among children, teenagers and young adults propelled my journey to obtaining an undergraduate and master's degree in law at the University of Liverpool and University College London respectively, where I graduated and then attended and completed the Nigerian Law School qualifying as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

My journey as a student and practitioner of the Law has enabled me to work and volunteer at various organisations focusing on the development of young people. During my time as a volunteer Childline counsellor in Nottingham, I would regularly listen and respond to children and young people who have contacted the organisation via phone, online chat, or email. I was responsible for providing necessary support on several issues such as bullying, abuse, self-harm, crime, and family relationships. This experience always made me question the motives and underlying reasons why young people engage in transgressive behaviours and how regular exposure to digital media may fuel these behaviours and experiences.

Prior to commencing this research, I volunteered with two community organizations in Nottingham: the Nottinghamshire Youth Commission and the Violence Reduction Unit. In these roles, I facilitated workshops for parents, guardians, and young people, both in and out of educational settings. The workshops focused on a range of topics, including crime prevention and education, child exploitation, abuse, knife crime, stop and search procedures, reoffending and rehabilitation, online safety, and fostering better relationships with law enforcement authorities. During these workshops, young people frequently expressed concerns regarding online safety, peer pressure, the use of social media platforms, and the increasing influence of these platforms on offline disputes and behavioural construction. Parents and guardians echoed these concerns, recognizing both the benefits and drawbacks of social media. They highlighted the platforms' potential to encourage harmful behaviours both online and offline among young people.

I chose to focus this research on Nottingham City due to its complex and fluctuating history with violent crime, which has garnered significant attention over the years (ONS 2023). According to a report of the Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour (Police Foundation, 2010) in the early 2000s, Nottingham earned the nickname "Shottingham" a reputation for violence involving firearms linked to the supply of illegal drugs, driven by gang violence and organized crime. From 2002 to 2007, the city had an average of 16.6 murders per year, peaking at 21 in 2004-2005 (ONS 2006). More recently, 9 murders were recorded in the year ending September 2023, marking an increase of 3 compared to the

previous year (ONS 2023). Furthermore, between 2014 and 2023, incidents of violence resulting in injury in Nottingham increased by 13.6%, and as of 2024, Nottingham's crime rate is 26% higher than the average for the East Midlands (Crime rate, 2024).

Despite being one of the safest cities in the UK, Nottingham is also considered one of the most dangerous in the county of Nottinghamshire (Crime rate, 2024). This duality of safety and danger makes it an interesting and important city to investigate the role of social media in shaping behaviour and its potential influence on young people. Nottingham is home to a large population of young people, many of whom are in and out of education (ONS 2020) and with growing concerns about the impact of social media on young people's behaviour, this research aims to explore how social media might be contributing to the influence of behavioural construction among young people in Nottingham.

Therefore, with Nottingham being the second most densely populated local authority area in the East Midlands (ONS 2023), these experiences have undoubtedly fuelled my motivation to further investigate and explore these issues as they pertain to young people in Nottingham. These experiences have also endowed me with the confidence and determination to complete this study. Accordingly, the aim of this research is to contribute to the ongoing discussion on optimizing social media use, identifying additional online safety needs, providing support, and preventing the escalation of transgressive behaviours from the online to the offline environment among young people.

In 2017, there was an alarming rise in deaths of young people, with offences involving knives and sharp instruments rising about 22% in England and Wales (ONS 2017). Thus, as stated above, some of these crimes among young people may have been sparked by a dispute online on the 'streets' of the Internet, subsequently leading to physical violence against each other offline. Interestingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has encouraged more online presence among young people, especially when enforcement authorities such as the police and other frontline youth justice workers are under-resourced (Haines and Case, 2018) and lack sufficient training in identifying and dealing with some of the issues presented by young people online and offline (Windle et al., 2020). Therefore, with the increasing use and reliance on social media platforms, these incidents have continued to plague my mind with the question of 'what role social media has in influencing these transgressive behaviours and what else can be done to keep young people and their community safe online and offline.' Accordingly, this is the gap that this study fills.

No doubt, there is growing concern among parents, educators, researchers, and policymakers across the UK about the presence and influence of social media in young people's lives. Many researchers have traditionally highlighted factors such as poor parenting, economic situation, peer pressure, politics, racial prejudice, single parenting, rap and drill music, teenage alienation, unaware teachers, and unsupervised Internet access for youth violence in the country (Irwin-Rogers and Pinkney 2017). The government and related agencies are constantly pushing efforts to implement family, school and community intervention strategies for preventing or reducing youth crime such as the recently passed Online Safety Act 2023, Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP), Youth Inclusion Programme (YIP), The Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) and Safer School Partnership (SSP) focusing on reduced opportunities for engaging in transgressive behaviours and keeping young people safe online (Ross et al., 2011; Steven, 2018).

Therefore, this study is timely, it supports existing literature and provides new knowledge regarding the role of the ever-evolving social media and its influence on transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham, UK.

1.6 Contributions to knowledge

It cannot be ignored that a wide range of valuable academic literature, national statistics and policies have been published about young people, aggression, violence, and criminality in various parts of the UK. However, what this research achieves is building upon previous studies by investigating this thesis through an alternative analytical lens of social media, an emerging online environment, and its relationship with transgressive behaviour among young people in Nottingham.

This research presented information on the role of social media and online peer relations on transgressive behaviours and provided a clear understanding as to whether social media influences transgressive behaviours among young people and how the online environment needs more scrutiny and intervention. I believe young people are one of the most important resources a country has, and more attention should be given to their way of life both online and offline. As such, this study provided a unique insight into the social and interactive online environment of social media, peer relations and transgressive behaviour among young people in Nottingham.

This thesis contributes to the criminological and sociological knowledge in two ways:

Firstly, it adds to the perceived gap in the literature and the growing body of research on digital media and its influence on criminality among young people. Findings and recommendations from this study may subsequently impact future research and practice on social media use and transgressive behaviours and its influence among young people in Nottingham, UK.

Secondly, as the purpose of this thesis is to understand the role of social media as it relates to transgressive behaviours among young people, this study also assists policymakers, schools, parents, enforcement authorities and community groups in understanding and reviewing how these behaviours might be instigated through social media use and activities. Developing adequate online and offline intervention strategies could support intervention programs to prevent the escalation of these behaviours into the real world. For instance, more active workshops can be organised across schools and communities educating young people on the influence peer relations and social media may have on transgressive behaviours, thereby encouraging safety online and offline. Also, specialised prevention programmes could be notified when specific threats including the location of specific transgressive activities are posted online to intervene and prevent escalation of harm. This knowledge is important if we are to further understand the complex relationship between social media and transgressive behaviours among young people and therefore be in a better position to intervene, design and develop appropriate crime reduction strategies.

1.7 Thesis Structure and Outline

This thesis is comprised of seven individual chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 presented the introduction, background, and overview of the thesis. This chapter introduced the research topic discussing youth crime and digital social media among young people, and the research gap this study fills. This chapter also discussed the research rationale, motivation and the need for this research in Nottingham. Furthermore, it identified the research question, aims and objectives and how this study contributes to the profession. Finally, an overview of the entire thesis is presented.

Chapter 2 provided a critique of the contributions existing research studies have made to the body of work on transgressive behaviours, social learning, identity development and

presentation of self, youth offending and the influence of social media among young people. This critique justifies how the present study addresses the gap therein.

Chapter 3 described and justified the research methodology that is adopted in this study. It carefully explained the philosophical position of the researcher and further provided a rationale for the research context, design, sample, data collection, analysis and ethics. It also considered the impact of COVID-19 on this research methodology.

Chapter 4 presented the findings of the generated data from the qualitative methodological approach of semi-structured interviews. It also considered the narrative process and results of the data analysis where key themes emerged. Recordings are transcribed and coded thematically to reveal meaning from participants' data.

Chapter 5 presented the findings of the generated data from the qualitative methodological approach of focus-group discussions. It also considered the descriptive process and results of the data analysis where key themes emerged. Recordings are transcribed and coded thematically to reveal meaning from participants' data.

Chapter 6 provided a discussion of the semi-structured and focus group findings where results are analysed. The study discussed the analysed data by drawing connections and relationships to existing literature in reflection on the study's research question, aim and objectives.

Chapter 7 discussed an overview of the research, the research limitations, contributions, and implications, as well as the considerations for future research, focusing on areas of practice and policy. The summary and conclusion of this thesis are also discussed. Lastly, a reflection on how this study was completed and the contributions made by the research is also highlighted.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This Chapter discussed the background and introduction to the study discussing the ever-evolving and growing sociology of the digital media landscape among young people in the UK. The possible social media link to transgressive behaviours was also discussed using terms such as online and offline activities or transgressive behaviours. The unprecedented freedom and fewer regulations social media platforms provide its users and its influence on

transgressive behaviours has over the years continued to raise concerns among parents and enforcement authorities. These concerns have continued to attract considerable public attention which necessitates an urgent response. The rationale which motivated this research was discussed, highlighting the timely manner of this study and the need to encourage online safety among young people. Lastly, this chapter outlined the research contributions to knowledge as well as the overview of the structure of the thesis with a brief description of each chapter.

In identifying the research gap, which justified the need for this study, the next chapter explored existing criminology and sociology research and provided critiques to its studies on youth offending, cultural criminology, online deviance, and the changing patterns of online and offline reality among young people. In doing so, this next chapter discussed previous literature on the negatives and positives of social media use as well as the possibilities and extremities of the digital space as it relates to transgressive behaviours among young people. Following this, behavioural constructions, social learning theories, identity development and presentation of self and sources of online conflict are also discussed, exploring how young people learn about themselves and construct reserved and sociable behaviours online and offline. Lastly, this next chapter also discussed previous literature on digital media being a public space for regulation and intervention or a private space to be left alone. Accordingly, the influence of networked online and offline streets on transgressive behaviours among young people and their peers in the UK is also discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Research on child development and the growth of criminal behaviour (Gifford-Smith et al., 2005; McCord et al., 2001; Tomé et al., 2012) has shown that individual, school, peer, and social and community factors as well as their connections can together influence behaviour. Although Bock and Goode (1996) also argued that antisocial and delinquent behaviour, is the result of a combination of various factors such as individual, biological, genetic, and environmental factors continuing throughout an individual's life span, there is more to be considered with the rapid growth and accessibility of social media and its influence among young people. For most of the world's population, part of today's everyday life is online (Porubay et al., 2023). Therefore, the possibility of young people's development, behaviour, and activities being negatively or positively influenced by peer-related and unrelated activities on social media remains a concern to their parents, schools, enforcement authorities and the larger society.

This chapter explores existing criminology research and provides critiques of its studies on youth offending, cultural criminology, online deviance, and the changing patterns of online and offline reality among young people. It also discusses behavioural constructions, identity development and presentation of self, sources of online conflict on social media, features and affordance of social media platforms and the peer influence of these activities on transgressive behaviours among young people in the UK.

2.2 The Internet and Youth Offending

The importance of the Internet and its regular use among young people has developed concerns about online safety such as the influence on transgressive behaviours, as well as the adverse effects on well-being (Goldsmith and Wall, 2022; Ponnusamy et al., 2020; Valkenburg and Pietrowski, 2017). According to a report by former Commissioner of Metropolitan Police Service London (MPS), Cressida Dick (2018), the Internet may have normalised violence, as trivial disputes between young people seem to be rising to violence and murder 'within minutes' due to the influence of social media sites. With concerns about the increase in knife crime among young people, this report referred to the 'postcode wars' incident in 2017, where rival gangs from different postcodes in London taunted each other on YouTube, which subsequently led to the death of a young teenager (News Report, The Argus,

2018; Fatsis, 2019). Following this, two teenagers were also killed after posting a music video on Snapchat, filmed in a rival gang territory in London.

While recent studies have done much to advance our understanding of some Internet-related offences, notable gaps for its continuous study remain. According to Liem and Geelen (2019), there are wide variations of perspectives among criminologists on the impact of the Internet on violent behaviour among young people. These perspectives range from considering the Internet as an alternative social space where advanced types of criminality and violence occur to the Internet merely being used as a facilitation of already existing offences, and to doubts as to whether Internet-related offence exists altogether (Yardley and Wilson, 2015).

2.2.1 The Internet and opportunities for conflict

According to Elsaesser et al. (2021), Goldsmith and Wall (2022), and Liem and Geelen (2019), it has been argued that to an extent, the Internet in several ways presents new opportunities for various offences, opening new ways to re-think the nature of crime. In their study of the connection between homicide and the Internet from four different Western countries, Liem and Geelen (2019), suggest six distinct categories of Internet use relating to crime, namely: (1) Internet as a stage to showcase the crime or to publicise the intent of criminal activity. For example, in May 2016, four men were sentenced for murder upon conclusion that crucial to a fatal stabbing incident, were ongoing threats communicated through videos uploaded onto YouTube (Bartholomew, 2016), (2) Internet as an encyclopaedia which is employed by perpetrators to gather useful information for violent offences including the destruction of evidence, (3) Internet as a hunting ground where contacts through social media and other online activities are made, (4) Internet as a market place, for example, to acquire criminal tools which potentially enables the purchasing of violent weapons without meeting face to face (Paoli et al., 2017), (5) Internet as a catalyst in form of posts on social media and other online activities; and Internet as an organisational tool as part of a mode of operation or to coordinate violent offences.

However, as these findings were based on newspaper surveillance, the authenticity and validity of information reported in newspapers cannot be guaranteed. The reason for this limitation is that underreporting crucial details of homicides using newspaper sources alone may have led to the mistaken inclusion and exclusion of cases in this study. Although these categories according to Liem and Geelen (2019) may not necessarily constitute new types of homicide, these categories highlight the fact that the Internet could be used in various ways,

possibly constituting a reproduction of already existing forms of crime assisted through new digital means, some of which extend beyond the Internet to offline or real-life transgressive behaviours. Thus, it is apparent that the increase of young people's unfettered reach and access to information and opportunity on the Internet and the novel ways it can be used remain a concern.

With a blend of snowball and maximum variation sampling for six months in two large cities in the UK, Irwin-Rogers and Pinkney (2017), analysed various social media platforms linked with face-to-face violence and suggested that social media may on occasion act as a catalyst and trigger for serious youth violence. Findings demonstrated that as the online space or environment can be free of restrictions, a small minority of young people with the presence of social pressures, are exposed daily to social media content that displays or incites serious violence in real life. The authors also noted that violent intent through music videos uploaded on YouTube is the exception rather than the norm, but whilst the goal and intention are positive, the ends cannot be used to justify the means if young people are being influenced as a result of the content uploaded as part of these videos online (Irwin-Rogers and Pinkney, 2017). Although this report has provided some understanding of young people's use of social media, one cannot be certain of the extent to which these findings apply to young people living in smaller cities, as the report focused on two large urban cities.

Furthermore, as Jatmiko et al. (2020) also suggest, the impact of the internet on people's behaviours, being able to go from slightly 'angry' with each other online to physical 'violence' within a brief period. Likewise, Elsaesser et al. (2021) also suggest that the public, and regularly available features on social media heighten the influence to fight, as well as create and permit novel ways for conflict. In other words, "something so small can turn into something so big so fast" (Elsaesser et al., 2021). Some young people could go from being tolerant to displaying a lack of tolerance, respect, justice, or kindness through the influence and radicalisation of extremist groups or just influence from peers on social media platforms (Jatmiko et al., 2020). In other words, some forms of transgressive behaviours may be limited to online interactions while others may be related to physical or face-to-face acts of harm. If attention is being given to general criminal behaviours and youth offending, the online space or environment should equally be considered with a view to checking and regulating online disputes that may extend to the physical expression of transgressive behaviour as much as possible. If these aggressive and transgressive actions are to be adequately addressed to prevent offline physical expression of violence, it is therefore important, that efforts are made

to recognize and mitigate what may be happening in an environment that many adults and authorities may feel is beyond their immediate understanding and increasingly hidden from plain sight. This in turn will help authorities to prioritise responses to social networking platforms capable of facilitating and enhancing genuine face-to-face harm.

As such, although linking social interaction to transgressive behaviours is not new, what is new however, is to study the role, degree and impact of social media activity and online peer influence in the build-up to offline or online transgressive behaviour amongst young people in Nottingham. Also, as young people's use of social media and representation of self is rapidly evolving, there is no guarantee that the role of social media on transgressive behaviour among young people has been fully uncovered. Therefore, the main empirical gap that this research sought to address is whether exposure to, or engagement with, social media activities influences offline and online transgressive behaviour amongst young people in Nottingham. These findings will therefore lay the foundation for future research.

2.3 Social media and violence

Social media has been described as a 'space' or environment where threats online can be extended to violence offline (Elsaesser et al., 2021; Irwin Rogers and Pinkney 2017; Patton et al., 2013; Reyes et al., 2023) as highlighted above. Reports have indicated that social media has been integral to how violence takes place, as youth violence may have now extended to a new and sometimes complicated form of conflict identified and described in the academic community as 'Internet Banging or Cyber Banging' (Patton et al., 2013).

The term 'Internet Banging' or 'Cyber Banging,' according to Patton et al. (2013), describes a set of social media behaviours common among young people sometimes perceived to be gang-connected youths that include threatening, trolling, and taunting others using social media. The term describes threats on social media that escalate through back-and-forth conversations online (Elsaesser et al., 2021). It has also been argued that the term 'Internet banging' may have developed from increasing access to and participation in social media activities which may then represent an unintended use of existing SNS (Patton et al., 2013). Researchers also agree that these online spaces can immediately turn into intimidating and frightening environments, where certain online behaviours and activities may encourage violence and increase the potential for transgressive behaviour beyond existing online social networks (Bryce and Fraser, 2013; Moule et al., 2014). According to Lane (2019), it is difficult to understand how young people interact in the offline street, without also considering how

these conflicts begin or continue on social media platforms. Drawing on ethnographic work with Black and Latino adolescents in New York City, Lane (2019) emphasises that youth conflict begins either on the 'digital street' (online) or the physical street and regularly alternates backwards and forwards, such that both digital and physical streets can create one street life for a young person. As mentioned earlier, there is a dearth of research examining the effect and impact of these social media activities among young people in Nottingham. Nevertheless, these behaviours may be leading to serious face-to-face harm in various cities and communities in the UK.

In addition, studies report that receiving distressing comments, threats and name-calling are the most frequent forms of cyberbullying behaviours (Anderson, 2018; Hemphill et al., 2014; Vogels, 2021). As such, young people could be in danger from some social media activities because it seems that just as adults' express concerns towards young people hanging around physical street corners, so they also have concerns with young people's unrestricted access to the street corners of the online environment. This has been observed by Fraser (2015), as he argued that young people are less likely to 'hang about' in the physical streets today than in years past due to the rapid growth and development in technology like SNS. This, therefore, relates to the further fear that the negative influence of social media may tend to facilitate or encourage transgressive behaviours (Brown, 2005; Elsaesser et al., 2021; Goldsmith and Wall, 2022). These behaviours could be perpetuated by peers, strangers or known acquaintances, and this makes focusing on the role of social media on transgressive behaviours an important study for academics and practitioners. Also, the venues through which cyberbullying, radicalisation and other transgressive behaviours occur reflect the social media platforms most in use at the time of the behaviour or activity. These platforms along with their features, afford their users ease of connection and expression, which in turn responds to individual needs such as independence (Goldsmith and Wall, 2022; Karahanna et al., 2018) as is further discussed below in Section 2.4.1. Thus, assessing the extent to which social media are emerging platforms for the appearance of transgressive behaviour online and offline among young people is the aim of this study.

2.4 Peer conflict and social media

Social media platforms have been widespread since the early 2000s, and their use has been growing at exponential rates since then with the Internet rising as one of the most important tools of communication and socialisation (Anderson and Jiang, 2018; Auxier and Anderson,

2021; Defede et al., 2021; Elsaesser et al., 2021). It has also become popular among young people for several reasons, to the extent that it now plays a significant role in their lives as the vast majority use smartphones and tablets to access these online social platforms with ease (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Genner and Suss, 2017). As much as information technology has enabled access to information, knowledge, and support to an extent unimaginable only a few generations ago (Day, 2014; McNamee, 2020), it is, however, sometimes accompanied by unpleasant experiences that take expression in the form of online harm and violence carried out by various people through various social media platforms (Elsaesser et al., 2021; Irwin-Rogers and Pinkney, 2017).

Undoubtedly, access to these social networking platforms offers a wide range of advantageous opportunities but at the same time, the detrimental use and susceptibility to risks is also greater for young people (Duran and Martínez, 2015; Ponnusamy et al., 2020). This may be because young people in their transformation stage and the developing process which their brain goes through can be heavily influenced by their peers in the formation of their identity. Specifically, children and adolescents are at risk while navigating and experimenting with social media due to limited self-regulation and exposure to peer pressure (Undiyaundeye, 2014), and according to McGovern and Milivojevic (2016), social media has a positive, negative and unpleasant side when it comes to its relationship with young people and harm. As a result, the use of communicative functions on these social media platforms by some young people to express online and offline behaviours such as harassment, aggression and bullying has resulted in lawless behaviours thus becoming a significant concern for peers, parents, educators, and policymakers (Bryce and Fraser, 2013).

Peer relations have been a key topic in criminology due to the significant influence friends have on behaviour and youth violence through the imparting of values, behaviour, and social reinforcement, which may be positive or negative (Rokven et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2023). A consistent finding in research shows that peer influence online or offline can also be a major factor in the decisions made by young people to engage or not engage in transgressive behaviours (Goldsmith and Wall, 2022; Weerman, 2011). Therefore, if offline or physical peer interactions can influence general behaviour amongst other peers, there is little or no evidence to suggest whether offline transgressive acts may also be influenced by online peer relations through social media platforms.

2.4.1 Social media as a channel that alters peer conflict

As social media platforms are increasingly being used to create and maintain personal relationships with friends and strangers to express opinions on diverse issues (Allen, 2019; Graciyal and Viswam, 2021), there is a commonly held belief that violence that occurs online is less impactful than violence that occurs offline due to the digital environment in which it takes place. However, Donato et al. (2022) demonstrate that online platforms serve as a mirror of the offline environment and both the victims and perpetrators of transgressive behaviours exist online and offline, highlighting a connection between the two environments (Belotti et al., 2022). For example, Patton et al.'s (2013) study on youth violence shows gang members reported using social media to boast about violence, make threats, insult, avoid potentially violent encounters in person and display gang symbols in high-stress neighbourhoods. These behaviours can be attributed to the fact that young people earn and maintain respect online and offline by being willing to fight and uphold their reputation (Whittaker et al., 2020). According to Stevens et al. (2017), the conduct of interviews with 60 youths from marginalised neighbourhoods observed that online disagreements often result in real-life conflicts, leading to a blurring of the line between online and offline interactions which often results in several forms of harm and violence (Elsaesser et al., 2021; Reyes et al., 2023).

Now, as technology has become an integral part of our daily lives and has been embedded within our everyday practices (Battin, 2017), Internet users are not necessarily attached to physical devices for communication but rather to what the Internet allows and permits them to do (Belk, 2014). Technology enables us to interact, learn, engage, comment, share, respond, like, compliment, and discuss. However, it also facilitates the spread of fake news, misinformation, violence, hate, discrimination, bullying, and abuse.

Elsaesser et al. (2021) note that conflict on social media occurs within a unique interpersonal context that alters, rather than reflects, offline peer experiences. Firstly, the constant availability and accessibility of online communication can lead to immediate and frequent conflict among peers. Secondly, social media magnifies peer interactions and expectations (Nesi, Choukas-Bradley, and Prinstein 2018a, 2018b). Social media has also made communication quicker and more widespread than ever. Online behaviours are shaped by the feedback received from friends and followers, which is measured by metrics such as "likes" on social media posts. This quantifiable validation on social media platforms can have a significant impact on peer interactions (Sherman et al., 2016; Elsaesser et al., 2021). Social

media platforms such as TikTok and Facebook can quickly escalate conflicts among adolescents due to the high visibility and connectivity offered by SNS. Social media conflicts are consequently observed by an active and engaged audience at all times (Marwick and Boyd, 2014), and according to Stevens et al. (2017), these conflicts are now present everywhere through computers or smartphones.

Social media provides an open space where its users are free to exchange ideas and opinions on various issues and according to Elsaesser et al. (2021), there are specific social media features such as tagging, comments, images and video sharing, live streaming and status post that transform the perception of threats connected to offline violence. Some social media interactions occur without the physical cues that are present in face-to-face communication, such as vocal tone, physical touch, and facial expression (Nesi et al., 2018a, 2018b). This means that aggressive content on social media may be perceived as harsher due to the absence of these cues. Additionally, making threats may be experienced as more rewarding given the immediate feedback available online. On these platforms, communication happens over a period of time, allowing those who are involved in a conflict to respond and fight back in a way that may not be possible in an in-person offline altercation. Furthermore, certain social media features may also present new opportunities for conflict and transgressive behaviour, that can change the nature of peer conflict online. These features are discussed below.

2.4.1.1 Social media affordances and conflict

Research conducted by Elsaesser et al. (2021) highlights the concerning link between social media disputes and physical violence. The study demonstrates how social media platform features can escalate conflicts, amplifying the possibility of real-world harm and violence. Goldsmith and Wall (2022) also observe that there is a connection between young people's needs and desires and the features of social media platforms. For instance, Facebook's 'friending' option allows users to fulfil their individual needs such as competence, autonomy, and relatedness by connecting with others. Cooper (2000) has identified three significant affordances - accessibility, affordability, and anonymity - that can tempt and encourage young people to engage in transgressive behaviour. The main idea behind this exploration is that social media's features may play a significant role in encouraging young people to engage in transgressive behaviours offline.

- Accessibility

According to Goldsmith and Wall (2022), the Internet provides a platform for online deviance. With easy online access, young people are particularly vulnerable to such behaviour. The ease of access to online platforms is attributed to the integration of internet usage into the daily lives of young individuals. This has been made possible by the increasing number of digital platforms and the widespread use of smartphones. Consequently, social media has become an influential tool for communication and information sharing, serving various needs and objectives (Defede et al., 2021).

With the emergence and growth of electronic communication devices, hate speech has the potential to reach larger audiences than ever before. This means that it is no longer confined to offline spaces, as individuals and groups use electronic devices to spread their messages of hate (Brown, 2009; Farrington et al., 2017; Kilvington and Price, 2018, 2019). Likewise, as studies have shown, the act of trolling can be contagious and even ordinary people can become trolls in certain conditions. (Cheng et al., 2017).

- Anonymity

Anonymity offers Internet users the option to go online using avatars or without revealing their true identities. According to Goldsmith and Wall (2022), young people tend to feel more comfortable searching and exploring personal matters such as identity and sexuality when they presume themselves to be anonymous. This is because they can engage in "safe edgework" (Shay, 2017), wherein they can intentionally explore themselves and obtain emotional rewards without the scrutiny of parents or guardians.

- Affordability

Upon gaining access to the Internet, young people can easily access various functions and contents without spending much or any money. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok can be used to derive personal information anonymously, free of cost. They can also download or access various written, audio, and visual materials, both appropriate and inappropriate, sometimes without any financial constraints (Goldsmith and Wall, 2022).

2.4.1.2 Social media features and conflict

According to Elsaesser et al. (2021), engaging in certain social media features, such as tagging, commenting, image and video sharing, live streaming, and status updates, can amplify conflicts among young people.

- Comments

Social media users can respond to the content posted by others on social media platforms through comments. However, the comments section has also been described as a starting point of conflict, where people express their anger towards other users in an accessible way (Elsaesser et al., 2021). According to Nakayama (2017), we live in a world where it is more acceptable to abuse someone online than in person. In addition, Nakayama also suggests that some young people feel pressured to behave in extreme ways online to outdo others and gain more attention and reactions.

According to Elsaesser et al. (2021), online comments serve as a means for social media users to actively engage and participate in ongoing discussions, ultimately strengthening and magnifying the initial conflict. The existence of comments on social networking sites could potentially encourage a young individual to intensify a social media dispute that they may not have otherwise pursued. These could be comments from peers and strangers encouraging and amplifying an escalation of face-to-face conflict, as this feature affords users the front-row seat in other people's life experiences which young people can feel invested in. As such, these types of comments can range from suggesting healthy diet options to requesting an address as a challenge to meet up and engage in physical violence at a specified location.

- Tagging

Social media platforms commonly offer the option for users to tag others in their status updates or photos, indicating their involvement. This tag is visible to anyone who views the post or image. However, this feature has been known to negligently draw attention to conflicts and can escalate them further (Elsaesser et al., 2021).

- Live Streaming

Live streaming is a feature available on various social media platforms, such as Facebook Live, Instagram Live and TikTok Live, which enables users to broadcast a video live to their social media followers. This feature allows a larger real-time audience to tune in, watch and comment on the video. However, it is suggested that live streaming may heighten a young person's experience of conflict, as it can quickly bring in a large number of comments and attention, thereby making it more public. Therefore, it may reinforce the need for the person to escalate the conflict (Elsaesser et al., 2021).

Social media is saturated with content that promotes certain ideals, encouraging users to compare themselves with their peers in respect of achievements, reputation, body image, life experiences, and abilities. Sharing images and videos on social media platforms often triggers this behaviour, as certain features constantly prompt users to engage in social comparison (Caner et al., 2022). According to Festinger (1954, 1957), we tend to make comparisons with people who we see as similar to us because we draw a part of our identity and self-esteem from the social groups we belong to (Hogg, 2003; Turner et al., 1994; Tajfel, 1981). As such, with a broad reach on social media, young people can sometimes rely on these comparisons with other peers to accurately assess their abilities, traits, attitudes, and actions. Undoubtedly, the pressure that young people face in today's society can lead to psychological distress, especially when there are inconsistencies between the ideals imposed on them and their egos (Oswald et al., 2020). Social media provides a safe haven for adolescents, as it allows them to fulfil their psychosocial needs without the watchful eye of their parents (Dahl et al., 2018).

Studies have reported that 93–97% of adolescents aged 13–17 years use at least one social media platform and are active on social media platforms for at least three hours a day (Barry et al., 2017; Vannucci et al., 2020). Compared with the older generations, young people at an earlier age gain access to SNS and thus feel comfortable in its exploration and affordances and are more vulnerable to social media addiction (Ho et al., 2017; Cheng et al., 2021).

As much as features on social media afford its users the possibility of existing online without geographical or time constraints (Cheng et al., 2020), problematic use of social media according to Ponnusamy et al. (2020), also known as social media addiction, can impair users' psychosocial functioning and well-being (Cheng et al., 2021; Servidio, 2023). For example, when a young person feels distressed when they are unable to utilise or engage with social media platforms via their smartphones or other devices for a period.

2.5 Kinds of transgressive behaviours online

The most common types of transgressive behaviours that are likely to take place on/via social media include cyberbullying/victimisation, taunting, trolling, harassment, electronic dating aggression/cyberstalking, gang violence, peer-to-peer violence including school shootings and cyber-suicide (Patton et al., 2013). Notably and as discussed above, the harmful use of social media doesn't always stay confined to the online world. It often spills over into the offline world and can result in a range of transgressive behaviours among young people and their peers. Even if the incident initially appeared to be a private matter, it could become a public display of unacceptable actions among young individuals and their peers. For example, extremist groups may use social media platforms to recruit and radicalise members through the sharing of hateful images, texts, and videos (Patton et al., 2013). Gangs have in recent times also used social media sites such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook to trade insults and make threats of violence that may develop into criminal offences such as homicide (Whittaker et al., 2020). These examples as discussed below, clearly indicate the possibilities and capabilities of the digital space as it relates to transgressive behaviours.

2.5.1 Cyberbullying and victimisation

According to Mengü and Mengü (2015), cyberbullying is the act of bullying carried out through electronic means, such as social networks or computer-mediated communication. It involves victimizing, harassing, distressing, and pressurizing others. According to the Office for National Statistics (2020), around one in five children aged 10 to 15 years in England and Wales (19%) had been subjected to at least one type of online bullying behaviour in the year ending March 2020, equivalent to 764,000 children. Examples of cyberbullying include spreading rumours sending mean, threatening, insulting, and embarrassing messages or pictures via text, email and posted on SNS (Van Laer, 2014). Cheng et al. (2017) and Hardaker (2010) also note online and offline trolling as a form of cyberbullying. Hardaker (2010) further notes that as trolling involves aggression, deception, disruption, and success, anonymity is a situational factor that contributes to trolling behaviour in young people (Hutchens et al., 2015).

It is important to note that physical advantage is not necessary in cyberbullying whereas physical or in-person bullying can be characterised by physical dominance. As Reyes et al. (2023) note, the concept of Internet banging is distinct from cyberbullying in that it is defined by proximity. While social media users enjoy the opportunity to engage with and gain knowledge from others via SNS, they are also at risk of encountering significant levels of

objectionable online material (Chen et al., 2012), including cyberbullying, addictive behaviour, trolling, online witch hunts, and fake news (Baccarella et al., 2018). The prevalence of social media technologies has resulted in a concerning rise in the number of victims a single offender can access and harm (Wall, 2017; Curtis and Oxburgh, 2023). Emotional impact is commonly reported by victims of cybercrime, with effects ranging from mild irritation to more severe symptoms like depression, insomnia, anxiety, and even panic attacks (ONS, 2020). As per the latest report from Eurostat (2022), individuals aged 16 to 29 years were found to be more prone to accessing and spending considerable time on the Internet, engaging in social media, gaming, and conducting online searches. The effortless accessibility and rapidity of these platforms provide individuals with the opportunity to connect with people globally but also expose them to detrimental and hazardous materials on the Internet (Defede et al., 2021; Goldsmith and Wall, 2022).

In cases where electronic bullying was a contributory factor, events such as the reported death by suicide among children and young people in the UK have galvanised efforts to combat the issue through various channels, including the CJS (Cross et al., 2012). Perpetrators of this cyberbullying behaviour dominate their victims through anonymity and the limited possibilities of defence and escape options available to the victim online (Aborisade and Adedayo, 2016; Estévez et al., 2020). In this way, a lack of fear of repercussions or punishment (Pereira and Barbosa, 2019), encourages them to continue to carry out transgressive behaviours they may ordinarily not perform in offline interactions (Montilla et al., 2018). This therefore makes the Internet or the less regulated social media platforms a conducive space for such perpetrators.

It is concerning that children and young people who are most at risk of online abuse may also lack access to the necessary support and resources to protect themselves. Therefore, it is vital to detect offensive content online to ensure their safety and well-being. The UK government released the Online Harms White Paper in April 2019 as a response to the need for online safety. This comprehensive framework outlines measures - including legal and illegal online harm prevention - to ensure the safety of UK internet users. It also includes plans for an accountability system and oversight for tech companies to prevent harm to individuals in the UK. The Online Safety Act 2023 is a critical step towards safeguarding vulnerable users from online harm, with a specific focus on children and young people who are at heightened risk of cyberbullying and other forms of online abuse. By holding social media companies accountable for their users' safety, the Act aims to eliminate illegal content from these

platforms, preventing it from being viewed by anyone, regardless of age. To an extent, this legislation will provide much-needed protection and peace of mind for social media users.

2.5.2 Sexual or gender-based violence

Sexual or gender-based violence refers to any harm against a person that affects their physical or mental health, development and identity (Aborisade and Adedayo, 2016). As violence is a way of action to exert physical force intended to kill, cause intentional harm, destroy, rob, and expel (Mengü and Mengü, 2015), the perpetration of this crime can be initiated and perpetrated online and offline across class, age, race, religion and so on.

In the UK, the definition of sexual or gender-based violence has been revised to include controlling and coercive control referring to:

“a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour” (Home Office, 2013, Circular 003/2013, pp. 1).

According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (2021), the year ending March 2020, it was estimated that 1.6 million women aged 16 to 74 years in England and Wales were subjected to domestic abuse, around 7% of the female population. The crime survey also estimated that 3% of women aged 16 to 74 years in England and Wales were subjected to sexual assault (including attempts) and 5% were subjected to stalking. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that just as women represent most victims of domestic abuse and forms of sexual violence offline (Office for National Statistics, 2018), they also form the majority of those who are sexually victimised online (Davidson et al., 2019).

Online sexual or gender-based violence exists within a context like what happens offline and could be as destructive as offline violence with abuse against women such as sexual violence and rape, image-based sexual abuse (IBSA), harassment, and stalking occurring in numerous ways (Jane, 2017; Marganski, 2017). According to Jane (2017), there is also a wide range of Internet platforms used to facilitate these behaviours, including platforms such as social media, dating apps and gaming sites. As such, the Internet environment is commonly regarded as a medium that enables and facilitates online abuse. This is because it makes it easier for

abusers to communicate with their victims without the need for physical proximity (Huber, 2023; Powell et al., 2018).

The impact of gender-based violence in the digital realm can significantly affect the safety, health, livelihood, family ties, dignity, and reputation of women and girls (Powell et al., 2020; Watson, 2023), sometimes resulting in isolation (Huber, 2023). Some findings from this study noted that the online environment provides a space in which victims are not only abused but are 'publicly' abused. This is further exacerbated by the purposeful public identification of victims through the sharing of personal information, which then leaves victims increasingly vulnerable to further forms of abuse, which is again made easier to perpetrate by features and affordances of the online environment. Permanency a feature offered by the online space was a contributing factor to the women's poor mental health, which stemmed from the constant uncertainty around further image publication. It is precisely this public arena provided by the online environment which underpins why some women live in a constant state of paranoia, fear and anxiety about the public linking them to the images (Henry et al., 2023; Huber 2023; Nicola et al., 2021).

Although anyone can be a victim of gender-based violence, research shows that women's experiences of online abuse are different to men, as women are more susceptible to persistent and harsh forms of abuse online (Giugni, 2019). According to the United Nations (2018), women around the world are 27 times more likely to be abused on the Internet compared to men. This online abuse tends to be highly sexualised and openly driven by the target's gender (Huber, 2023). Despite being in the 21st century, violence against women is still a significant concern. The Internet has given perpetrators new ways to express this transgressive behaviour.

2.5.3 Youth gangs

Young people involved in gangs show the most significant correlation between their use of social media and face-to-face violence, according to a study by Irwin-Rogers and Pinkney (2017). As such, it is widely recognised that street gangs or groups may gather information on their targets or victims through their social media accounts to determine their vulnerability and the best time to attack. Liem and Geelen (2019) refer to this use of social media as the Internet as a 'hunting ground' and an 'encyclopaedia'. Empirical studies suggest that gangs spend significant time on the Internet, specifically, social media (Aborisade and Adedayo, 2016), resulting in the term 'Internet banging or Cyber banging' (Lenhart, 2015).

According to a study on Cyber banging in Canada by Morselli and Décary-Héту (2013), social networking sites and modern technologies are among the most commonly used tools by street gangs and organised crime members for committing crimes, communicating with each other and recruiting new members. Throughout the history of gang culture, territory has held significant importance. With the advent of the Internet, virtual spaces have provided an avenue for gang members to interact and share various media, establish reputations, and cultivate a sense of collective identity without the need for physical proximity (Décary-Héту and Morselli 2011; Storrod and Densley, 2017). According to Décary-Héту and Morselli (2011), physical altercations on the streets tend to have a limited number of bystanders as an audience. However, social media offers a global platform where anyone can access content conveniently. This access means that perceived taunts, trolls, insults, and attacks can remain in the public eye indefinitely and potentially escalate the risk of retaliatory behaviour both online and offline, as noted by Elsaesser et al. (2021) and Goldsmith and Wall (2022).

Consequently, gangs and peer groups may participate in various online activities, such as sharing offensive videos, encouraging risky challenges, flaunting weapons, bragging about their criminal acts, ridiculing their rivals' victimisation, and more (Patton et al., 2013; Whittaker et al., 2020). Lumsden and Morgan (2017) also describe the act of trolling and taunting on the Internet as akin to Donarth's (1999) analogy of fishing, where one sets a line and bait, hoping for a response. Unfortunately, such actions can lead to online abuse, causing victims to respond in various ways, such as avoidance, negotiation, confrontation, or diffusion. It is important to note that such behaviour can potentially escalate beyond the online world, leading to face-to-face violence.

2.5.3.1 Problematisation of the term 'gangs'

It is important to note that the definition of what qualifies as a criminal gang has long been a topic of debate. Research conducted in the United Kingdom has consistently identified discernible groups involved in criminal activities and weapon use (Smithson et al., 2013; Taylor, 2023). However, there is significant variation in the descriptions of the nature and organization of these groups.

In 2009, a review of British 'Street Gangs' by the Centre for Social Justice included a section titled, 'Confusing and unreliable - a lack of knowledge and understanding' about the concept of 'gangs'. This review concluded that there was a lack of understanding of the concept of 'gangs' despite numerous studies by justice agencies and academics (Centre for Social

Justice, 2009). The UK Gangs Working Group of 2009 aimed to establish a universal definition for use by all parties engaged in addressing gang-related issues. This initiative sought to eliminate confusion surrounding the terminology and enable comparative analysis across various studies. The group's chosen definition described gangs as:

“A relatively durable, predominately street-based group of young people who (1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, (2) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence, (3) identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) have some form of identifying structural feature and (5) are in conflict with other, similar gangs.” (Centre for Social Justice 2009: 21)

Taylor (2023) asserts that the term 'gang' is being more frequently applied to control marginalized groups, especially young black men. The collective classification and stigmatic effect of the gang label can evoke fear and hostility among the law-abiding majority and has been suggested to be a government tactic to shift focus away from the escalating issue of inequalities, directing blame instead towards individual delinquent behaviour (Densley et al., 2020; Smithson et al., 2013). Previous research also indicates that when youth activity is labelled or framed as gang-related, it can lead to an escalation in their behaviour, increasing the level of risk. As a result, this intensifies surveillance and justifies more stringent forms of intervention and monitoring (Keith, 1993; Ralphs et al., 2009; 2013).

Recently, there has been a growing recognition within the Ministry of Justice of the detrimental impact of the term 'gang' in perpetuating bias against specific ethnic groups (Taylor, 2023). Notably, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has emphasised in their latest 2021 guidance on prosecution decisions that the inappropriate use of the term 'gang' can extend liability beyond what can be proven and disproportionately affect minority ethnic individuals. (Crown Prosecution Service, 2021). Therefore, some authors conclude the term 'gang' should be disregarded due to how it labels rather than aids understanding (Conly, 1993; Smithson et al., 2013; Taylor, 2023). Despite this, the term has persisted. Nonetheless, this current study notes the problematisation of the term 'gang' and limits its brief discussion to avenues for transgressive behaviours.

In summary, the term "gang" provides minimal assistance to professionals seeking to comprehend or address risk issues, develop effective strategies, or offer intervention for individuals who engage in offending behaviour as part of a group. At its most detrimental, the term perpetuates bias and racism towards individuals from Black and Asian backgrounds and

reinforces unproductive power dynamics between psychologists, allied professionals, and individuals involved (Taylor, 2023).

2.5.4 Cyber-suicide

Cyber-suicide is a term used for suicide and its ideations on the Internet. Cyber-suicide is associated with internet platforms that entice vulnerable individuals and equip them with various ways to self-harm (Birbal et al., 2009) intentionally. According to Alao et al. (2006), the term Cyber-Suicide is also known to indicate individuals using the Internet to communicate suicidal thinking. In a study examining adolescents' suicide statements on Myspace, Cash et al. (2013) reviewed 1,038 Myspace posts collated from publicly available profiles. Findings observed and disclosed that suicidal thoughts were expressed among young people as a response to unpleasant online and offline experiences such as substance use and mental health issues. Although data for this cyber-suicide study was obtained from only one SNS (Myspace), which at this time could be said to be struggling to regain a strong presence on the Internet, similar user experience can be said of other prominent SNS such as TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube. The authors suggest that young people expressing suicidal thoughts may use SNS to reach out for help and support as they navigate through challenging experiences daily. The authors also noted concerns about where the use of social media can create an avenue for young people to access methods of attempting suicide and others who have done so and that online engagement with prior suicide thoughts or attempts may encourage them to replicate the event, a phenomenon referred to as the 'Werther effect' (Aborisade and Adedayo, 2016). As such, to indicate the adverse effect of media portrayal of suicides, Phillips (1974) developed the term the 'Werther effect'.

Without suggestion, Durkheim (1897) argues that some suicides would still have taken place eventually. Thus, while some individuals may be prone to suggestion, Durkheim believes that imitation is not prevalent enough to impact the suicide rates in society. This is because Durkheim observed that individuals who died by suicide related to imitation would have taken their own lives regardless of suicide rates. However, it has been noted that individuals who have attempted suicide report have several suicidal friends (Bearman and Moody, 2004; Krietman et al., 1969). This result might suggest that individuals imitate suicides of close friends and family, and vulnerable people may prefer a sense of community and friendship with other suicide-prone persons (i.e., assortative relating; Joiner, 1999). In addition, proximity to suicide may also result in cognitive desensitisation or priming to the concept of suicide and

increase the risk for suicidal behaviour (Joiner, 2005). Likewise, Phillips (1974) suggests that the 'Werther effect' can manifest on a national or international scale, in contrast to Durkheim's (1987) assertion, and it is not necessarily created by only individuals who may have either way attempted or died by suicide.

In other words, it is possible that with suicide stories as depicted today online and offline, media instigates or hastens some suicides and creates others. A recent example is 14-year-old Molly Russell, who took her own life in 2017 after viewing distressing materials about depression, self-harm and suicide on Instagram and Pinterest (Regulation 28 report from The Coroner's Service; NSPCC, 2022). Suicide ranks as the second leading cause of death worldwide (Siddhant et al., 2023) among people aged 15 to 29 (Vuong et al., 2023). As such, these digital media platforms can indeed be used by young people to display suggestions and comments about suicidal thoughts, behaviours, and possible intended actions.

Niederkrötenhaller et al. (2020), in their study of suicide and suicide reporting in the media, discovered that there is a correlation between suicides by celebrities and increases in suicide in the population as evidence of similarity between the number of suicides and the suicide method used by a celebrity was observed. However, Niederkrötenhaller et al. (2020) also note that experiences of hope and healing are also featured in the media, which might assist in the prevention of suicide attempts. This means that to an extent, exposure and subjection to materials and contents of suicidal behaviour can also have a positive (i.e., educative or preventive) impact when coping strategies and solutions are presented. This is known as the 'Papageno' effect (Niederkrötenhaller et al., 2010; Till et al., 2018; Niederkrötenhaller and Till, 2019).

2.6 Attraction to transgressive behaviour

Goldsmith and Wall (2022) argue that not all motivations for transgressive behaviours are indicative of deep criminal pathology or criminal career commitment while still acknowledging biological, economic, and environmental background factors of crime and addiction to crime. Katz's (1988) research on the allure of criminal behaviour among young people and its relation to the Internet can be better understood through seduction. Goldsmith and Wall (2022) further explain that seduction is closely tied to the ability of situations to influence one's actions and decisions.

Similarly, Wortley (2008) recognised that individuals might engage in criminal behaviour due to the influence of their immediate surroundings, which can cause them to consider actions they otherwise would not have. This implies a certain level of attraction and temptation. While the idea of seduction has been primarily applied to offline delinquency, Katz (1988) proposes that by immersing oneself in specific environments, an individual can genuinely encounter and explore a new or different world. As such, these observations suggest that specific circumstances can influence both the drive to commit criminal acts and the chance to do so. These circumstances and contexts can manifest themselves both online and offline. For instance, extensive participation in online activities like gaming and social networking is common (Presdee, 2000; Wall, 2007) and can occasionally lead to difficulties (Ponnusamy et al., 2020; Schaffer and Fang, 2018).

2.6.1 Internet as an attractive setting

Vaidhyathan (2011) characterises the attractiveness of the Internet as a 'seductive swamp'. This phrase effectively depicts an enticing environment that can be challenging to navigate once immersed. It accurately reflects the addictive nature of the online world and the complexities of managing our digital presence and usage (Goldsmith and Wall, 2022). Within the context of criminal behaviour as an allure, Katz (1988) introduces the notion of 'sneaky thrills' to explain the motivational factors that drive young people to engage in shoplifting and vandalism. This concept encapsulates the exciting anticipation of committing a crime like shop theft, the complex emotions that arise during the unlawful act, and the exhilarating rush of successfully perpetrating such crimes. According to Katz (1988), people engage in deviant leisure activities because of their innate desire for thrills, pleasure, and excitement. This implies that the desire for excitement is becoming increasingly popular among young people. Sometimes, the environment and setting of these activities can bring out hidden or previously unknown desires in the participants, leading to transgressive behaviour (Wortley, 2008).

Many young people are naturally curious and tend to seek new experiences. However, the online environment can particularly attract them (Clarke, 2012; Goldsmith and Wall, 2022). As well as providing a wealth of exciting opportunities, the Internet also expands one's sense of self (Katz, 1988). According to Hayward and Young (2004) and Hayward (2016), crime is sometimes portrayed as a cool, romantic, and exciting cultural symbol to attract young people. This cultural context creates a desire for transgressive behaviour. Despite the inconsistent

legal definition of criminality, Smith and Raymen (2018) argue that some forms of leisure are universally detested because of the severity of harm associated with them (see Section 2.8).

2.6.2 Social media, an invitation to transgressive behaviour

In explaining how situational factors facilitate or encourage transgressive behaviours, Clarke (2008) observed that a proliferation of criminal opportunities could draw individuals with no pre-existing disposition for crime towards criminal behaviour, and regular exposure to such transgressive opportunities can also lead law-abiding people to seek more of such action (Clarke, 2012). Verbeek (2005) and Wood et al. (2023) argue that the Internet can influence harm. They suggest that technologies can encourage or discourage human actions by 'inviting' specific actions while inhibiting others. In other words, technology can 'invite' people to translate their harmful intentions into a plan of action that enables them to achieve a similar goal. This means that technology not only extends an individual's capability to cause harm but can also motivate them to do so by shaping their perception, actions, and experience (Wood et al., 2023).

Drawing a link to the Routine Activity Theory, Cohen and Felson (1979) assert that three factors must converge for crime to occur: a potential offender, a vulnerable target, and the lack of a capable guardian. This theory includes the routine activities of both offender and victim or suitable target, and changes to routine activity patterns could directly affect crime opportunity. According to Cohen and Felson (1979), routine activities may typically occur (1) at home, (2) in jobs away from home, and (3) in other activities away from home. For example, an offender might habitually stroll through certain areas, searching for homes vulnerable to burglary. On the other hand, a competent guardian can be anyone who can intervene or act as a witness, such as ordinary citizens, police, or security personnel. Similarly, it can be argued that regular changes to the routine activity patterns of Internet users could directly affect any potential crime opportunity, either by reducing the likelihood that offenders would encounter suitable targets in the online environment, or by increasing the amount of time people would spend online and hence provide guardianship there (Farrell and Tilley, 2020). For example, due to the fluctuations in people's routine activity (lifestyle and mobility) during the COVID-19 pandemic, Langton et al. (2021) noted a significant change in the nature of crime in England and Wales during lockdowns, indicating a disruption in the frequency of convergence between motivated offenders, suitable targets, and a lack of guardianship (Halford et al., 2020; Stickle and Felson, 2020).

As Verbeek (2011) notes, "unforeseen mediations can ... emerge when technologies are used as intended" (p. 57). For example, Facebook and Instagram Live provide the opportunity for live streaming. In doing so, it invites forms of content intended and unintended by the user, such as the live streaming of violence and terrorism (Wood et al., 2023). For instance, Dragiewicz et al. (2018) highlight that:

"The design of each platform's front-end, user-facing features and affordances, as well as its back-end architectures and algorithms, shapes the possibilities and constraints of private and public communication on that platform, including the ability to spread and share abuse, to engage in creative counter-abuse tactics, or to report and block abusers. On the other hand, users frequently exploit platform features in ways that are not intended or adequately contemplated by the platform" (pp. 614-615).

As Wood et al. (2023) noted, the interplay of various causal factors, including human agency and technology, can give rise to harmful outcomes. Therefore, the specific design, decisions, procedures, and principles adopted by SNS can significantly impact the likelihood of E-enabled violence perpetrated by their users (Harris 2021; PenzeyMoog 2021; Wood et al., 2023). Situations provide opportunities for crime and can accelerate it (Clarke, 2012; Wortley, 2008). By providing an unlimited pool of victims, enabling criminals to access readily available information about their victims, and facilitating communication between peers around the world, social media could create several new opportunities for and ways of committing crimes (Surette, 2015). As social media is not constrained by distance and volume, perpetrators can commit crimes at an increased speed and a lower cost (Wall, 2005). Nevertheless, rather than accepting an assumption that the Internet and other SNS create criminogenic environments, these contrasting viewpoints create a gap in our understanding and form several questions about whether young people's private online spaces are to be left alone or monitored and whether researchers are looking at a contemporary online/offline phenomenon through a different lens. Regardless, for young people in the UK, social media may afford new ways to express aggression that can be demonstrated offline in various communities.

2.7 Online deviance and leisure

Social deviance refers to behaviour that violates social norms, values, and ethical standards (Downes & Rock, 2007). The idea that people engage in crime and deviance as a form of leisure is a concept that has been introduced previously. It dates back to Friedrich Engels in

1844 in his work 'The Condition of the Working Class in England' (1987), where he wrote of the young people of Manchester's regular Sunday pursuits of sexual liaisons, drinking, dog fighting, gambling, prostitution and arson.

Presdee's (2000) 'Carnival of Crime' work, based on the social structure/alienation theory (Wall, 2007), highlights negative assumptions about social environments. According to Presdee (2000), contemporary society witnesses a significant amount of crime, which reflects the pressure on individuals to lead 'two lives' owing to the existing social structure. To examine everything that happens before a crime occurs, Presdee addresses the performance of exciting and seductive pleasures which he refers to as 'the carnival.' The carnival, as explained by Presdee, can be likened to the second life of the people, a place where people tend to perform their collective frustrations, excitement, and transgressive pleasures regardless of whether the behaviour or action is directed by punishment or reward. The concept suggests that the initial phase of life is the 'official' one, defined by work and regulated by an external authority. The second phase is considered to be the only authentic space where an individual can express their emotions and feelings towards life. This phase is often associated with the world of 'excess, obscenity, and degradation' as described by Presdee (2000, p. 8). In other words, the Internet provides people with a 'second life' (Wall, 2007; Presdee, 2000), a place to take a break from their everyday lives and indulge in activities that may not be acceptable in their "real life." This online space allows individuals to cross social boundaries and engage in private, immoral acts and emotions (Hall, 2018; 2020). Thus, the Internet is referred to as a space that offers a "safe site" for these activities, "where they can enjoy private immoral acts and emotions" (Presdee, 2000, p. 64).

Some examples of carnivals of crime include joyriding, street parties, street pillow fights, happy slapping, graffiti, environmental destruction, and others. According to Presdee (2000), these events and activities are all carnivalesque or performance actions because they create intense joy, thrills, pleasure, and excitement for some while also adding to the displeasure, suffering and humiliation of others.

Although Presdee's (2000) 'Carnival of Crime' work precedes the emergence and growth of social media, transgressive behaviours are often linked to online anonymity and lack of physical presence. On one hand, social media has the potential to improve communication and relationships, which is remarkable. However, it also has adverse effects that are prevalent and distressing (Aborisade and Adedayo, 2016).

2.8 Forms of online deviance and leisure

In line with the work of cultural criminologists, Smith and Raymen (2018) propose that criminology has predominantly focused on the actions of young individuals involved in activities like drug consumption, graffiti, or loitering. While not always illegal, these behaviours often straddle the boundary between illegality and deviance, sparking conversations on law enforcement reactions, policy measures, antisocial conduct, and crime deterrence. Smith (2014) argues that individual, social, economic, and environmental harms are becoming structurally embedded within many accepted and normalised forms of leisure. In effect, as leisure and recreation are often viewed positively, harmful or deviant behaviour typically carries a negative connotation, there may be a link between the two.

In discussing harm relating to or having the character of a space or area, Smith and Raymen (2018) argue that spatially contingent harm refers to leisure activities that attract disproportionate criminalisation relative to their actual harm. An illustrative instance of this type of 'serious leisure' is skateboarding (Garrett, 2013), which is, to some extent, a recognised sport and leisure pursuit with its competitions and regulating agencies. Nevertheless, as cultural criminologists have observed, engaging in this activity beyond its commercialised confines or near private property is deemed illicit and unacceptable (Kindynis, 2016). In other words, different forms of leisure in different spatial or environmental contexts can pose different meanings, requiring different regulations.

Therefore, in addition to opportunities for transgressive behaviour presented by the Internet (see Section 2.6.2) there are certain behaviours which when exhibited offline by young people, could have a different meaning and effect when experienced online. At the same time, while behaviours like this can occur in different environments (offline and online), some of the experiences or effects of such actions could be the same. In addition, while legal, certain behaviours can directly or indirectly cause harm and may be considered morally wrong (Smith and Raymen, 2018). This harmful leisure was divided into four categories namely: subjective harm, environmental harm, socially corrosive harm, and embedded harm. For this current study, we will consider the relation of online transgressive behaviours as it relates to socially corrosive harm and embedded harm.

2.8.1 Socially corrosive harm

Society functions on the basis of a strong and inclusive social structure that is built on mutual trust and understanding. However, certain leisure activities can have a negative impact on our social structure, leading to the isolation of individuals from important social networks such as family, friends, and community (Smith, 2016; Smith and Raymen, 2018). According to Smith and Raymen (2018), an example of socially corrosive leisure that allows individuals to retreat from society into the 'wallpapered world' of fantasy is violent video gaming such as the very well-known 'Grand Theft Auto series. Atkinson and Rodgers (2015) describe these avenues as the growth of 'murder boxes', where online video games can create virtual worlds that depict harmful cultural norms. These norms can include the use of violence to dominate others based on their race or gender. Such representations can perpetuate harmful stereotypes within society.

Watching online content can influence young people into more complex and troublesome activities both online and offline. For instance, some features of the Internet can attract certain young individuals to shift from playing online video games and other activities to indulging in hacking and other online-related offences (Elsaesser et al., 2021). Hacking can be enjoyable for some people, and the reward of success can lead to further involvement. However, this can create a complex situation where it is necessary to negotiate the boundaries between what is considered legal and what is not (Goldsmith and Wall, 2022).

Also, of note are the possible socially corrosive effects of the rapid increase of social media use among young people (Ponnusamy et al., 2020; Cheng et al., 2021). Social media offers a platform for people to showcase their lifestyle, culture, and consumer skills competitively and comparatively (Caner et al., 2022). Whether it is a carefully composed picture of a work of art or a snapshot of a vacation, individuals who create and share content on social media selectively present their identity through a visual lens. This ever-present will to the representation of self is what Yar (2012) suggests can also encourage more severe forms of transgressive behaviours or intimidation, which often find expression through social media. In other words, these acts are sometimes intentionally performed to create and spread harmful content online, contributing to criminal behaviour.

2.8.2 Embedded harms

According to Smith and Raymen (2018), some leisure cultures become entrenched within legitimate and familiar consumer markets, and gambling is one example. The popularity of gambling has increased significantly in recent years, with many people now considering it a regular and legitimate form of leisure activity. This trend has been fuelled by the rise of online social networks, which have made gambling more accessible than ever before. However, the landscape of gambling is constantly evolving, with new technologies transforming the industry at an unprecedented rate. According to researchers, the industry has changed so much that it may now be unrecognisable (Downes et al., 2014). In other words, the growth of new online socialisation forums may have disguised the social harms surrounding online engagement with gambling and other harmful leisure activities.

Social media's impact on harmful leisure activities and transgressive behaviours among young people in real-world/offline communities may be complex and rapidly evolving. In summary, the premise for this exploration, as discussed above (see Sections 2.4.1 and 2.6.2), is the idea that the Internet and social media provide certain features, opportunities, and advantages that not only encourage cybercrime but also entice young people to engage in more transgressive behaviours. These platforms offer various appeals to pleasure, availability, and convenience, making it easier for individuals to indulge in transgressive behaviours.

2.9 Presentation of self-online

To understand online communication, behaviour and interaction among young people, Goffman's (1959) work 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life' will be explored. Self can be developed in several ways, and one of the main ideas behind symbolic interactionism is that through verbal communication, our sense of self and identity is primarily formed through constant interactions with others (Baumeister, 1997). The basis for this exploration is symbolic interactionism's importance in understanding how self and social identities are curated and maintained online among young people.

According to Goffman (1959), individuals construct performances to create 'impressions' that align with their goals. We adapt our performances to suit the social environment and audience. Thus, highlighting desired representations of themselves (Saker, 2017). According to Goffman, when we interact with others, we tend to unconsciously put on a social performance that fits the situation. This means that we take on a particular role and behave accordingly. In

response, we also become part of the audience and react to the social performance of others. Goffman refers to this as a 'working consensus' (1959). However, when we are by ourselves, performance then becomes unnecessary, as that is when our authentic self is truly genuine (Goffman, 1959). In other words, our environment is always the theatre or stage, with individuals always in a performance.

Self-presentation is a process where we form impressions of others based on their performance and they do the same of us (Goffman, 1959). Goffman identified two major performance types that individuals exhibit. Firstly, the 'sincere' performer is an individual who believes that the impression of reality which he stages is the actual reality. These individuals consider their performance or personality to be entirely authentic across different social groups. Secondly is the 'cynic' performer who is aware of performing in different social contexts and seeks acceptance among their circles through self-presentation.

Feher (2019) agrees with Goffman (1959) that representation involves actions and staging to create visual images for an audience. She further asserts that the need for online self-representation causes the user to select the best information to share with the respective audience, which can create a specific type of image for that user.

While Goffman's (1959) theory of human interaction and behaviour was primarily focused on face-to-face situations where individuals are physically present, it did not take into account the broader societal constructs that can also impact one's sense of self and identity, including but not limited to law, government, and religion. Thus, ignoring more significant societal and background impact, this theory paints a limiting picture of an individual's performance on stage. Several researchers have utilised Goffman's theories to analyse behaviour and communication patterns online, aiming to gain critical insights into the nature of these interactions (Aspling, 2011; Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013; Merunkova and Slerka, 2019; Serpa and Ferreira, 2018). Online experiences often reflect the same forms of oppression, disadvantage, and prejudice encountered in offline everyday life (Boyd, 2011; Farrington et al., 2017; Nakamura, 2007; Nakayama, 2017). According to Everaert (2014), the importance of first impressions is amplified in the context of social media. When someone looks at another person's profile on platforms like Facebook or Twitter, they can form an opinion about that person's identity before meeting them in person. This removes the pressure of presenting oneself in a particular way during a face-to-face interaction. At the same time, social media

allows people to create an online persona that only showcases specific aspects of their lives that they choose to share.

Livingstone (2008), in his study of teenagers using SNS, suggests that these platforms create a space and an environment for young people to be more visible to their peers while seeking validation and experimenting with various identities or representations of self. This supports the argument that online peer validation could be incorporated into offline personality (Fullwood, 2015) as self-representation on social media has increasingly become visual, with smartphones capturing our reflection at any moment. On the other hand, Surette (2015) points out that social media may present opportunities for performance crimes, which is the ability for criminals to create accounts of the crime through texts, images, or videos which can then be distributed to a larger public via social media platforms while hiding their identity.

Hence, the idea suggested in Goffman's (1959) work, although focussed on offline face-to-face interactions, can be helpful in terms of understanding online interactions and engagements as social media platforms allow users to make changes to their perceived self and identity online that they would ordinarily not have been able to confidently make offline (Davis, 2012). This gives users control over their self-representation and identity, and they can choose how they want to be perceived by others and how to best represent themselves online and offline to others (Ellison, 2013; Ganda, 2014). Self-presentation is a common human behaviour, driven by the desire to project a positive image. However, individual and situational factors influence how we engage in self-presentation. Research shows that we are more likely to engage in self-presentation in some situations than in others (Jhangiani et al., 2022). Ultimately, our self-presentation behaviours are context-specific as we choose which persona to adopt. Although useful in the online environment, the absence of nonverbal and physical elements of SNS provides individuals with more opportunities to be inventive with their self-presentation, allowing greater control over their performance, and thereby reducing the risk of identity manipulation being exposed.

2.10 Self-representation online and offline

It has been widely recognised that the Internet allows users to experiment with different versions of themselves, allowing for greater flexibility in self-expression (Fullwood et al., 2016). Presenting a positive self-image to others to enhance social status is an essential and natural aspect of everyday life, known as self-presentation (Jhangiani et al., 2022). This self-presentation among peers has been suggested by several studies to increasingly take place

on the Internet (Davis, 2010; Schouten et al., 2007), which enables its users to control their expression of self far more easily than in an offline environment.

With key features of social media, receiving validation from peers in the form of likes, comments and followers may serve to approve a specific representation of self which may then be incorporated into one's online and offline personality (Fullwood, 2015). Young people may feel pressure to conform to social norms and gain peer acceptance, which can be amplified by social media's deindividuation effects (Kim and Park, 2011; Moser and Axtell, 2013; Whittaker et al., 2020). Deindividuation is a term used to describe a state in which individuals lose their sense of self-awareness. This often happens when people do not think that their actions could be singled out by others, particularly when they are in a group (Festinger et al., 1952). This lack of self-awareness can make it difficult for individuals to reflect on the potential consequences of their actions (Imada et al., 2021). Therefore, this study's primary aim is to explore and discover whether transgressive behaviours among young people may be encouraged in Nottingham through social media as these platforms have a substantial number of young people as their regular users.

Hall (1997) described three theories of representation namely: reflective, intentional, and constructive. He notes that we all have different experiences and interpretations of 'reality,' and as such words, texts, images, videos, and other representations can have various meanings when used in different contexts or cultures. According to Jhangiani et al. (2022), the desire to compartmentalise our reputations and audiences can sometimes spill over into behaviours in the online environment. It is interesting to note that according to Wiederhold (2012), some young people were shifting from Facebook to Twitter due to the need for a more selective audience. With their parents now being friends with them on Facebook, there is a growing need for younger people to find a new space where they can build connections and associations that may not necessarily be parent-friendly.

According to Rettberg (2017), digital cameras, smartphones, and social media have revolutionised the way we present ourselves to the world. Drawing on the insights of Goffman (1959), Rettberg highlights how these technologies allow us to share our experiences and self-representations with a wider audience than ever before. Nowadays, young people frequently use social networking sites to communicate their intentions, express themselves, build relationships, and construct their self-identity. According to Marwick and Boyd (2010),

social media users often use self-presentational strategies to maintain their popularity and image.

2.11 Young people and Identity development

Adolescence is a crucial and important stage in human development and the period of transitioning from childhood to adulthood is when the development of a comprehensible self and identity begins (Coleman, 2011). During adolescence, some individuals become closer to their peers while gradually distancing themselves from their parents (Dolev-Cohen and Barak, 2013). Typically, youths seek comfort and affirmation from their peers who are undergoing similar life experiences. Additionally, some young individuals who do not receive adequate support from their families may endeavour to derive a sense of acknowledgement, connection, and inclusion by their peers and even unfamiliar individuals to make up for the absence of such support in their school and home environments (Hall, 2018; 2020). This could be because of status frustration, which Cohen (1955) describes as a kind of tension and reaction to feeling out of place in society. This could mean that young people may form a kind of subculture or group to gain a sense of status from their peers in response to the tension and lack in their immediate environment. This subculture, according to Cohen (1955), can consist of behaviours normally thought of as transgressive and criminal. As a result, this support is now easily aided by the Internet, as it enables young people to maintain connection and communication from any space or environment (Defede et al., 2021).

According to Fuchs (2017), some of the communications that take place on social networking platforms repeatedly involve feelings of belonging together or friendship, often resulting in more than social relationships. Belonging is a basic human need that is essential for feeling accepted and being a part of a community. It goes beyond just social interaction and involves a deep desire for lasting and supportive relationships that allow for shared experiences and a sense of connectedness. As noted by Maslow in 1968, belonging is a fundamental emotional requirement for human beings. Likewise, recent studies by Lambert et al. (2013) and Smith et al. (2021) have also emphasised the importance of belonging in facilitating personal growth and building strong communities. No doubt, SNS like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok, Snapchat and Twitter have increased new communication and community-building channels that are instant and readily available for young people (Defede et al., 2021). This is evident as young people have always found and used public online spaces to gather and share information, provide support, and compete for social status among peers (Bradley

et al., 2019). Therefore, belonging plays a crucial role in social media usage. When users feel a strong sense of community and positive emotions, they are more likely to return to the platform (Liu et al., 2018).

In addition, however, detrimental, and excessive use of the Internet, and social media, can cause the development of risky online behaviours which can lead to potential adverse and negative effects such as depression and anxiety (Abbas et al., 2019; Nemati and Matlabi, 2017). For example, a combination of their exposure and the mutual need for acceptance within the peer group may lead to addictive engagement in antisocial and illicit behaviours which most times may start as bullying, hate speech, trolling and taunting others on social media (Cohen-Almagor, 2018). This supports the idea that young people's need for social belonging predicts their use of social media and willingness to engage in collective actions (Liu et al., 2018; Seo et al., 2014). At the same time, as research suggests, low self-esteem among young people is usually associated with Internet addiction and the problematic use of SNS to feel connected (Andreassen et al., 2017; Servidio et al., 2018). This low self-esteem is prevalent in individuals who tend to check their social media on their smartphones regularly, an addiction due to the fear of missing out (FoMO) on social experiences (Servidio, 2023).

In their study of life narratives on Facebook, Robards and Lincoln (2017) further agree that for many, Facebook as a SNS has come to represent an archive of memories that acts as a space which can be edited, re-organised, modified, re-configured, re-presented and even deleted as it gives young people a platform through which to produce and curate their longitudinal life narrative online. These stories are influenced by individuals who are either known or unknown to each other, who work together to create and assess each other's online activities by posting and exchanging pictures, messages, and videos on various social networking sites as a connected public (Lapidot-Lefler and Barak, 2012, Nguyen and Barbour, 2017). They also suggest that social media platforms function similarly to a teenager's bedroom, where young people may exert both practical and symbolic forms of authority. For instance, we can control our privacy settings like opening or closing the digital bedroom door or editing an image before posting it to present ourselves in a certain way (Lincoln, 2012). Fullwood (2015) further argued that when we are unsure of how we want others to perceive us, it is preferable to adopt an identity and self-representation that will gain approval and popularity among peers, both online and offline.

Furthermore, Petering (2016), according to his study of social media and youth violence, believes that model online identities were often being used as a cover for elevated levels of anxiety and insecurity. Some studies suggest that social media platforms help young people meet their basic needs of belonging and self-presentation. These platforms can facilitate fun, cognitive skill improvement, and social interactions (Boursier and Manna, 2018; Griffiths and Kuss, 2017; Lim et al., 2013), other studies have reported more negative effects (Ponnusamy et al., 2020) encouraging users to engage in various transgressive behaviours (Elsaesser et al., 2021; Goldsmith and Wall, 2022; Patton et al., 2013). Such misuse may lead young people to experience adverse effects of social media if not responsibly managed (Cheng et al., 2021; Frost and Rickwood, 2017; Vannucci et al., 2020; Webster et al., 2021). Thus, SNS are very popular among young people as they play a crucial role in facilitating communication, relationships and exploration of matters that are important to them. Therefore, it is essential to understand the effect of social media on transgressive behaviours among youngsters. As such, it remains evident that the study of identity construction and self-presentation online and offline and its relation to youth offending among young people in the UK is an important consideration.

2.12 Authenticity of Identity presentation

Many young individuals with an online presence utilise multiple social media platforms to navigate their social relationships, perspectives, and environments. The occasional differences in how they present themselves on each platform may suggest an attempt to portray different personas online. Marwick and Boyd's (2010) research suggests that people present themselves differently online depending on their audience and the context of the interaction. Nguyen and Barbour (2017) suggest that the expectations and norms of behaviour in a job interview are different from those in a social setting like a bar. In other words, people tend to behave differently depending on the situation they are in, just as they do in the offline, real-world environment.

Nguyen and Barbour (2017) have also noted that the digital media space is a particularly useful expressive space for people to experiment with identity, thus permitting identity performance to take place and receive feedback from others. Studies indicate that individuals tend to modify, embellish, and present unrealistic versions of themselves on social media platforms (Manago et al., 2008; Robards and Lincoln, 2017). When considering the concept of authenticity in the online world and the ways in which users craft their digital personas,

experts propose that social media serves as a tool for constructing and evolving one's online identity through careful curation and editing of content (Bailey et al., 2020; Chua and Chang, 2016; Hogan, 2010). As an example, young women have been found to use selfies to showcase various aspects of their identity, according to Nguyen and Barbour (2017). Therefore, determining the authenticity of individuals' online identities remains a matter of subjectivity, as noted by Williams and Copes (2005).

Nonetheless, it is believed that using technology for the experimentation of self can lead young people to reach a more 'authentic' version of themselves (Bailey et al., 2020). According to research, SNS serve as an extension of one's offline identity, where users tend to present their genuine selves (Ellison et al., 2006). By doing so, users can affirm their sense of self and increase their feeling of belonging (Bailey et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2021). This indicates that SNS provides users with a broader platform to express their identity beyond offline limitations. According to Katz and Crocker (2015), Snapchat is commonly perceived as a temporary and heavily edited platform, offering a greater degree of privacy to its users. The short-lived nature of Snapchat's content allows for more creative expression and fewer limitations on user engagement. Additionally, this feature enables individuals to experiment with their self-presentation and explore unique styles (Katz and Crocker, 2015). This implies that users can persistently adjust their self-presentation and identity performance according to the appropriate social context known as the situation and the audiences (Nguyen and Barbour, 2017).

Therefore, presenting different aspects of one's identity does not necessarily make them less authentic but rather selective in how they represent themselves in different social contexts for different audiences (Marwick and Boyd, 2010). Consequently, one's authenticity on social media platforms is consistent regardless of the platform used. However, being authentic requires representing oneself in alignment with personal values, beliefs, and traits. In other words, young people on these SNS are attentive to their curated identity which attracts and captivates the appropriate online audience.

2.13 Social learning theory and behavioural construction

Researchers have different theories about how children, young people and adults learn about themselves and their societal roles. In the following sections, these theories are outlined and critiqued. Social Learning Theory (SLT) proposes that differences in criminal behaviour can be attributed to principles of learning (Akers, 1998). Learning is a multifaceted process that

various factors can influence, and as many different psychological and criminological theories suggest, observation, interaction and association can play a critical role in determining how and what people learn (Hammer, 2011; Fryling et al., 2011, Bandura 1971; Cooley 1902). According to Hoffman (1993), SLTs see the environment as the major force in the development of behaviour. As such, learning can be defined as "a persisting or enduring change in human performance or performance potential as a result of the learner's interaction with the environment" (Driscoll, 1994, pp. 8-9). As is of interest to this current study, Social Learning concepts and their relation to young people's behavioural construction online and offline are discussed below.

2.13.1 The 'looking glass' self

In their study of social behaviourism, sociologists Mead (1934) and Cooley (1902) argued that people develop a sense of self through interactions with others. However, they differed in how this might happen. According to Cooley (1902), an individual's self-identity can be shaped by every person they encounter throughout their lifetime. This is because people develop their sense of self by observing how others perceive them, a phenomenon that Cooley referred to as the 'looking-glass self' (Beer, Watson, and McDade-Montez, 2013). In other words, the general idea of the 'looking-glass self' theory is that the development of self occurs through interactions with others, which is based on our understanding of how others perceive us. The 'looking-glass self' uses a mirror as a metaphor for how we view others' perceptions to understand ourselves and measure our worth.

According to Cooley (1902), the 'looking glass self' indicates that how one sees oneself is not strictly an individual occurrence, but rather it involves others. Cooley's theory asserts that individuals actively participate in shaping how others perceive them, rather than viewing the self as a mere internalisation of interactions (Cooley, 1902). McIntyre (1998) argues that individuals and society are not two separate entities but rather interconnected components of a whole. According to his perspective, primary groups such as families play a significant role in shaping one's sense of self through the use of a "looking glass." Similarly, Cooley's belief in the importance of primary groups in socialisation is reflected in their emphasis on close relationships. In these groups, individuals develop the ability to understand others' thoughts and adjust their behaviour accordingly (McIntyre, 1998). Thus, primary groups play a crucial role in the development of an individual's socialisation and their understanding of society.

In applying the concept of the 'looking-glass self' to the online environment, Marwick and Boyd (2010) argue that the fixed and recurrent flow of reactions, judgements and evaluations obtained on social media platforms helps shape its user's identity. This is because users are likely to modify their behaviour to gain a considerable number of favourable and positive reactions from others. Nguyen and Barbour (2017) in their study of 'Selfies and Identity Performance', also argued that the assumptions of others' impressions affect our concept of the image of self, particularly when viewed through the lens of the 'selfie'. For instance, young people may take multiple selfies but only select and share or post the few they believe portray them in the most positive light to appeal to other people. Based on the expected perceptions of others, which stresses the importance of the opinions of others in one's image of the self, the user then internalises feedback from the audience. In other words, and as Cooley (1902) described, our gestures and behaviours are modified by how we believe others view us. Nonetheless, the emergence and presence of SNS could provide some complexity to the 'looking-glass self.' Users of these platforms are now exposed to multiple interactions, perceptions and judgements of various people online, which can suggest or imply having multiple mirrors. As such, social media platforms may create room for the digital or cyber self which refers to the self or image that an individual may want to create for these SNS, some of which could be positive and others negative.

Although popular and useful, this concept of 'the looking glass' self has shortcomings. This theory does not differentiate between the impact of this perception on ingroups and outgroups, close friends, family, and strangers (Nebo, 2022). The concept in question is limited to a small group of people or a small-scale social structure, namely, the primary group that interacts daily. On the other hand, a "secondary group" is a larger group of people who are brought together temporarily to work towards a common goal. These relationships are more impersonal and goal-oriented. (Cooley 1902; Nebo, 2022). Ingroup refers to a social group that an individual identifies as being part of, while an outgroup refers to a group that an individual does not identify with (Gordijn et al., 2001). People can identify with both groups based on many factors such as race, gender, age, ethnicity, values, and interests.

Similarly, not every perception carries the same weight for every individual, for instance, the perception and evaluation of strangers might impact a young person in a much separate way than that of close peers and family. It is unclear from Cooley's (1902) work whether the concept of how others perceive us is more significant with people from our own families and close culture or if it is more widespread. In contrast, Perkins, Wiley, and Deaux (2014) discovered

that members of a particular ethnic minority group in the United States believed that their self-esteem was significantly related to how other members of their culture perceived them. On the other hand, their perceived appraisal of European Americans towards them was only weakly related to their self-esteem.

Furthermore, according to Berkowitz's (2005) social norms theory, individuals tend to conform to perceived descriptive norms when expressing or inhibiting behaviour. Descriptive norms refer to beliefs about what the "typical person" thinks, feels, or does. They can either discourage or encourage transgressive behaviour depending on whether it is seen as normative or counter-normative. In other words, if the descriptive norm suggests that transgressive behaviour is acceptable or favoured, it may encourage such behaviour. In contrast, if it indicates that it is unacceptable, it may discourage it. Descriptive norms can work in several ways and also promote transgressive behaviour. As individuals assess the occurrence of transgressive behaviour within their social group (or the wider general population), they may perceive that they engage in a transgressive behaviour more or less than others. The degree to which social norms influence people depends on whether their behaviour is above or below the perceived norm. Individuals who perceive themselves as more accepting of nonconformity than their peers or social circles may experience pressure to conform and reduce their level of nonconformity to align with the norm.

Suppose an individual believes that they are less accepting of transgressive behaviour than what is considered typical. In that case, any normative pressure imposed by the descriptive norm should increase the acceptance of transgressive behaviour. However, if an individual perceives their behaviour as counter-normative, even when it is not, this misperception could lead young people to change their behaviour, deviating from the true underlying norm. This phenomenon of misperceiving descriptive norms has been given the name 'pluralistic ignorance.' Thus, 'pluralistic ignorance' refers to situations where individuals act in ways that do not align with their actual beliefs and values. This behaviour can occur when people believe that others in a group hold different beliefs than their own (Miller and McFarland, 1991). Consequently, they may act in a way that conforms to perceived group norms, even if it goes against their values. The theory can also be applied to situations where individuals avoid confronting problematic behaviour in others.

People often avoid expressing their discomfort with problematic behaviour, assuming their peers feel the same way. Bringing the true level of discomfort among peers to light can

encourage individuals to address the offending behaviour. Abusers and perpetrators may also deny or justify their actions due to a (mis)perception that their behaviour is normal (Baer et al., 1991), an experience known as 'false consensus' (Pollard et al., 2000).

2.13.2 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory proposed by Tajfel (1978) and Tajfel and Turner (1979) reflects an individual's self-concept derived from group membership and a need to belong. Turner's (1982) distinction between personal and social identity illustrates the beginning of Self Categorisation Theory (SCT). Personal identity is conceptualised as self-definition as a unique individual in terms of interpersonal or intra-group differentiations ("I" or "me" versus "you"); whereas social identity refers to self-definition as a similar group member in terms of in-group–out-group differentiation ("we" or "us" versus "they" or "them") (Boduszek et al., 2015). According to Jhangiani et al. (2022), the subject of social comparisons highlights the impact of who we compare ourselves to on our self-perception. For instance, associating oneself with significant and respected groups can boost self-esteem and cultivate a positive self-image.

Social comparison is the act of comparing ourselves with others to understand our abilities, skills, opinions' validity, and social standing. This process involves examining our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours and comparing them to those of others (Guyer and Vaughan-Johnston, 2020). We tend to compare ourselves with others who we find important for our social experience. These may include people we know and interact with or others we consider significant. However, according to Festinger (1954) and Gibbons and Buunk (1999), we often make the most meaningful comparisons with those we perceive as similar to ourselves. As such, the social identity theory asserts that, to an extent, we derive part of our self-esteem and identity from the social groups we belong to (Tajfel, 1981; Turner et al., 1994; Hogg, 2003). Again, the emergence, growth, and daily use of SNS could make these social comparisons, perceptions and development of 'self' difficult as young people are daily exposed to multiple perceptions and social comparisons, some of which may influence transgressive behaviours.

In addition, signs and signals like body language can be misunderstood when making social comparisons, which can impact the concept of the 'looking-glass self' with subjective perceptions of how others see us. Perception is not always reality, but our experiences with our environment often shape our self-views. According to Baumeister (2005), much of what we know about ourselves comes from observing how others see us. Their evaluations and judgments impact our self-perception and, in turn, affect how we believe others perceive us.

Even if we misjudge others' reactions, the misjudgements and misinterpretations become part of our self-concept. Shrauger and Schoeneman's (1979) study found that our self-concepts are based on our perceptions of how others perceive us, rather than on how others perceive us. Thus, research supports Cooley's (1902) idea that people act based on perceptions of how others perceive them.

2.13.3 The individual and social self

Mead's (1934) theory of self is another concept many use to explain the process of social learning. The general idea of Mead's concept of social learning is that self emerges from social experience and interactions (Mead, 1934). Mead identifies two aspects of self which he labels the 'I' and the 'ME' noting that the individual and society are inseparable. According to Mead, the individual identity does not exist outside of the social self instead it is produced through the 'I' and 'ME' constant reflection on social judgments. In other words, the 'self' is a human-exclusive concept developed through social interaction and relationships. Infants cannot develop the 'self' as they cannot yet engage in social activities.

According to Mead (1863-1931),

“We divide ourselves up in all sorts of different selves with reference to our acquaintances. We discuss politics with one and religion with another. There are all sorts of different selves answering to all sorts of different social reactions. It is the social process itself that is responsible for the appearance of the self ... A multiple personality is in a certain sense normal, as I have just pointed out” (p. 352).

In other words, this multiple personality as Mead (1934) suggests, implies that people can be selective and persistently adjust their self-presentation and identity performance appropriately according to the relevant social context known as the situation and the audiences (Marwick and Boyd, 2010; Nguyen and Barbour, 2017). Mead (1934) argues that what others think of us and the perspectives and perceptions of others are necessary for one to have a sense of self. According to Stets and Burke (2003), the self has a dual nature - individual and social. It regulates meanings to maintain its existence but relies on communal meanings to interact with others and establish social structures. Although the way people influence others can change over a lifespan, foundational to Mead's (1934) theory is that there are two main categories of influences: 'the significant other' and the 'generalised other'.

As the self develops, Mead (1934) also noted that children are first able to only take on the role of significant others such as parents, siblings, or another primary caregiver. Mead believed that others do not easily influence infants and young children. This is because they do not care about what other people think of them and cannot also take another person's perspective. Mead referred to the 'generalised other' as the society or community in general where norms, values, attitudes, and expectations of others are established. This social group is significant to an individual, allowing objective thinking and abstraction from an individual perspective. Mead saw that society was a very crucial component of the mind. Mead (1934) believed that individuals carry society within their minds, and this shapes their subsequent behaviour. Undoubtedly, this society includes not only the offline or real-world environment but also the digital space and online environment where individuals can build virtual communities in which norms, values, attitudes, and expectations of others are similarly expressed. Interestingly, this shows how socialisation is an active ongoing process and how the human mind and the self are a social product. Nevertheless, as we mature, our beliefs about how others perceive us become more important as our understanding of social interactions develops.

According to Greenfield (2014), for many young people, their self-esteem is increasingly based on what others think about them, and not what they think about themselves which explains their need for connections, validations and acceptance by other peers as highlighted previously. They care about the perceptions of significant or important people in their lives like family, parents, teachers, and close peers than those of strangers. Therefore, when young people feel disrespected by content or activities uploaded to social media by their peers, this can generate a concerned perception with compelling social pressure to take certain actions, revenge or retaliate in real life and to protect their perceived status among other peers (Patton et al., 2016).

2.13.4 Differential association theory

Another crucial concept of socialisation and criminal behavioural construction is Sutherland's Differential Association Theory (1939). The general idea of differential theory is that through interactions with others, people learn the values, attitudes, methods, and motives to become offenders from their environment. Notably, these interactions and associations may vary in terms of priority, duration, frequency, and intensity (Sutherland, Cressey, and Luckenbill, 1992). In other words, behaviours that a young person learns when they are small can persist

throughout life and they may have longer and frequent or shorter and occasional associations with people who commit crime, and the more status a person holds, the more likely a young person is to learn from them (Clarke, 2012; Matsueda and Lanfear, 2020). In effect, if one is exposed to and has more contact with people who break the law, one is more likely to commit a crime. On the other hand, if one has more contact with people who believe breaking the law is wrong, they are less likely to commit a crime. With his theory, Sutherland (1939) attempted to identify universal mechanisms that describe the genesis of crime and criminal behaviour as per the individual, contrary to the existing and dominant explanation that criminal behaviour is determined by a variety of factors such as economic status, neighbourhood, personality, age, social class, broken homes, and minority status (Matsueda, 1988).

Sutherland (1939) explains that all behaviour is learned through association in personal and intimate groups, including criminal behaviour and that offenders do not suddenly produce criminal behaviours. In effect, just as one would learn to walk, drive a car, or read a book, one also learns how to commit a crime. It has been observed that the learning of criminal behaviour occurs primarily within intimate personal circles rather than in any general social settings. According to Sutherland, individuals are primarily influenced by their family and close peers, as criminal behaviours are typically learned within intimate personal groups rather than via exposure to violent media, movies or games. This content of learning includes two elements, one set is the techniques and skills for committing crimes and the second, is the specific directions on motives, drives, rationalisation, and attitudes (Sutherland, Cressey, and Luckenbill, 1992). Sutherland's (1939) theory proposes that criminal behaviour is not simply a result of imitation but also involves various aspects of learning, such as listening, observing, understanding, and practising. Interestingly, this argument supports Cooley's (1902) and Mead's (1934) concepts of learning being more of a social experience than a reclusive one.

However, despite its important contribution to the theories of crime, Sutherland's Differential Association Theory (1939) has its shortcomings. The current theory does not fully explain why some people who are not affiliated with criminal groups commit crimes while others who are surrounded by such groups do not. It does not take biological factors and criminal penalties into consideration, as well as the circumstances surrounding the crime (Barnes and Teeters, 1959; Cressey, 1964; Jeffery, 1959; Piquero and Tibbetts, 2005). It assumes equal access to criminal and anti-criminal behaviour and ignores individual differences in free will and personality traits (Caldwell, 1956; Cloward, 1959; Cressey, 1964). This criticism implies that this theory has not taken full advantage of broader social psychological research describing

learning mechanisms (Cressey, 1964), as it does not provide a comprehensive or accurate depiction of how criminal behaviour is acquired. As such, the emergence and growth of digital media indicate that learning of any kind takes place both in the offline and online environments and this questions Sutherland's (1939) argument that people only learn criminal behaviours in intimate groups. This is because today, young people are exposed to and have access to multiple social media platforms, where learning is not strictly intimate, but involves a vast range of general and extensive social interactions and experiences.

Notably, Sutherland et al. (1992) presented differential association as a developmental theory that aims to explain what there is to know about the biography or profile of an individual with criminal behaviour and not as a situational theory that seeks to explain situations that facilitate criminal behaviours (Sutherland, Cressey, and Luckenbill, 1992). Despite that, ignoring the situation and origin of the crime does not provide a complete explanation for the crime. Supporting Sutherland's concept, Akers and Sellers (2005) suggest that social learning occurs through direct and indirect interactions with those who engage in deviant behaviours (Morris and Higgins, 2010). According to Sutherland's theory of differential association, family and friends are the main sources of influence on an individual's behaviour. However, Warr (2002) argued that online or offline interactions with secondary peer groups can also contribute to the social learning process.

2.13.5 Differential association and online crimes

Dearden and Parti (2021) suggest that increased social media use can lead to greater familiarity with online social norms. Multiple studies have shown support for social learning and differential association theory to explain cybercrimes. Morris and Blackburn (2009) found that differential association was the strongest predictor of self-reported software piracy among various criminology theories tested, including strain, neutralisation, social learning, and self-control. Hutchings and Clayton (2016) also claimed that cyber criminals learn sophisticated techniques through associations with deviant online peers.

While online hate groups can influence anyone, Hunter (2012) and Dey et al. (2012) argue that young people are the most susceptible due to their increased time spent online. In his study of online hate groups and the Internet, Hawdon (2012) notes that the use of social media by hate groups is not new, but it amplifies the effect of hate groups and the presence of these groups in an environment with an increasing amount of young people who frequently use this online space is a potentially dangerous combination. With the rise of social media, it has

become easier for hate groups to interact, learn, and rationalise violence online. According to McCuddy and Vogel's (2014) analysis, utilising Hawdon's (2012) perspective on differential associations in online SNS, it appears that engaging in online socialisation can lead to real-life criminal behaviour. Additionally, research suggests that online trust among individuals fosters strong virtual relationships, with users often identifying with their online communities as strongly as they do with their families (Lehdonvirta and Räsänen, 2011). This high level of trust in online relationships can facilitate differential association.

While it is undeniable that transgressive behaviours exist among individuals and groups on the Internet, it is not necessary to the fact that young people will always embrace and subsequently perpetrate transgressive behaviours. However, in considering Sutherland's (1939) differential association, the likelihood of some young people engaging in transgressive behaviours is likely to increase. Hawdon (2012) suggests that young people utilise social media platforms to express and showcase their desired self-image to their peers. Based on the feedback they receive, they may either feel validated or invalidated. Positive feedback reinforces their projected identity and encourages them to maintain that image. On the other hand, negative feedback prompts them to adjust their projected identity to receive more favourable feedback. Consequently, it is likely that through online interactions, young people can assign an important status level to their online friends, thereby giving those peer opinions added value. They teach each other and learn from each other, validating violence and violent acts, thereby creating and recreating, affirming, and reaffirming, a culture of transgressive behaviours.

It is interesting to note that Li et al. (2016) discovered a correlation between both self-control and social learning and cyberbullying perpetration among middle school students. This suggests that low self-control could be a possible explanation for the association with delinquent friends, which in turn could indirectly lead to cyberbullying. Self-control is responsible for keeping someone away from criminal opportunities (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). Shadmanfaat et al. (2018), discovered that low self-control and association with deviant peers played a vital role in predicting cyberbullying engagement against sports rivals. Similarly, in 2020, Nodeland and Morris found that associating with peers who support cyber-offending, either online or offline, significantly influences cyber-offending behaviour. As young people spend more time online, building and maintaining relationships, the opportunities for exposure to criminal and deviant behaviours are increasing. However, Nodeland and Morris

(2020) also suggest that self-control is more important in the interaction between peers rather than the actual commission of transgressive behaviours.

In providing support to previous studies, Dearden and Parti (2021) emphasise that simply learning the motives and techniques of crime does not necessarily result in criminal behaviour. However, they suggest that low self-control is also correlated with online offending, this offending behaviour increased as self-control decreased (Baek, 2018), and associating with peers, who support involvement in offending behaviour online or offline, significantly influences participation in this behaviour. In other words, online or offline learning on social media platforms cannot equally facilitate learning as described by Sutherland (1939), as blended learning, which involves a combination of online and offline platforms, is becoming increasingly popular among learners. This is due to its potential to enhance diverse types of learning.

2.13.6 Learning by observation, modelling and imitation: Bandura's concept

General proponents of Social Learning Theory (SLT; Bandura, 1971) argue that individuals can learn by observing and imitating others' behaviour and the resulting outcomes. For example, a teenager might learn violence by observing violent peer interactions. These imitations and modelling are with no reinforcement or punishment attached to the behaviours or actions of the individual. Bandura's work has been instrumental in shedding light on the impact of early childhood environments on aggression, delinquency, and antisocial behaviour. In particular, his famous Bobo doll study has become a significant reference point for social research. Many of the findings in this field can be traced back to the methods and insights described in his work (Bandura, Ross, and Ross, 1961).

As there is an unfettered reach of learning and behaviour imitation among young people, these social psychological experiments regarding aggression, correction, and learned behaviours have become applicable to today's online and digital learning environments. As such, these experiments are relevant to this current study as society's concern is and has been on the continuous growth and dependency on social networking platforms and its negative impacts on young people.

Bandura et al. conducted a study in 1961 to explore if behaviour can be learned through observation and imitation. The study showed that children can acquire social behaviour, including aggression, by observing and imitating the aggressive behaviour of another person.

They also demonstrated that social learning and social construction require attention to observed actions, memory, ability to replicate, and motivation to act similarly. In other words, behaviour is learned from our environment through observation of others. In effect, learning can include moral judgments regarding right and wrong which can in part, develop through observation, imitation, and modelling. This argument to an extent supports Cooley's (1902), Mead's (1934) and Sutherland's (1939) assertion that the development of self is through social interactions and experience which is not limited to imitation alone, but it follows through with techniques and justifications for certain learned behaviours.

The theory that emerged from the aforementioned study suggests that children acquire social skills by copying the conduct of adults (Bandura, 1961). In 1963, Bandura, Ross and Ross further published the results of another study investigating how children were influenced by the aggressive behaviour of adults they saw either in real life or on film. The theory from this study noted that children were more aggressive, and they imitated the behaviour they had seen. The observations made in both studies reveal that children's conduct is impacted by what they perceive. These studies indicate that children tend to emulate not only the real-life behaviour they observe but also the behaviour they witness on television, even if it is being exhibited by fictional or non-human characters. In other words, individuals need not undergo the repercussions of certain conduct first-hand to learn from it (Ahn et al., 2020; Bandura, 2005; Bandura et al., 1963; Gibson, 2004b; Horn and Williams, 2004). This implies that observational learning may not mandate active observation of an individual's behaviour. Hearing or reading instructions, like in videos or books, can also facilitate learning (Bajcar and Babel, 2018). This notion contradicts Sutherland's (1939) argument that people learn criminal behaviour from family and friends as the presence and use of digital media create easy access to near and distant observational learning.

Although Bandura's (1961) theory focused on children, some of its findings can be extended and applicable to young people and today's digital online environment. It seems logical that more exposure and engagement with not only violent, aggressive, and antisocial behaviours in the real world and on social networking platforms, but also in video games, can lead to more transgressive behaviours among young people online and offline (Hollingdale and Greitemeyer, 2014). Of particular interest to this research is observing the social learning theory from a sociological, psychological, and digital point of view, noting that continuous and far-reaching transgressive behaviour online and offline is not only a concern for individual

development but also society. This is so because children and young people may not necessarily imitate and copy all behaviour that they observe, but the transgressive message received from observation could have some form of impact and alter their general mindset or behaviour. Huesmann et al. (2003) found that there is a correlation between exposure to television violence and aggression in youth as well as adulthood. Nevertheless, although the main idea of Bandura's SLT is that we do what we see, this theory has its limitations.

Human behaviour is complex and multifaceted (Orsucci and Tschacher, 2022). Although Bandura's theory may provide a partial explanation for some types of simpler voluntary behaviours (Deaton, 2015), it may oversimplify the intricacies of human actions to an extent. Browne and Hamilton-Giachritsis (2005) argue that much of Bandura's (1961) research fails to account for the full complexity of human behaviour. In other words, additional factors such as parental influences, family violence, cultural norms, deviant peers, and potential psychopathological issues also play significant roles in shaping behaviour. For instance, an individual's thoughts, emotions, beliefs, and perceptions drive a substantial portion of their actions. Culture, defined by shared beliefs, values, norms, and practices, also plays a key role in shaping human behaviour. Social expectations and peer pressure further influence behaviour, and environmental stressors, such as economic hardships, natural disasters, or societal upheaval, likewise have profound effects on behaviour. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize that human behaviour cannot be easily reduced to simple explanations. The intricate interplay of cultural, environmental, psychological, societal, and biological factors creates a complex web of influences that contribute to human behaviour.

Additionally, Browne and Hamilton-Giachritsis (2005) emphasize the importance of distinguishing correlation from causation, noting that multiple factors influence behaviour. For example, not all children who interact with aggressive peers will imitate that behaviour and become aggressive themselves. Instead, those already predisposed to aggression or who have previously engaged in aggressive behaviour are more likely to imitate their peers (Boxer et al., 2005). Similarly, individuals without pre-existing inclinations towards criminal behaviour can be enticed into such behaviour by the spread and escalation of criminal opportunities (Goldsmith and Wall, 2022). Even law-abiding individuals may be tempted to commit crimes if they are regularly exposed to easy opportunities for them (Clarke, 2012; Goldsmith and Wall, 2022). Thus, aggressive children may prefer watching violent shows or playing violent video games more than non-aggressive children.

Concerning the current research, it is not possible to categorically state that all activities and uses of social networking sites (SNS) influence aggression or transgressive behaviour among young people both online and offline. Rather, there may be a correlation between the two. However, it remains challenging to determine whether single or multiple and continuous exposures to a vast array of behaviours and activities on SNS can have a long-term or short-term influence on a young person's behavioural construction.

Lastly, the social learning theory (Bandura, 1961) is limited in its applicability to young people who can act independently, exercise self-control, and make their own free and rational choices. According to Ingrid and Jutta (2019), agency can be understood as a roadmap involving intentional action, which includes the ability to set goals (intention), plan their pursuit and attainment in the future (foresight), and allow behaviour to be guided by these goals (action-regulation). This concept underscores the importance of being intentional and proactive in shaping one's path and outcomes.

Learning also involves making moral judgments about what society deems right and wrong (Mead, 1934), which means that young people can exercise agency and free will as part of social learning, regardless of what they observe. For instance, cognitive control allows individuals to override their impulses and make decisions based on their goals rather than habits or reactions from observations. Consequently, people do not necessarily reproduce violent or aggressive behaviour simply because they have observed it. People often engage in certain behaviours for the thrill and excitement, which sometimes manifests as harmful leisure activities. As Presdee (2000) suggests, recognizing that transgressive behaviours can be enjoyable and pleasurable can be difficult to understand and unpleasant to consider. Thus, individuals may choose to engage in specific behaviours not merely because of observational learning but due to a complex interplay of intentions, goals, and personal agency.

2.13.7 Imitation and online video gaming

According to Sherry's (2001) research on the impact of violent video gaming on children, the nature of the game being played is a crucial factor to consider. Specifically, she highlights how exposure to realistic human and fantasy violence can increase violent tendencies. Additionally, the duration of gaming sessions also plays a role in shaping such behaviours. As such, DeLisi et al. (2013) also argue that this violent video game playing is most times correlated with aggression, which in some cases imitates already observed behaviour. With the advancement of graphics in video games, they are becoming increasingly realistic. As a

result, it remains a concern that children and young people are spending more time playing these online video games (Roberts, Foehr, and Rideout, 2005). In like manner, young people seem to spend long hours using social networking platforms for various purposes and there is no doubt that such unregulated use exerts influence on individual and group behaviours. Thus, watching the actions or behaviours of characters in violent video games can also lead to observational learning (Bajcar and Babel, 2018).

2.14 Implications of Social Learning Theory on social media use

Following the work of Bandura (1961), social media has transformed the way we interact and experience the world (Defede et al., 2021). As a result, individuals are now able to observe, imitate, and model both positive and negative behaviours online and offline (Deaton, 2015). With this understanding, it is no surprise then that technology has provided a means to capture the intricacies of human experience. With daily social interaction, the world has become a stage where people of all ages and genders can learn and grow (Deaton, 2015).

Fitch (2009), in his research, suggests that young people who perpetrate group or peer-based offending and illicit behaviour may often have been victims of crime. For example, where crime is a common experience for a young person at home or in the wider environment, the likelihood of a young person carrying a weapon and engaging in violence may be heightened (Day et al., 2007). Although correlation is not causation, according to Lee and Lee (2017), there is a notable correlation between young individuals who commit serious crimes and their consumption of crime-related content online. In today's world, the Internet provides unrestricted access to real-life images and videos depicting criminal behaviour, which has led to concerns about whether increased exposure to these online behaviours and excessive time spent on the Internet could contribute to an uptick in transgressive behaviour (Aborisade and Adedayo, 2016; Clarke, 2012).

Although much of social learning and behaviour construction may be encouraged through observation of real-life circumstances and interactions in social spaces and environments, the emergence of digital media as a social environment may have also introduced a new dimension to the learning, perception, and modelling of people's behaviour (Aborisade and Adedayo, 2016; Defede et al., 2021). As young people are regularly exposed to the lifestyles and behaviours of more people through the Internet, these negative or positive lifestyles and behaviours can be observed and imitated over time online and offline. This presented

opportunity may tend to inevitably influence the social construction of young people's behaviour, identity, self-representation, and general social experience.

Using social interaction as a mirror, people gauge their worth and behaviour based on comments and signals from others, which can be wrongly or rightly interpreted. As such, these theories and processes discussed above, on their own do not seem to fully explain all transgressive behaviours particularly when applied to the digital media age, as they raise complex questions about the nature of identity, socialisation, self-control, and the changing landscape of self. As an increasing number of young people spend more time online, there are more opportunities to engage in transgressive behaviours and this reality calls into question whether the above-discussed social learning theories are adequate in considering transgressive behaviours that take place in the online environment.

According to Aiken (2017), social media has introduced the concept of the cyber self, which refers to the digital persona that a person chooses to present on a social media platform. In most cases, there may be significant disparities between their online and offline identities as young people are increasingly involved in the curation of their online identities, at the expense of developing their real-world selves. As such, these digital platforms act as mirrors for young people seeking validation and feedback from others. Based on likes, comments, and followers, their sense of self develops. In doing so, the social relations of having more influence online or offline are rigorously fed back to young people in terms of their interactions and connections with others (Gerlitz and Lury, 2014). Nonetheless, young people may choose to perform and engage in certain behaviours because these actions are enabled or have become normalised within social media (Wood et al., 2023), which then does not make the behaviour new. The result and application of the above-discussed social learning theories suggest a copycat or copy-and-paste behaviour.

According to Nabavi (2012), people are only partial products of their offline or online spaces and environments so, it is also likely that these behaviours could be copycat, copy and paste or simply leisure agency. Undoubtedly, while digital media platforms may provide young people with unprecedented positive opportunities, they could also create serious risks and inherent challenges. Consequently, contents on SNS used to perpetrate aggression, bullying, slander, stalking, displaying, and inciting serious acts of violence, are increasingly being hidden by nature from responsible adults, organisations and authorities who have the potential to respond and challenge this behaviour. As such, this research sought to further discover

whether the use of social media for online or offline learning impacts copycats or agency behaviour, if learning can occur without a behaviour change and when certain observations may end up as copycat behaviour.

2.15 Networked streets - Private space to be left alone or public space for intervention.

Perrin and Jiang (2018) have highlighted that the Internet has become the most widely used and rapidly adopted technology in human history. With the advent of social media, it has attained a highly influential position, particularly in shaping the behaviours and communication patterns of young people across the globe. This underscores the importance of understanding the role of technology, particularly the Internet and social media, in shaping our lives and society (Lenhart, 2015; Ioannidis, Chamberlain and Treder, 2016). As noted above, personal digital and smart devices and social media are increasingly popular among young people and can be argued to be an even more popular everyday activity than watching TV. No doubt, how we search for information, consume media and entertainment, connect to people, and manage our social networks and relationships (Anderson and Jiang, 2018; Defede et al., 2021) all affect how we represent ourselves and connect online and offline.

The emergence of digital media in contemporary youth culture has rekindled conversations about the notions of private and public space (Robards and Lincoln, 2017). Much of academic attention according to Wang and Edwards (2016) has been given to young people's negative use of social media. When contemplating the impact of social media on young people, it is argued that it can be both beneficial and advantageous. The authors propose that through social media, young individuals can develop and maintain diverse types of relationships, leading to positive and constructive experiences. The Internet has created various and innovative methods for people to connect (Defede et al., 2021) and interact speedily across multiple SNS and the combination of these ways could lead to misinterpretations of behaviour and identity (Goldsmith and Wall, 2022; Wang and Edwards, 2016).

Some researchers have questioned whether aggressive behaviour and activities on social media constitute a new wine in a new bottle, i.e., a new mode of operating criminal activities and in need of a new theory, or it is an old wine in a new bottle better understood by existing theories (Irwin-Rogers and Pinkney, 2017; Wall, 2005). In their study of Internet crimes, Burden et al. (2003) argued that there are true cybercrimes which would ordinarily not exist outside of the online environment, and there are crimes which are E-enabled, in other words,

crimes known to the world before the emergence of the Internet but increasingly perpetrated via the Internet. Some examples of true cybercrime acts include dissemination of viruses, cyber vandalism, and hacking, while other examples of E-enabled crime include information theft, card fraud and defamation (Burden et al., 2003).

In expanding further, the literature on social media and offending behaviour, considering the above-discussed literature on crime, digital media, identity development and self-presentation, social learning theory, online deviance and networked streets, this study thus continues to explore the role of social media on influencing transgressive behaviours among young people.

To achieve this aim, the following research question was addressed:

What role does social media play in the influence of transgressive behaviours and vice versa among young people in Nottingham?

To further achieve the aim and subsequently address the abovementioned research question, the following objectives were also addressed:

1. To understand the attitude of young people towards aggressive peer interaction on social media.
2. To investigate how young people, address online and offline identity and self-representation of peers on social media.
3. To explore ways in which social media may influence transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham.

2.16 Chapter summary

This chapter explored and discussed the current state of knowledge by addressing the relevant literature. The following areas were discussed: youth and youth offending, the offending landscape of social media, features and affordances of social media implicated conflict, identity development and Self-representation, Presentation of self, social learning theory and behavioural construction, online deviance and leisure and networked streets. In exploring the existing literature on criminology and sociology research, this chapter provided critiques to its studies on youth offending, social media-implicated conflict and the changing patterns of online and offline reality among young people. The findings from this literature review show that social media use and transgressive behaviours among young people in

Nottingham are under-researched areas that deserve consideration. Overall, this chapter identified the research gap, which justified the need for this study.

The next chapter examines the research methodology used for this study and how this process guides the data collection, analysis, and development of this research. Multiple qualitative research methods have already been identified and examined, and their strengths, limitations, and how these methods are best suited for this research study are discussed. Further to this, the setting, context, and sampling focus of this study are also discussed. In search for meanings, interests, and patterns in collected data, the phases of thematic analysis are also explored, and finally, the relevant ethical considerations to protect research participants through the course of this study are discussed.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Fundamental to the knowledge produced by any research is the methodology underpinning its design. The purpose of this chapter is to set out the rationale behind the research and provide a reflective account of the methodology used for this study. The literature review drew attention to the lack of information on the influence social networking platforms may have on young people, particularly about concepts of transgressive behaviour. Thus, this study explores these young people's use of these social platforms and its relationship with transgressive behaviours online and offline.

This chapter introduced the research methodology used for this study by exploring the benefits and limitations of conducting a qualitative research study in an online environment and reflections on the research process, as well as how its application guided data collection, analysis, and the development of this research. Firstly, this chapter explained the epistemological position from which the study emerged; how we know what we know (epistemology), and the sort of things that exist in the social world (ontology). Following this, a detailed explanation of the research method adopted in this study is provided and justified. Ethical considerations are important within research projects; thus, this chapter therefore considered a variety of ethical issues before moving to a discussion of the data collection method and analysis. Taking a theoretical turn, the data collection method, sampling, data analysis and challenges involved in the research process are considered and reflected upon to accurately present the findings captured and make conclusions as to the originality of this thesis. Lastly, this chapter reflected upon the COVID-19 global pandemic, the subsequent disruptions caused and the impact of this on the research study.

For this study, a multiple qualitative approach was chosen as it was deemed most appropriate to address the research question (Creswell, 2007). This approach is further explained below. A qualitative design requires the researcher "centres on the attempt to achieve a sense of the meaning that others give to their situation" (Smith, 2005, p. 12). In carrying out this research in a qualitative manner, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used to explore more profoundly dual collective experiences of young people's social media use and activities, youth violence, and transgressive behaviour patterns. As such, how the multiple qualitative methods informed knowledge construction within this research was also discussed.

A thematic analysis approach was utilised to analyse the data (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Each stage of this study's methodology is expanded below.

3.2 Epistemology and Ontology

Qualitative research comprises of different philosophical assumptions. This section describes the epistemological and ontological positions this study has taken. Ontological issues refer to questions regarding the existence of various aspects of society, including social actors, cultural norms, and social structures (Smith, 2012). The definition of ontology, also provided by Snape and Spencer (2003), highlights the fundamental nature of the world and our ability to comprehend it. Furthermore, ontology in research is a philosophical consideration that deals with social entities (Bryman, 2012). Similarly, Ormston et al. (2014) also state that ontology concerns the question of "whether or not there is a social reality that exists independently from human conceptions and interpretations and closely related to this, whether there is a shared social reality or only multiple, context-specific ones" (pp.4). In essence, ontology aims to uncover the meaning behind our assertions of social world existence.

On the other hand, epistemology concerns how people acquire knowledge, including its sources and validity. Epistemology can also be defined as "an issue which concerns the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in the discipline" (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p.56). In other words, epistemology studies how we know what is true about the relationship between social media use and transgressive behaviour among young people in Nottingham. Further to these definitions, various authors (Bryman, 2012; Cohen et al., 2011) have emphasised that the kind of epistemological assumption a researcher has about the knowledge of reality will affect or determine how he or she will go about (methods) exploring knowledge of the research study. According to Cohen et al. (2011), "the social world can be understood only from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of what is being studied" (p. 19).

Unlike a qualitative research method, a quantitative study will be unsuitable for a constructivist epistemology on this study because the statistical and numerical nature of the research design excludes the essential narratives and perspectives of research participants. Likewise, a mixed method will not be appropriate due to its quantitative element. As this research sought to capture multiple and diverse perceptions, interactions and realities of participants, my epistemological position was validated through my decision to conduct both semi-structured interviews and focus groups. This study has uncovered valuable insights into the online

environment by examining young people's perceptions, behaviour, and interpretation of social media and transgressive behaviour. Thus, since this social research aimed to explore young people's diverse realities, epistemology represented qualitative research's preferred qualities and essence.

The diagram below further illustrates my understanding of the relationship between epistemology, methodology and data collection methods.

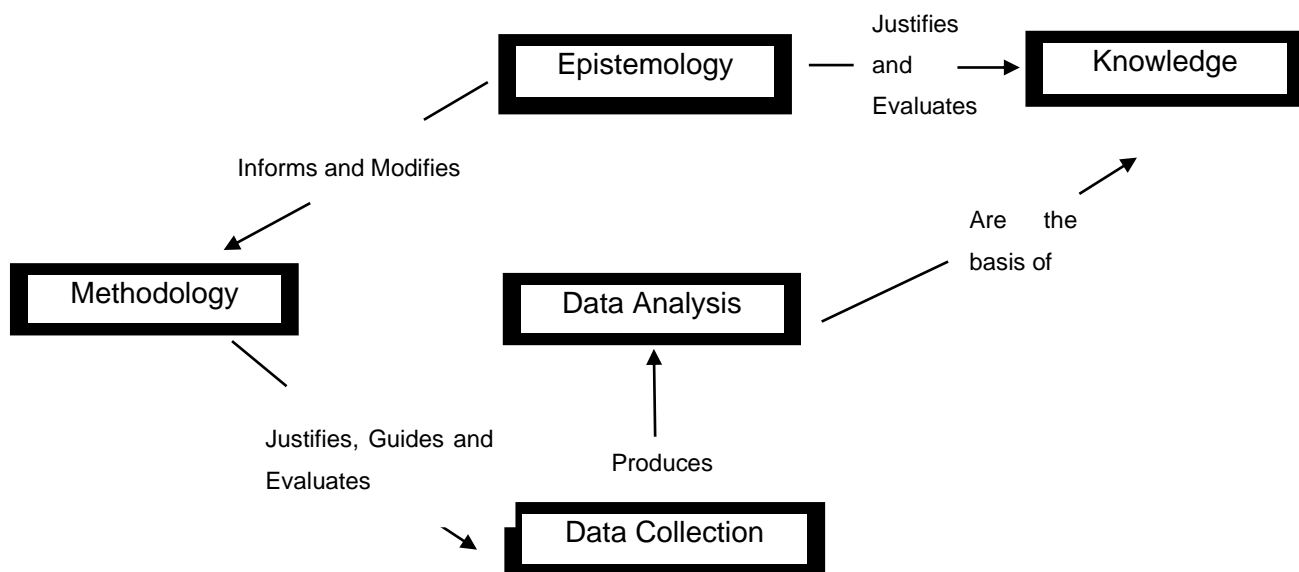


Figure 3. 1 The Simple Relationship between Epistemology, Methodology and Methods (Carter and Little, 2007).

This diagram illustrates the interconnected process of a research design, enhancing my understanding of my role as a social science researcher. The diagram also demonstrates how the epistemology would inform and modify the methodology adopted in this research, which seeks to justify the original raw data (knowledge). In effect, all components within the diagram work together to produce knowledge of the social reality being studied.

3.3 Research methodology

"A research method is a strategy of enquiry which moves from the underlying philosophical assumption to the research design and data collection" (Myers and Avison, 2002, p.7). Johnson (2006) asserts that if the outcome of a research study fails to validate its hypothesis,

it is highly likely that the methodology adopted contains certain flaws. As such, it is imperative to adopt an appropriate research design with clarity on the process and practice of the method to avoid potential flaws. This research aimed to understand the effect and role of social media on transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham. The most common research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. Thus, as mentioned above, this study has adopted a multiple qualitative research method to obtain an individual and collective or shared comprehensive understanding of the research problem. I have expanded further on the definition of the qualitative research method and the reasons and limitations for adopting this method. This section aims to examine how qualitative research aligns with this study.

3.4 Qualitative research method

Qualitative research methods are widely recognised and accepted in social sciences due to diverse ontological, epistemological, theoretical, and philosophical assumptions contributing to their development (Punch, 2011). Qualitative research is characterised by its naturalistic approach, aiming to study the everyday lives of diverse groups or communities within their natural environment (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Qualitative researchers aim to comprehend how individuals construct their meaning, whether through a shared comprehension of a given circumstance founded on an emotional or epistemological stance. This enables them to interpret the social world and the surrounding reality (Todd et al., 2004).

Charmaz (2000, 2014) argues that qualitative research aligns with constructivism, enabling researchers to delve into individuals' experiences from their perspectives. Incorporating the subjective experiences of research participants, including their emotions, perceptions, and thoughts, can significantly enhance our understanding and interpretation of the studied topic. Qualitative research has a solid role, particularly in the social sciences. However, as with other research methods, its strengths, limitations, and challenges must be recognised. With that in mind, the robustness of the argument, reflexivity of the researcher, trustworthiness, and data credibility are central to this process.

3.4.1 Reasons for adopting qualitative research method

A qualitative research method, as highlighted above, is informed by several epistemological viewpoints that enable research to gain data on subjective experiences, exploring how young people give meaning to their reality and constructions of the social world (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). This qualitative research method was considered appropriate for this study because

qualitative methods are inductive and generate the perspectives and experiences of young people required for the research aims to be explored. This study adopts a constructivist paradigm and assumes reality is socially constructed through historical, cultural, interpersonal, and social processes, and as such, this method enhances the understanding and interpretation of human experiences, including their meanings and intentions (Creswell, 2007; 2013).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research methodology is a multifaceted and sophisticated approach that allows researchers to obtain an in-depth and holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. They further provide the following principles that underlie qualitative research. Qualitative research:

- is holistic, which involves exploring all aspects of a problem to gain a holistic understanding.
- this study looks at the relationships and connections within a system. It explores the role of social media in transgressive behaviour among young people in Nottingham.
- aims to comprehend social phenomena rather than making predictions about them.
- requires a thorough data analysis process that demands considerable time. It also requires ongoing data analysis.
- the researcher must be the instrument and describe their biases and ideological preferences.
- takes a personal approach and considers the experience of each participant.
- includes obtaining informed consent from participants and considers ethical concerns in its approach.

Thus, as qualitative researchers are often more concerned about uncovering knowledge, this approach enables access to richer and deeper insights into the subject under study (Attride-Stirling, 2001). More specifically, adopting a multiple qualitative method of semi-structured interview and focus group assisted this research in determining and exploring whether there are different individual constructions of reality or a shared and collective one among young people's use of social media and its influence on transgressive behaviour. As such, the study does not seek or believe there is a single and measurable reality. This study explores participants' distinctive and subjective perspectives (Charmaz, 2006), and this approach also observed the influence between research participants as they engaged and participated in this study. It also provided insights into individual and collective changing patterns and trends in

the representation (Greer, 2013) of social media and transgressive behaviours. It generated valuable data on which further qualitative study can be based (Hale 2013). Hence, qualitative methods were therefore integral as they enabled this research to explore its aims and objectives and gain an in-depth understanding of the research area. This research discovers and explores ways transgressive behaviour links online and offline experiences and how young people present their identity among peers online.

3.4.2 Reasons for adopting a multiple qualitative research method

The combination of qualitative and quantitative elements within a study is called inter-paradigm research, a commonly used mixed methods approach (O'Reilly and Kiyimba, 2020). At the same time, the multiple qualitative method approach draws upon the combination of two different qualitative procedures and can be referred to as an intra-paradigm study (O'Reilly and Kiyimba, 2015; 2020). Both aspects of the multiple qualitative method are usually drawn from the same pattern in the study (Silverman, 2019). Combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches can compensate for weaknesses in a single research design (Bryman, 2012) and capitalise on the strengths of each approach (O'Cathain and Thomas, 2006). In literature, researchers have also observed the existence of several phrases that refer to the integration of various approaches in a study. These include 'qualitative mixed methods design,' 'multiple method design' (Morse, 2009), 'multi-methods' (Anguera et al., 2018; Creswell, 2015), and 'combined qualitative methodology' (Swanson-Kauffman, 1986). Notably, multi-method studies typically incorporate multiple types of qualitative research (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010).

In this specific research project, it was anticipated that there would be discrepancies between how some participants discussed and shared their perspectives on the research when they were interviewed alone and in the focus group. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were necessary to access the discussions and experiences of young people's social media use and understand its influence on transgressive behaviours. (O'Reilly et al., 2021). Through these two qualitative research methods, the researcher was able to explore specific issues in greater depth. For example, the semi-structured interviews showed that some participants were in control of their thoughts and presence in the online environment and, consequently, any influence on their behaviour. The focus group, however, revealed a bandwagon effect for some participants, a confirmation bias, and, at the same time, a carefully considered and

formed response. Combining the semi-structured interview data with the focus group data allowed discrepancies to be identified.

The rationale for including a semi-structured interview and a focus group in this research project is to improve the robustness of the study that would not be otherwise obtained by generating data through one process and to extend the scope of the findings (Bazeley, 2018). By having these two complementary perspectives, this study gains a deeper and more comprehensive insight into young people's social media dependency, peer relational influence, and their impact on transgressive behaviours, both online and offline. Employing multiple qualitative research methods grounded in the same epistemological perspective enhances the research quality. The utilisation of diverse methods facilitates the identification of various angles and nuances, leading to a more comprehensive and robust analysis (Essén and Sauder, 2017; Tierney et al., 2019).

As Silverman (2017) explained, "there are no right or wrong methods. There are only methods that are appropriate to your research topic and the model with which you are working" (p. 195). Adopting a multiple qualitative method prevents the study from reflecting a partial and limited picture of social media use and its influence on transgressive behaviours without a link to peer relational influence (Sade-Beck, 2004, pp. 48). Thus, this study has undertaken a multiple qualitative method approach as it is evident that combining online, and offline data collection methods will provide added value and enable participants to share their experiences comprehensively.

3.5 Qualitative data collection methods

This study commenced data collection with an initial phase of semi-structured interviews as a means of introducing the research topic to the participants. This method facilitated participants' familiarity with the questions and terminologies and helped them develop the necessary thought processes. Additionally, it established rapport between the research participants and I, enabling in-depth, one-on-one discussions that explored each person's experiences, thoughts, and understandings of their social media use and its influence on their behavioural construction (Lamont and Swidler, 2014). This rapport was instrumental in guiding and managing the subsequent focus group discussion.

Following the semi-structured interviews, the study conducted follow-up focus group discussions with the same participants. The primary aim of this approach was to encourage

group interaction, thereby eliciting valuable data that might not have been accessible through individual semi-structured interviews. It was essential to explore the dynamics of peer relationships and their influence on the research discussion. Through this method, participants could delve into each other's realities, capturing multiple layers of views that informed the study. Thus, the familiarity and informality established during the semi-structured interviews were beneficial for fostering open discussion among participants.

Therefore, by employing both semi-structured interviews and focus groups, this study achieved a more comprehensive understanding of the individual and collective impacts of social media use. It highlighted the role of social media in transgressive behaviour and how young people perceive their experiences both online and offline.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

The most common qualitative data collection method is interviewing and according to Potter (1996), conducting interviews was essential for gathering and acquiring qualitative research data for this study. Bazeley (2009) states that qualitative interviewing works well with the Thematic Analysis method as this approach can be open-ended, guided, yet emergent. Qualitative interview was a practical approach for gaining in-depth insights into young people's experiences, feelings, and interpretations of the social world (Mack et al., 2005). In this study, I chose to begin data collection with a semi-structured interview as this process would allow for a one-on-one discussion and understanding of each person's experiences and opinions on the research topic (Lamont and Swidler, 2014).

The rationale for choosing this method was that it provided an uninterrupted, uninfluenced, and seamless dialogue between me and the research participants (young people), which was needed to explore and further answer the questions raised by this study. With this research method, open-ended questions enabled the interviewee to express their feelings and views in a comfortable and discursive manner. The semi-structured interviews addressed the research question by asking interviewees about personal and peer-related experiences with social media activities and transgressive online and offline behaviours. The purpose was to gain insight into the diverse individual experiences and perceptions young people have of online and offline social media activities, the influence of peers online as it relates to transgressive behaviours, and to convey findings as simply as possible whilst answering the research question. As such, participants were invited to share their experiences over a set of semi-structured interview questions provided by this study (See Appendix 3).

3.5.1.1 Reasons for adopting semi-structured interviews

There are several advantages to this method that are valuable to this research. According to Crowther-Dowey and Fussey (2013), semi-structured interviews allow the interviewee to speak freely about their individual experiences and social reality. As a result, this flexibility allowed for a close personal interaction and experience between me and the participant, encouraging shy or less confident participants to build a rapport with me to generate personal, meaningful, and reliable data. This further enabled me to seek clarity where necessary, avoid third-party influence on the formulation of responses, and ensure the report and analysis of generated data reflect the research participants' views. For this study, I anticipated that the order of questioning would vary depending on the flow of conversation and the weight of data being produced by each participant. As a result, a greater level of flexibility and power resided with me as I steered and managed the interview discussions (Saunders et al., 2003).

In addition, this method facilitated the reconstruction of events through a systematic interview process wherein the participants were asked to recollect and describe how a specific series of events unfolded in the current study (Bryman, 2012). For these reasons, this semi-structured interview method has enabled my study to gain a more profound and individualised understanding of the impact and role of social media on transgressive behaviours and how young people understand their user experiences online and offline.

3.5.2 Focus group

Following the first phase of semi-structured interviews, emerging data and themes from collected data were used to design a follow-up focus group discussion. Using focus groups as a research methodology has a long history, with origins in sociology dating back to the 1920s. However, it was not until several decades later that focus groups gained popularity among market researchers for gathering opinions. It also regained popularity in social sciences in the 1940s (Merton and Kendall, 1946; Merton, Fiske, and Kendall, 1956). Sociologists and psychologists have since then used the method. Its popularity has only continued to grow over the years, and it has become an indispensable tool for qualitative researchers in fields such as education, communication, media studies, sociology, feminist research, health research, and marketing research. (Nyumba et al., 2018; Lunt and Livingstone, 1999; Morgan, 1996).

A straightforward definition of focus groups, according to Krueger (1994), is:

"The focus group interview ... tap into human tendencies. Attitudes and perceptions relating to concepts, products, services, or programs are partly developed by interacting with other people. We are a product of our environment and are influenced by people around us" (pp. 10-11).

Asbury (1995) emphasises that the principal justification for using focus groups is their ability to capitalise on the interaction within a group to elicit rich and robust experiential data. This definition unequivocally connects focus groups and their effectiveness in generating valuable insights. Developing this emphasis on interaction among people in a group, Kitzinger (1995) notes:

"The idea behind the focus group method is that group processes can help people explore and clarify their views in a way that would be less easily accessible in a one-to-one interview... When group dynamics work well, the participants work alongside the researcher, taking the research in new and often unexpected directions" (p. 299).

This is per the focus groups that this study has conducted, as each group of participants were invited to collectively discuss and exchange viewpoints over a set of follow-up questions that this study had provided (See appendix 4). To ensure a successful discussion among participants, I created a safe and non-threatening environment for the participants to have an open and relaxed discussion, thus guaranteeing a successful outcome (Hennink, 2007). Following this, to define the term focus groups, Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) described focus groups as a form of collective discussion centred around a specific set of topics. The process involves the researcher facilitating conversation between participants, who are encouraged to share their opinions, ask questions, and engage with one another. Thus, the primary feature of this methodology involved fostering group interaction among participants to elicit valuable data that may otherwise remain inaccessible through alternative approaches. The ensuing exchange of ideas among young people heightened the credibility of the technique, as the information shared by participants could be verified, supported, or challenged within the context of the group dialogue.

3.5.2.1 Reasons for adopting focus group

According to Morgan (2002), the most straightforward test in deciding to adopt focus groups as a research method is to consider "how actively and easily the participants would discuss the topic of interest" (p. 17). This study used focus groups with the same participants as the data collection method. This approach enabled the researcher to achieve the goal of capturing a comprehensive range of perspectives, collective thoughts, and perceptions on the correlation between social media usage and transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham.

One advantage of the focus group methodology was the ability for participants to collaboratively generate ideas, drawing from their shared perspectives and experiences. This approach provided valuable insight into how participants construct and organise their social world, expressed in their own words and language (Smithson, 2007). The adoption of focus groups was built on the notion that the group interaction would interact with one another (Chen and Hinton, 1999) and encourage participants to explore and clarify individual and shared perspectives (Morgan, 2002). For instance, focus groups enabled research participants to discuss their individual and shared realities, experiences and understanding of peer relations, how online and offline experiences are viewed and what difference (if any) social media makes. Collectively, research participants were able to explore each other's realities, thereby capturing multiple layers of views and informing this study.

Another strength of adopting a focus group was that it allowed for in-depth interactions while uncovering hidden study aspects that may not have been identified with semi-structured interviews. This approach enabled me to understand shared experiences better, making it a valuable tool for qualitative research (Gaiser, 2008). Thus, utilising focus groups allowed the researcher to engage with participants collectively, enabling this study to acquire detailed information that was imperative to address the research question effectively. This study was also able to observe the participant's influence amongst one another during the focus groups as well as what a joint and collective online reality looked like among participants. As a result, this follow-up focus group method enabled my study to understand better social media's shared impact and role on transgressive behaviour and how young people understand their experiences online and offline.

3.6 Context

This study focused on Nottingham, one of East Midlands's largest settlement areas in England, UK, a locality that reveals these broad social issues among young people. According to the Office for National Statistics, police reported and recorded crime figures in Nottingham for the year ending June 2023, which increased by 4% compared with the year ending June 2022. Offences involving knives or sharp instruments, robbery and firearms increased by 3%, 11% and 13% respectively. Nottingham witnessed a 17% increase in crime between July 2021 and July 2022. This resulted in an overall growth of crime in the city. Although in 2012, Nottinghamshire Police recorded substantial reductions in the rate of significant crime (Office of National Statistics, 2012), Detective Chief Superintendent Gerald Milano (Head of Crime for Nottinghamshire Police, 2019) stated that Nottinghamshire now has a higher crime rate than anywhere else in the East Midlands. As such, crime incidents, on average, grew by 1.2% between 2011 and 2021.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) released data in October 2018 indicating a substantial increase in youth violence in Nottinghamshire, specifically regarding knife crime. The incidents involving knives or sharp objects rose from 763 the previous year to 861. The latest figures from the ONS also show a reduction in knife crime offences by 13% in Nottinghamshire from the year's end to March 2020. At the same time, Nottingham has seen a rise of 18.9% in incidents of violence with injury, which includes stabbings and shootings, between 2011 and 2021. The number of such incidents increased from 2,941 to 3,497 per year. In the year ending March 2022, after the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, there has been a rise in most types of crime. These crime types, such as sexual offences, hate crimes, residential burglary, homicide, stalking and harassment, drug offences, public order, and possession of weapons or firearms, have now exceeded pre-pandemic levels. Efforts have since then been made to reduce violence and knife crimes and ensure a safer future for young people. Nevertheless, there remains a lack of academic literature addressing neither the recent increase in these transgressive behaviours nor the role of social media on these behaviours among young people in Nottingham.

Therefore, with a population of almost half a million people, a current increase in crime rates, and elevated levels of unemployment and poverty, Nottingham reveals broad and familiar patterns of social transformations and youth violence. This research has, therefore, focused its study on Nottingham for the above reasons.

3.7 Research sample

Social science research involves identifying and analysing patterns of behaviour within specific populations. Bhattacharjee (2012) defines sampling as a statistical procedure that involves deliberately selecting a representative subset, or sample, from a larger population of interest. This process concludes and makes statistical inferences about the population. As this research could not study the entire population because of feasibility and cost constraints, it selected a purposive sample from the target population of interest for observation and analysis. Most qualitative studies offer a detailed, contextualised comprehension of a particular aspect of the human experience rather than attempting to generalise (Polit and Beck, 2010) as is the aim of this research.

Nonetheless, this study has allowed the insights gained from the research sample to apply to individual cases within the population of interest (Firestone, 1993; Polit and Beck, 2010). The concept of transferability, or case-to-case transfer, as it is commonly known, has been widely discussed in academic literature. Lincoln and Guba (1985) coined transferability, whereas Misco (2007) referred to it as reader generalisability. Both terms refer to the process of using the findings of an inquiry in a different context or with a different group of people. Therefore, this research method's focus and target population have concentrated on young people in Nottingham, UK.

The sampling frame for this study also focused on young people in Nottingham. Due to the increase in the percentage of young people accessing smartphones and social media, this research employed the purposeful or theoretical sampling technique focusing on young people (male and female) aged 18 to 25 who use social media in Nottingham. This methodological approach aims to capture underlying reasons, patterns, and motivations and uncover trends related to social media activities and transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham.

The rationale for this type of sampling was to enable the inclusion of participants who represented a broad range of views. Thus, as this study aimed to discover the relationship between social media and transgressive behaviours among young people, participants have also been selected or sought after based on pre-selected criteria relevant to the research question. As such, these criteria included several young people (male and female) aged 18 to 25 from different genders and backgrounds and with access to various social media accounts

to gather data on their perceptions of social media and transgressive behaviours. See Appendix 5 for demographic information of participants.

This study consisted of 25 semi-structured interviews and five focus groups of five participants. The same research participants participated in the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups for this study. According to Krueger (2014), it is accepted that a focus group of between five and eight participants are sufficient. A focus group of five to eight participants is ideal for procuring a diverse range of shared perspectives while maintaining orderliness and coherence. As information power was used to guide adequate sample size in this study (Malterud et al., 2016), the research method's sampling was a continuous process instead of a discrete and singular stage. Malterud et al. (2016) also identified five items that, along different dimensions, impact the sample's information power. Thus, it is essential to consider the study's objective, the specificity of the sample, the theoretical framework, the quality of the discussion, and the analysis approach to determine if adequate information power will be achieved with a smaller or larger sample size, as illustrated in the model below.

Furthermore, information power indicates that fewer participants are needed when a sample holds more relevant information for a study (Malterud et al., 2016). Therefore, an initial approximation of a sample size of 20 to 30 participants was necessary for planning this research. The final sample size was continuously evaluated for adequacy throughout the research process. This way, data collection was ended when the obtained research sample yielded sufficient information power (Malterud et al., 2016). Hence, the results presented in chapters four and five of this study also indicate that the sample size had sufficient information to generate new knowledge, which aligns with the study's goals and objectives.

3.8 Research participant recruitment and access

As a volunteer with the Nottinghamshire Youth Commission, I approached and verbally discussed the proposed research with the coordinator of the Youth Commission, expressing my need for research participants from the commission. The coordinator was happy to grant young people access as research participants for the study. Following this discussion, an introductory email was drafted and sent to the Youth Coordinator with detailed information about the research project, who then informed the young people at the commission about the research project. Potential participants were then initially approached on my behalf by the Youth Coordinator, and I was subsequently notified of the participants' interest via email.

Researchers have various methods for recruiting participants, as highlighted by Nyumba et al. (2018). These methods include recruitment questionnaires, telephone solicitations, and door-to-door canvassing. Additionally, researchers can offer incentives or rely on local networks and contacts, as suggested by Krueger (1994). However, the primary focus should always be on the impact of these recruitment methods on the ensuing discussion.

Considering the ethical practice discussed below (see section 3.11), as a researcher, an introductory email with a project information letter and a consent to participate form was provided to The Nottinghamshire Youth Commission, which acted as a gatekeeper in accessing research participants. This project information letter (see Appendix 1) and consent form (see Appendix 2) were also available to volunteer research participants before the semi-structured interview and the focus groups. Enclosed in the project information letter were the title, purpose, and aim, as well as the background of the study. Due to the nature of the study and the terminology used to depict and represent conducts and actions that violate a moral law or rule of behaviour or challenge socially accepted standards of behaviours, a definition of 'Transgressive Behaviour' was also included in the project information sheet. Including this definition was important to enable prospective volunteer participants to understand the word and its use in this study, which would prepare their thought process during the semi-structured interview and focus groups. It also contained information on what participation meant for each participant, highlighting that participation was voluntary.

This document also shared the benefits of participating in the research project and information that the semi-structured interview and focus groups would occur online via the Microsoft Teams Video Conferencing Platform. It was also included that although this was being undertaken as part of a doctoral thesis, each participant would receive a £10 Amazon voucher via email upon completing each semi-structured interview and focus group discussion to compensate for their time. This document also explained and detailed information on participant identity, storage of collected data and how the study's result would be used. Following this, participants were encouraged to return a dated and signed copy of the consent to participate in the research form to the researcher via email, upon which a Microsoft Teams Online invitation was then sent out to respective participants by the researcher via email. This illustrates the operation of the informed and voluntary nature of the research.

Finally, to safeguard participants who needed support during the data collection process, a list of appropriate support services was provided in the project information letters for participants to contact before and after the semi-structured interview and focus groups if needed.

Therefore, as noted above, 25 young people participated in the semi-structured interviews. Subsequently, five focus groups of five participants were conducted with the same 25 young people who participated in the semi-structured interviews. These diverse young people were made up of 14 females and 11 males from Nottingham who had access to the Nottinghamshire Youth Commission in capacities such as volunteers, mentees, interns, and victims of crime.

3.9 Thematic analysis

Effective qualitative data collection is crucial for any research study and often involves some form of interpretation. The interpretation process helps researchers understand the meaning of the data generated. Hence, I have adopted thematic analysis (TA) as a means to identify, analyse, and interpret patterns of meaning (known as 'themes') within the qualitative data generated (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2013). Both authors have argued that TA must form the basis of qualitative analysis as it equips researchers with fundamental skills that can be utilised across other qualitative analysis forms. I employed TA as a data analysis technique because it provides organised and straightforward procedures for developing qualitative data codes and themes. These codes serve as essential and relevant units of analysis that capture significant aspects of the research data, which align with the current research question.

Adopting a TA for this study allowed me to explore the diverse views of research participants' perspectives, experiences, and opinions on the research question. Furthermore, by utilising TA, I was able to go beyond merely calculating explicit words, statements, or expressions of ideas from generated data. I was also able to delve deeper into the data and extract overarching themes that aided in identifying, comparing, and developing crucial clues. These themes were then adapted or connected to the raw data for a more comprehensive analysis (Alhojailan, 2012). This resulted in a comprehensive thematic description of the entire dataset, enabling I and readers alike to gain an understanding of the "dominant and critical themes" (p. 83) presented in the data (Blackler, 2009).

3.9.1 Characterising a theme

A theme represents a patterned response or meaning found within the dataset. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that a theme should capture something significant about the data. The critical question of what counts as a theme or pattern is one of prevalence or how repetitive and reoccurring the instances are.

When searching for themes, Ryan and Bernard (2000) suggest that one of the most common criteria for establishing patterns or themes within data is the repetition of information within a data source. Other indicators include metaphors and analogies, similarities and differences and transitions in generated data. Namey et al. (2008) concur that TA may involve various practices, such as examining the relative frequencies of themes or topics in a given data set, identifying code co-occurrence, or visually representing code relationships. However, repetition per se is not enough. This is because, while one or two single statements may be significant, they do not necessarily reflect the full view of other participants. As Joffe and Yardley (2004) suggest, it was essential for this study to exercise caution in identifying themes solely based on the frequency of occurrence, as it may not necessarily have captured the essence of the data. Therefore, as what constitutes a theme is rarely spelt out, my judgement and flexibility about the research question, aim, and objectives were necessary to determine a theme (Bryman, 2012).

3.9.2 Phases of thematic analysis

Ryan and Bernard (2000) state that engaging with TA begins with the researcher's search for meanings, interests and patterns in the data. This process can occur before data collection, during data collection, and after data analysis. With the growing recognition and appreciation of qualitative research, it was crucial to carry out the process systematically and rigorously. This resulted in informative, thorough, practical and knowledgeable outcomes (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). Consequently, the following six phases of TA and the description of the process, as identified by Braun and Clarke (2006), guided the development of data analysis in this study.

Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with your data

The analysis process commenced with prior knowledge and initial thoughts and interpretations as I gathered data through interactive interviews and focus group discussions (Tuckett, 2005) of transgressive behaviours, offline and online realities, and increased social media use amongst young people. This phase provided the foundation and informed the initial stages of data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As such, I had the main research question and the three research objectives in mind during this process, allowing the opportunity to consider each participant's narrative thoroughly. All raw data files were named and uniquely identified to represent a participant's contribution. The securely stored data was saved on a password-protected computer with separate folders for semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The

data was also saved with date stamps to ensure an audit trail and confirm the data analysis and interpretations for adequacy.

This study's generated data set was read twice before coding to shape ideas and identify patterns. In this stage, I utilised an Excel spreadsheet to record all generated data and notes on observations to document the progress of producing and transcribing the data into a format that could be examined in NVivo. In NVivo, I found it easy to code observation notes, interviews, and focus group transcripts. However, I also encountered multiple coded documents, including Word, Excel, and PDF, which needed a consistent structure. This undoubtedly posed an additional challenge as the documents often required additional formatting. Nonetheless, this additional challenge gave me an opportunity for continuous familiarisation with the transcribed data.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

After thoroughly reading and familiarising myself with the data, I moved on to the second phase. At this point, ideas about the data's content and aspects of particular interest were identified (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The initial codes were produced during this stage using the transcribed and generated data (Nowell et al., 2017). These codes were then used to identify data features relevant to the research question, aim, and objectives. According to Boyatzis (1998), a code can be deemed "good" only if it effectively captures the qualitative richness of the studied phenomenon.

Using a coding framework provided me with a clear trail of evidence for the credibility of this study. As this research took an inductive approach related to the objectives of this study, the themes were dependent on the generated data. Therefore, specific statements indicating potential repeated patterns were highlighted, analysed, and categorised into themes (Creswell, 2014). To optimise the analysis of extensive textual data, particularly from focus groups with a significant volume of content, the NVivo software program was utilised to assist with the sorting and organisation of complex coding schemes (Nowell et al., 2017). This approach enabled a more thorough and precise analysis, resulting in greater depth of understanding. Each data extract was coded into relevant themes multiple times (Nowell et al., 2017). This approach helped to identify common themes and provided insights into the research topic. Although this process was time-consuming, it was also guided by all three research objectives, enabling me to organise the codes into relevant categories to analyse the generated data further. A reflective journal was also kept throughout this study, reflecting on

myself as the researcher and examining how my thoughts and ideas evolved as I continued to engage with the data. Recorded memos were also used to identify noteworthy elements in the data and any developing impressions found in the data. The memos were used to determine their significance and how they related to each other (Starks and Trinidad, 2007).

Phase 3: Generating themes

For this study, I covered a variety of concepts in the semi-structured interviews and focus groups and, as such, utilised a conceptual framework to develop broad codes to help organise the data. I utilised NVivo to categorise and gather all the coded data extracts that were potentially relevant into themes and subthemes (Nowell et al., 2017), as needed. The formation of subthemes was inductive and not influenced by any pre-existing coding framework (Manyeruke, 2021). I also ensured that the development of and reasons for the subthemes were kept in a codebook (Manyeruke, 2021), including in the audit trail, which helped establish confirmability (Sabouni, 2019). According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), confirmability is attained when the research findings are credible, transferable, and dependable. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodology, I utilised a "miscellaneous" theme to serve as a temporary repository for codes that did not align with the main themes. Despite their marginal relevance, these themes were instrumental in contributing to the comprehensive background of this present study (King, 2004).

Keeping all data and codes was crucial as it was difficult to determine whether the themes would hold, be refined, combined, separated, or discarded without examining all the extracts carefully (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). Thus, I meticulously recorded the audit trail's development and hierarchies of concepts and themes to help establish confirmability (Manyeruke, 2021). Boyatzis (1998) and Nowell et al. (2017) noted that themes can be generated through either an inductive process based on raw data or a deductive process based on prior theory and research. This approach ensured that the study was grounded in a solid theoretical foundation while allowing for the emergence of novel themes from the data. I also used a thematic map to explore the relationship and connections between identified themes, considering themes directly and indirectly related to the research question (King, 2004).

Phase 4: Reviewing potential themes

This phase involved reviewing and refining identified themes (Nowell et al., 2017). First, I reviewed and categorised data extracts for each subtheme to establish whether they formed a cohesive pattern (Manyeruke, 2021), however, I noticed insufficient data to support some themes and subthemes. So, I returned to the raw data to ensure that the subthemes accurately reflected the participants' voices (Manyeruke, 2021; Nowell et al., 2017).

Secondly, I reviewed the themes to ensure they accurately represented the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis progressed to the next phase as the identified themes adequately reflected the coded data extracts and were firmly grounded in the data. Upon finding themes that did not fit the data, the coded data was reviewed and refined until a convincing thematic map emerged. Moreover, since coding data and generating themes can continue indefinitely (Braun and Clarke, 2006), I diligently coded, reviewed and refined any emerging themes relevant to the research question until adequate information power was attained (Malterud et al., 2016).

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

Upon achieving a satisfactory thematic map of the research data, the essence of each theme was identified. A detailed analysis was then written for each theme (Nowell et al., 2017), which involved identifying the story and context each theme generated and its relationship with the research question. I considered and discussed each theme at peer debriefing to ensure the themes were sufficiently clear. The process enabled me to gain insight into specific facets of the research that may have otherwise remained undisclosed (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). At this stage, the final themes were only considered once I had thoroughly reviewed all the data and coding to ensure the credibility of the findings (Manyeruke et al., 2017).

Arranging the themes in a manner that genuinely captured the data was necessary to effectively convey the narrative (Nowell et al., 2017). Therefore, I structured and restructured the themes until they accurately portrayed all the data and presented it in a way that was both valuable and comprehensible (Manyeruke et al., 2017).

Finally, to use participants' words, I reviewed the themes and subthemes to ensure accuracy.

Phase 6: Producing the report

After establishing the final themes, I initiated the process of writing the reports as a part of the final analysis and write-up phase (Nowell et al., 2017). To ensure the transparency of the research methods used to achieve the findings, I utilised the Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) reporting guidelines (Tong et al., 2007). To present a convincing argument supporting the accuracy and foundational assumptions of the findings regarding the research inquiry, the report incorporated brief and extended quotations or data excerpts from the participants (Bazeley, 2009). Each quote was accompanied by a distinctive and anonymised identifier for the corresponding participant (Nowell et al., 2017).

The discussion section of this research covered all of the themes explored in the study. To facilitate this discussion, I revisited the original theoretical literature that informed the study (Nowell et al., 2017). Through this process, I compared findings with the broader literature, identifying areas of support, contradiction, and new knowledge related to the topic. The findings present a concise, coherent, and logically structured account of the data collected across all themes (Nowell et al., 2017). The final analysis combined the themes and revealed a comprehensive story about the research topic.

3.9.3 Advantages for adopting thematic analysis

TA utilised a flexible approach to uncover patterns in data related to lived experiences, perspectives, and behaviour (Braun and Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). The data for this study was analysed through a TA process, which did not involve any pre-existing themes and can be utilised in any research that solely depends on participants' clarifications (Alhojailan, 2012). In other words, as this study explored the relationship between transgressive behaviours and social media use among young people in Nottingham, each participant's statement or idea contributed to understanding the prevalent issues. Also, TA is a more accessible form of analysis, as it does not require the same level of theoretical and technological knowledge as other qualitative approaches, making it ideal for novice researchers. (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As such, researchers who have little experience with qualitative methods might find that thematic analysis is a fast and straightforward technique to acquire, given the limited number of procedures and guidelines involved (King, 2004; Braun and Clarke, 2006). In other words, TA was helpful for summarising data sets, examining perspectives, and generating insights (Braun and Clarke, 2006; King, 2004).

3.10 Data analytic process

As mentioned above, this study successfully gained access to 25 young people during the data collection process. These 25 participants were individually interviewed about their use of social media, peer relations, identity development, self-presentation online and offline, and its influence on transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham. This research then adopted a thematic analytic process to explore and capture essential data on the influence of social media on transgressive behaviour among young people in Nottingham. This section presented the formal stages of data analysis as is discussed. It is essential to mention that several aspects of this analysis began during the data collection and audio-recorded data transcription.

In considering the data, the identified themes and subthemes were discussed with research supervisors and transcripts were shared to ensure that the themes adequately reflected the coded data from the semi-structured interviews and that nothing was missed or omitted. Many of the participants' responses during this data collection process included words such as peer pressure, violence, addiction, anger, crime, negative influence, harassment, taunting, positive influence, bullying, revenge, escalation, self-harm, misrepresentation, online abuse, and safety.

During this stage, I discovered that the analysis process was challenging, particularly as some aspects of the participant's narratives resonated with my experiences. This occurrence meant that I had to keep a reflexive journal, reflecting on subjective experiences about the use of social media and its influence on transgressive behaviour among young people. Alongside this process, I wrote memos as a tool to prompt deeper analysis of the data (Bazeley, 2009), reflecting on what was said, how often something was said and who said it. This approach led to findings, considering the relatedness of themes to each other and their importance in addressing the research question, from which analysis was formulated and discussed in Chapter 6.

As such, I found it helpful to leave aspects of my conscious experiences aside (Groenewald, 2004) and concentrate on participants' narratives and experiences. This allowed me time to consciously dwell on each participant's world and consider how social media use may influence transgressive behaviours. This approach also enabled me to identify, determine, interpret, and better understand the present themes as meaning became more visible over

time. As such, to ensure the themes emerged from the data, I adopted the 'bottom-up' inductive approach to analysis (Bryman, 2012).

3.10.1 Inductive reasoning approach

The analysis of generated data for this study began with specific observations, and then I began to detect patterns and regularities, formulate some tentative themes that could be explored, and finally this approach enabled the development of some general conclusions.

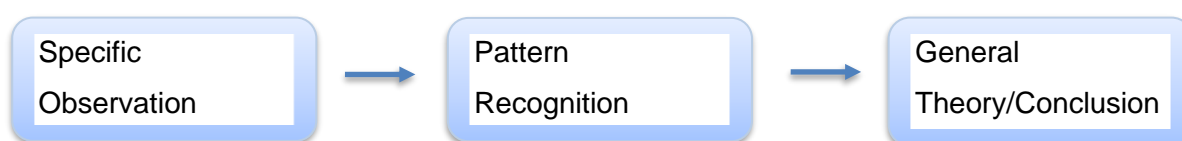


Figure 3.2 Inductive 'bottom-up' approach

An inductive approach was used to examine and understand the various perspectives on young people's use of social media. As I worked with each participant, the patterns of each person's diverse experiences and perceptions of online and offline social media activities and influence on transgressive behaviours progressed and were intricately linked. During the semi-structured interviews, some young people's attention to specific questions and ability to share individual experiences freely without reservations surprised me. As Inductive reasoning is a more exploratory process, I was able to learn from the experiences of participants by exploring the meanings from patterns of their social media use and how this use influences transgressive and non-transgressive behaviours.

3.11 Ethical and welfare considerations

The Leeds Beckett University Research Ethics Committee reviewed this research and it received approval on 22/02/2021. Imperative to research is a carefully considered and ethical research design. For this study, it was essential to prioritise safeguarding research participants by adhering to appropriate ethical principles in all research endeavours. As this research covered some sensitive information on social media activities and transgressive behaviours among young people, every data collection and analysis method operated ethically with due regard to the relevant ethical considerations. I carefully and conscientiously considered the potential vulnerability of participants, respected the gatekeepers, and took ethical practice

seriously and responsibly as I undertook this study (Palaiologou, 2012). Therefore, this study and each stage of this research process relied on the following guidelines:

1. Leeds Beckett University Research Ethics Policy
2. Leeds Beckett University Research Procedures Policy
3. The British Society of Criminology Code of Research Ethics

3.11.1 Ethics

I. Informed and voluntary consent

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), informed consent is essential in ethical research involving human subjects. According to the British Society of Criminology's Statement of Research Ethics (2015), consent is also recognised as an important process. Therefore, for this study to be considered ethical, the consent process was informed and occurred throughout the data collection process. In obtaining informed consent, I ensured adequate information about the research subject was provided to research participants (Davies, 2013). This was achieved by ensuring participants were provided with clear, detailed, and appropriate information about the study. Initial information was given to young people within the Nottinghamshire Youth Commission workshop as an informal and verbal discussion about the research. Those interested in participating were subsequently provided with a detailed project information sheet and the opportunity to ask me any questions before participating. According to Fleming and Zegwaard (2018), the project information sheet gave an overview of the research and the researcher, the expected duration and information on how their data would be used and reported. It also provided research participants with adequate, clear, and meaningful information regarding the research, which may have been needed to make an informed and voluntary decision about whether to participate in the study or not.

The British Society of Criminology's Statement of Research Ethics (2015) states that "participants have the right to refuse permission or withdraw from involvement in research whenever and for whatever reason they wish" (p. 6). Thus, consent was not a one-time action but a continuous process throughout the research. I also ensured that the participants were fully aware of their right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any point, even after signing the informed consent form or during the final stages of the research.

Participants were informed that they were not obligated to answer any question if they chose not to. Participants were also informed that although this was being undertaken as part of a doctoral thesis, they would receive a £10 Amazon voucher via email upon completing each semi-structured interview and focus group as compensation for their time. Additionally, Johnstone (2005) suggests that researchers may be perceived as part of the institutional structure, leading participation to be viewed as wise. Therefore, it was made clear that there were no repercussions for not participating, and I reiterated my student status. This information was communicated to each participant verbally and via participant information sheets and consent forms to ensure understanding.

II. Confidentiality and anonymity

Maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of research participants was crucial to safeguard their privacy, establish credibility and trust, and uphold ethical standards and the integrity of the research process. Before the commencement of the data collection process, participants were assured in the project information letters that confidentiality and anonymity would be upheld. This assurance was also communicated verbally during the data collection process.

Confidentiality was respected in all circumstances during and after data collection. I ensured that the sensitivity of the information provided by participants as well as their identity remained confidential and protected from unauthorized disclosure (Kaiser, 2009). This approach was necessary to build trust (Crow et al., 2006) between myself and the participants, ensuring participants were comfortable providing honest and truthful responses to the interview and focus group questions.

However, there are circumstances where upholding confidentiality may have been limited and conditional (Palys and Lowman, 2007; 2014; Wiles et al., 2008). A potential concern here was that due to the nature of the research, some participants might have been subjected to or perpetrated some transgressive behaviour and may choose to divulge such information or implicate behaviours for which they have not yet been sanctioned. As such, the limits of confidentiality were also discussed with the participants in the participant information sheets so that they understood the boundaries and could make an informed decision when deciding whether to participate. For instance, if in the data collection process, a participant revealed they were at risk or disclosed an important protection issue, the participant would have been notified in an appropriate way that my research supervisor and appropriate authority would be informed, thus breaking that confidentiality.

In addition, this study also ensured that the anonymity of research participants was protected. Participant anonymity ensured that any personal information identifying participants was recognized and removed. For example, to eliminate the possibility of identifying research participants, this study has used pseudonyms in transcripts, and data analysis and has also ensured the alteration of particular details that could make a participant identifiable (such as the location and dates of events) Smith (2003).

This study has further ensured that protecting participants' confidentiality and anonymity did not change, add, or remove from the meaning of participants' words in any way such that the research is not represented accurately (Flynn and Goldsmith, 2013).

III. Participant welfare and researcher safety

It was essential during this study to ensure that research participants were protected from harm, including physical anxiety, emotional distress, and personal humiliation (Stevens, 2013). Within this research, there were some potential risks to participant and researcher safety due to the topic's sensitivity within the interviews. As such, this study anticipated and guarded against potential harm to research participants, the researcher, the wider community, and Leeds Beckett University. Participant welfare was a key consideration within the context of the research. As such, while ensuring that the participants were fully aware of the risks involved before proceeding, this approach was considered to eliminate, isolate, and minimise risk (Fleming and Zegwaard, 2018).

Given the context of this study and with such anticipation in mind during the interview, I was open-minded in engaging with participants as they shared and revisited any vulnerability. For example, a parent of one research participant requested her child to be withdrawn from the research project as she had recently been subjected to some bullying and intimidating behaviour and was uncomfortable participating in the scheduled semi-structured interview. This request was acknowledged and granted to secure the participant from further unjustifiable harm and emotional and physical anxiety, and the participant was signposted to the appropriate support services. Ensuring a safe and comfortable environment during this study enabled participants to express their opinions freely (Acocella, 2011).

As Harvey (2007) suggested, I permitted a short informal debrief after the semi-structured interviews and focus groups to determine how the participants experienced the discussion process. Additionally, the research reminded participants how to access appropriate support

if needed. This included services such as Get Connected Support, Bullying UK (part of Family Lives), Kooth, and Young Minds. The relevant contact details were made available on the participant information sheets provided to participants.

IV. Data protection and storage

This study's data was protected and stored securely to protect the safety and privacy of research participants. The following documents were reviewed to ensure the research provided the appropriate level of data protection to all participants:

1. Data Protection Act 2018
2. General Data Protection Regulations
3. Leeds Beckett University's Data Protection Policy

Research materials were stored in line with the above legislation, regulations, and policy requirements on a password-protected networked computer. These research materials include participant information sheets, consent forms, audio recordings and transcriptions. All recorded audio was permanently destroyed after the transcription of generated data and complete analysis of research findings. Data was backed up on a secure university server that is password protected, and only I have access. Under the Freedom of Information Legalisation Act 2000, participants were also informed of their entitlement to access the information provided at any time.

V. Integrity, avoiding deception and bias

This research was designed, reviewed, and undertaken to ensure integrity, honesty, openness, fairness, transparent representation, value, and quality. Participants were made aware of my independence as a researcher. The study was conducted carefully to ensure the health and safety of both myself and the participants and to avoid conflicts of interest. Personal and professional boundaries were also maintained.

According to Bogdan and Bikien (1982; 2007), qualitative researchers have long debated the impact of the researcher's personal biases and attitudes on the data analysis process. This is particularly true when the data must be filtered through the researcher's mind before it can be written. As the data collection process is not an end, I regularly needed to make sense of the

data generated, reduce its volume, identify significant patterns and construct a framework for communicating research findings fairly and reflexively. This process was critical for producing high-quality research that was both rigorous and meaningful (Nowell et al., 2017). As a result, have constantly confronted individual opinions and prejudices with the generated data. Reflections of any existing prejudices and assumptions were regularly recorded as memos, encouraging an introspective analysis to reduce the impact of bias (Finlay and Gough, 2008). These memos helped me reflect on the continuous data generation and analysis. Another step I took, which assisted in reducing or eliminating bias, was to have the study reviewed by others, which further aided in the consideration of interpretations, assumptions, explanations, and judgments of the research process.

To reduce bias, I reported all research findings accurately and comprehensively without distorting or inventing any results during the research process (Kumar, 2011). This study has, in effect, limited bias and deception by being open, honest, and respectful to participants and "gatekeepers" with the data collection process, analysis, interpretation, and presentation of findings. This research has adhered to the required standards, taking a principled and ethical stance throughout the research process (Fraser et al., 2004).

3.12 Reflexivity and research methodology

Although research studies play a vital role in discovering new knowledge, it is equally important to share the experiences involved in the research process (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023; Shah, 2006). I had several reflections in mind before this study's commencement and its methodological approach. As well as understanding their views of young people, reflexivity invites researchers to understand their inward view or introspection (Roger et al., 2018). This began with an initial process of identifying myself as a researcher. I acknowledged the intersection of my personal and professional identities and that my positionality may have influenced my research. Hence, reflexivity enabled me to examine my outsider status and acknowledge any conscious assumptions and preconceptions which could influence the research methodology and subsequent outcome of this study.

This study was initially interested in exploring adolescents' (11 – 17 years) use of social media and its influence on transgressive behaviour. I was apprehensive that gaining access to participants and securing the consent of a supervising adult would have put constraints on my research timeline and that communication of my research questions and expectations would have been difficult. A more feasible and practicable option was to explore young people's (18

- 25 years) experiences and perspectives instead. Interestingly, this age group were willing and eager to participate in this study as they had been using social media for a long time, and they were familiar with the notion of transgressive behaviours and how it related to my research questions, aim and objectives. Building a rapport with this age group was easy, which impacted this study. At the time of conducting this study, I resided in Nottingham, and, as a result, it was practicable to make Nottingham the research context.

Before conducting this research, I volunteered with the Nottinghamshire Youth Commission and felt I could approach the commission to gain access to young people as research participants. After informal discussions with the workshop coordinator and becoming familiar with the workshop events, the coordinator was happy to grant me access to young people as participants in the study. To compensate for participants' time and contribution, I worked on the assumption that providing participants with a £10 Amazon gift card as an incentive would encourage prompt participation; this was not the case. I discovered that gaining access to young people and coordinating availability with young people is another thing. This challenge was more evident during the focus group discussions, and it meant I had to alter and be flexible with my research timeline to accommodate the focus groups as per their agreed availability.

I was conscious of my motivations for undertaking a multiple qualitative method of semi-structured interviews and focus groups for this study and how my knowledge, values and experiences as a legal practitioner and educator may influence the process (Jootun et al., 2009). Although I have worked with children and young people in various capacities, this research experience of working closely with young people may differ. As such, I decided to initiate the data collection process with a semi-structured interview to give participants sufficient avenues to fully express and share their experiences with social media use and transgressive behaviours. By adopting this approach, I became acquainted with the research participants and gained a more comprehensive understanding of their reactions to the research question. This approach was vital and influential in conducting a follow-up focus group with the same research participants. The element of familiarity and informality already established was beneficial to the research discussion among participants.

Equally, there were a few times during the data collection process when I could do nothing but empathise with the plight of some of the participants. As they expressed their thoughts and concerns, I wanted to assure them of confidentiality and anonymity. This study aims to serve as a tool for change if utilised accordingly.

Research is not value-neutral, as the researcher who produces knowledge plays a role in shaping it. Reflexivity involves critical self-evaluation and self-awareness of the researcher's positionality, recognising its impact on the research process and outcome (Berger, 2015; Palaganas et al., 2017). It is both a concept and a process (Dowling, 2006). The level of familiarity I had with research participants could have impacted all stages of the research process, including recruitment, data collection, and analysis (Berger, 2015; Nowell et al., 2017). As such, being reflexive enabled me to monitor how my behaviour affected the research process, which may have enhanced the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

My decision to adopt TA was based on its versatility, in that it could be applied to various epistemologies and research inquiries (Nowell et al., 2017). While I was aware of the laborious nature of transcribing, I decided to transcribe the interviews and focus groups using the NVivo software. It would aid in properly managing my data and conducting quick and accurate searches of all the data (Welsh, 2002). However, I debated using the NVivo software as I believed the process would take away from my immersive experience of listening to and transcribing the data. I assumed data collection would be a distinct and separate phase from my data analysis. However, I quickly became aware that analysis is iterative and recursive. As such, where time permitted, I listened to the audio recordings at least once to ensure that what was reflected in the transcription and analysis was true of the raw data. By following this process, I could immerse myself in the participants' experiences and therefore gained a deeper understanding of their perspectives.

It is crucial to recognise that social media's impact on children and young people is not just a research subject but a phenomenon that significantly influences me. Hence, I constantly tried to immerse myself in the participants' shared experiences as an active participant while trying to reconstruct the research problem. As a new mother to two young boys, I found myself laden with many preconceived judgements towards social media use and its influence on transgressive behaviours among young people. As such, throughout the research study, I asked questions such as: 'What are my feelings here?' 'What was my part in this?' 'How might I have influenced something or some behaviour?' (Watt 2010, pp. 188). In my comments book, I questioned whether social media platforms would ever be a safe and secure environment for my boys when they are older. According to Jootun et al. (2009), this exploration of these personal beliefs, "Makes the investigator more aware of the potential judgments that can occur during data collection and analysis based on the researcher's belief system rather than on the actual data collected from participants" (p. 43).

Putting my thoughts and feelings into words, I became more cautious and conscious of my perceptions and their impact. The process of reflexivity has enabled me to abandon my preconceived notions and recognise that there are various ways in which social media is utilised, all of which deserve equal consideration.

Reflexivity in studying others is crucial (Nowell et al., 2017; Palaganas and Estacio, 2021). According to Berger's (2015) research, Mauther and Docet's (2003) work stressed the importance of establishing a social and emotional connection with subjects as a crucial aspect of reflexivity. This approach allowed me to gain insight into the participants' role in shaping the interpretation of their experiences and recognise my biases and beliefs that may have influenced the research outcomes (Finlay, 2002; Freshwater, 2001; Pamela van der Riet, 2012).

3.13 Organisation of findings in Chapters 4, 5 and 6

In exploring and investigating young people's use of social media and its influence on transgressive behaviour, this study adopted a multiple qualitative research method consisting of a semi-structured interview and a follow-up focus group discussion. As highlighted in section 3.5, the adoption of semi-structured interviews as the first phase of data collection served to introduce participants to the research questions, thereby facilitating the identification of their individual experiences using social media and its influence on transgressive behaviour. Chapter 4 of this research presented participants' experiences, thoughts and understandings surrounding their individual use of and engagement with social media platforms and its impact on their behavioural construction. It was deemed essential to present the themes and findings from this data collection method in a distinct chapter to thoroughly explore, uncover and document participants' perspectives and unmediated contributions to the research. The findings presented in this chapter are intended for subsequent academic publication.

Subsequently, the themes derived from the interviews informed a follow-up focus group discussion with the same participants. Chapter 5 presented the findings from this follow-up discussion, offering a deeper exploration and investigation of the study. This chapter highlighted the evolution of participant's shared and collective experiences, as they reflected on and clarified their views and contributions regarding social media use and its potential relationship with transgressive behaviours among peers. It was essential to organise these findings in a separate chapter to fully articulate the contributions of participants from two distinct dynamics, emphasising how young people perceived their shared peer relational

experiences both online and offline. This approach not only facilitated the observation and highlighting of disparities in participants' responses, as evident in Chapter 7 (section 7.4) but also enhanced the overall coherence and organisation of the thesis. This distinct separation underscored the contrasting ways young people engage with social media and their interactions within peer group contexts.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I synthesised the main findings from Chapters 4 and 5, drawing connections and relationships to the existing literature to the study's research question, aim, and objectives. To ensure a coherent structure and maintain focus on the significant data, it was essential to present a comprehensive discussion of the findings in a separate chapter. This approach allowed me to thoroughly examine data that supported, expanded upon, or contradicted existing literature. Furthermore, this separation would allow for the findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5 to be prepared for academic publication separately, considering the valuable insights provided by the different dynamics of the study.

3.14 Reflections on COVID-19 disruption

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted our daily routines (Keen et al., 2022; Teti et al., 2020). It brought significant changes to the field of social science research. Lockdowns and social distancing protocols fundamentally altered how this research was conducted (Rahman et al., 2021), making it difficult or impossible to collect face-to-face data (Keen et al., 2022; Lobe et al., 2020). Fieldwork is a crucial aspect of qualitative studies as it enables researchers to engage with participants deeply within their context (Howlett, 2022; Wood, 2007, p. 123). Through face-to-face interviews, surveys, and participant observation in diverse field settings, social science scholars have gained valuable insights into the complex nature of our political and social reality (Howlett, 2022). However, the recent changes have proven particularly difficult for researchers whose projects involve fieldwork (Howlett, 2022). There has been little discussion on the implications of potential long-term research methodology in light of infrequent global pandemics (Keen et al., 2022; Roberts et al., 2021). This section outlines the impact of the pandemic on the initial data collection method, reflects upon this within the context of the research aim, and draws attention to the significance of adaptability during research.

Given the gap in knowledge of the influence of social media on transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham, the original research had been designed to collect data from participants physically at a Nottingham Youth Club centre. I visited the Nottingham Hyson

Green Youth Club and had an informal discussion with the on-ground staff. This research employed a multiple qualitative method using semi-structured interviews and focus groups to explore and understand how young people's social media use may influence transgressive online and offline behaviours. At this stage, COVID-19 was an unknown entity. However, when the UK government announced a lockdown in March 2020 because of the pandemic, this research and any form of data collection approach were temporarily halted. Subsequently, I, alongside my supervisory team, decided to alter my data collection approach. While videoconferencing closely simulates an in-person qualitative interview (Irani, 2019; Tuttas, 2015) and offers the convenience of real-time, online synchronous conversation with the exchange of audio-visual information, I could have been more enthusiastic about conducting research remotely. This is due to the expectation that the remote experience could be limiting in generating data and managing focus group dynamics (Lobe et al., 2020; Tuttas, 2015).

However, conducting research online is not a recent development in the field of social sciences (Coleman, 2010; Howlett, 2022; Hine, 2000, 2005). Social science researchers have used phone, Skype, and instant messaging software for many years to conduct interviews. This method has been explored in various studies such as Cater (2011), Johnson et al. (2019), and Sullivan (2012). Additionally, crowdsourcing techniques through the Internet have been effective in fields such as psychology (Howlett, 2022). In the past, online real-time interviews were mainly limited to video platforms like Skype. However, there has been a recent increase in the availability of communication technologies, making it easier to interact with participants in various settings (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014; Howlett, 2022; Jowett et al., 2011). Hence, for this study, I utilized Microsoft Teams, a video conferencing platform, to conduct the semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

The importance of flexibility and adaptability during the research process has been documented in methodological literature (Buchanan and Bryman, 2007; Rahman et al., 2021). The impact of the temporal halt to data collection provided me time to reflect upon the scale and aim of the study. According to O'Connor and Madge's (2017) research, the live nature of interviews and focus groups can foster a sense of authenticity similar to in-person interviews, as participants are less likely to overthink their responses or give socially desirable answers (Howlett, 2022). Surprisingly, the research participants for my study were notably more at ease and relaxed. This was evident in their clothing choices and appearance, which were less formal due to the interviews being conducted outside of traditional working hours - between 8:00 am and 7:00 pm UK time on weekdays and weekends.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, conducting field research has become incredibly challenging, although it remains an essential methodology for gathering first-hand experience by entering the setting or environment under study (Howlett, 2022; Mifsud, 2022). However, in many ways, conducting research online made me reflect on my role and how participants perceived me (virtually in this case) (Fujii, 2017; Howlett, 2022). This is because access to my digital data collection platform was solely determined by the participants involved in the research. Hence, my recruitment strategies played a pivotal role in ensuring the participants' attendance at the scheduled online meetings (Howlett, 2022). Therefore, managing the recruitment process effectively was imperative to avoid any mishaps.

Additionally, there were concerns regarding the well-being of the participants and the likelihood of virtual interviews and focus groups, resulting in issues such as "anxiety, challenges, concerns, dilemmas, doubts, problems, tensions, and troubles" (Abidin and De Seta 2020, p. 9). This was attributed to the perceived challenges of effectively managing virtual interactions and fostering productive discussions (Howlett, 2022). Some participants preferred to have the video feature of the online platform disabled, while others were happy to have their video feature enabled. It is believed that not having a video or visual representation or a potential headshot captured through the camera hindered my ability to fully perceive the body language and tone of the participants (Cater, 2011; Howlett, 2022), in addition to technical challenges such as unclear audio.

Furthermore, according to Howlett (2022), face-to-face and mediated approaches can only partially understand the environment and individuals under study. However, with technological advancements, researchers can immerse themselves in distant contexts, resulting in a more comprehensive and less biased digital research output. As a result, the knowledge generated through digital research is now more valid and reliable than ever, providing researchers with a powerful tool to understand the world. Given this new reality, as a novice researcher who had invested time and effort into the research design and ethics application, confidence and objectivity were needed to be responsive and flexible in making research design decisions. More philosophically, adaptability in changing environments can develop skills and produce research findings that may have been less focused and rich had the pandemic not forced a deeper consideration of the theoretical contribution of this study.

3.15 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the research methodology, the researcher's perspective, the research methods adopted in this study, and the advantages and limitations of adopting multiple qualitative methods. In exploring the ethical and welfare considerations of research participants, the researcher, and respecting the gatekeepers, this chapter carefully and conscientiously discussed the relevant and appropriate ethical principles that guided the course of this research's data collection and study. Following this, the setting and context, research sample, research participant recruitment and access were discussed. I then introduced and thoroughly discussed this study's approach to thematic data analysis and the six phases of thematic data analysis, which guided the development of this study's data analysis. Following this, I also discussed the data analytic process and the adoption of an inductive reasoning approach to examine and understand the various perspectives of young people's use of social media. Finally, the advantages and limitations of adopting a TA for this study were discussed, and some adaptations were implemented because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This section outlined the impact of both analyses and the skills development of the researcher.

The next chapter considers young people's prolific use of social media and presents the findings of the generated data from the multiple qualitative methodological approach of semi-structured interviews. This chapter also discusses the data analytic process of the inductive reasoning approach that was relied on by this study. Focusing on key themes that have emerged from the generated data, this chapter further highlights various quotes, data extracts and remarks provided by participants during the semi-structured interviews to reveal individual and subjective experiences of social media use and its influence on transgressive behaviours in Nottingham.

Chapter 4: Semi-Structured Interviews: Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents data from semi-structured interviews with 25 young people residing in Nottingham, UK. The data presented in this chapter is only part of that generated during the data collection process and further data is discussed in the next chapter. The data from the semi-structured interviews presented in this chapter explored how young people's use of social media platforms influences transgressive behaviour and peer relations. These participants spoke openly about their online user experiences and offline experiences with transgressive behaviour and this chapter documents how young people themselves discussed and reflected on the impact of this influence. The findings in this chapter present the key themes and subthemes emergent within the narratives of the data. In doing so, data presented in this chapter addresses findings as they relate to the following two research objectives: To investigate how young people address online and offline identity and self-representation of peers on social media and to explore ways in which social media may influence transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham.

Firstly, this chapter focuses on young people as prolific social media users. For most young people interviewed in this research, SNS represented a major part of their online and offline self-presentation and much of their daily living experience surrounded online activities. The second part of this chapter presents and focuses on key themes and their subthemes that emerged as results from the generated data. These themes focus on individual participant descriptions, quotes, and remarks of their experiences on SNS and how this influences their behaviours, identity, and peer relations.

4.2 Young people as prolific social media users

Based on a review of the existing literature (Chapter 2), this research started with the premise that the use of social media may influence transgressive behaviour among young people (Goldsmith and Wall, 2022; Lozano-Blasco et al., 2023), and through interviewer and participant conversations, it was observed that prolific use of social media platforms and behavioural changes online and offline, all express influence to a certain degree. For this present study, the semi-structured interview data collection method permitted me to have uninterrupted flow and access to young people's online worlds. This provided an

understanding of how their use of social media shapes or influences individual and peer group behaviours online and offline, transgressive, and non-transgressive.

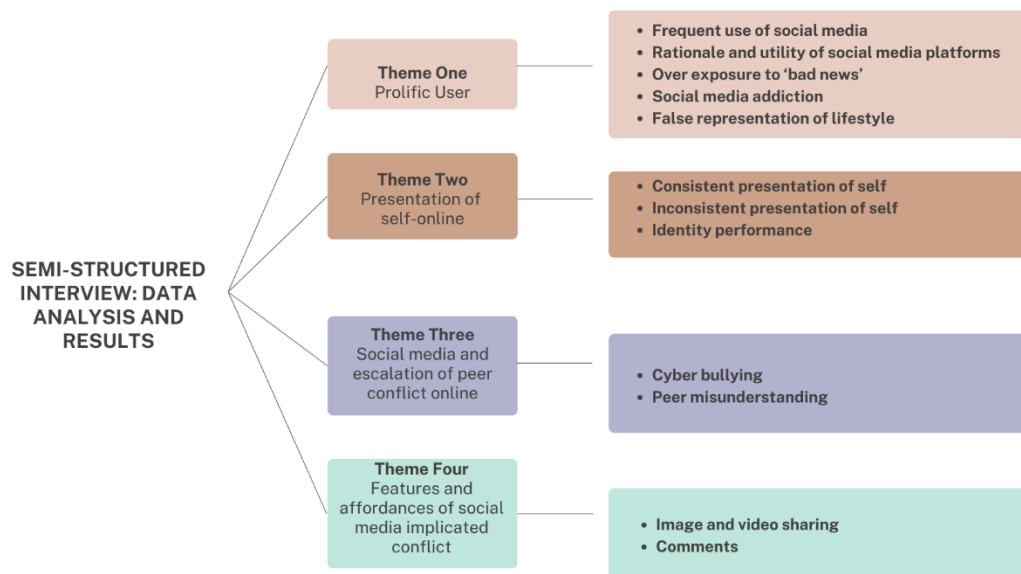
Life online as we know it can sometimes be different to offline experiences and this is increasingly the reality for young people. Described as the technologically savvy generation that has only ever known a world with mobile and digital devices (Pichler et al., 2021; Fortunati et al., 2019) most of the young people that were interviewed had been encouraged to join social media by a peer or peers and now they are prolific users of social media platforms and sometimes depend on these platforms in numerous ways one of which is keeping in touch with people. This frequent use of social media alongside other background factors is also what can be identified to drive some of their offline and online behaviours, some of which may be transgressive. Findings from this current study showed that the distress and anxiety of young people not gaining acceptance, approval and validation of their social circle, family community, the effort to create individual identity, the desire for thrills and pleasure, the necessity to express their personality, as well as the need to learn new things make young people prolific users of these social media platforms.

4.3 Key Themes

Upon reviewing the results of the analysed semi-structured interview data, the following four themes were identified: (1) Prolific user; (2) Presentation of self-online; (3) Social media and escalation of peer conflict online; and (4) Features and affordances of social media implicated conflict.

In this section, key themes and subthemes pertinent to young people's social media use, peer relations and its influence on transgressive behaviour are presented and discussed, alongside the key elements that made up the themes. In presenting each theme, quotes and extracts from the recorded semi-structured interviews are provided to highlight participants' thoughts and experiences on the research topic.

Figure 4 Semi-structured interviews – Themes and subthemes



4.4 Theme one: Prolific user

This was an important and recurring theme emanating from the data in understanding how frequently young people personally and individually use social media. The use of social media, the medium that allows people to be social online by sharing information, photos, news, lifestyle, content, and many more with other people (Taprial and Kanwar, 2012) has seen a high frequency of online engagement or interaction among young people.

During the semi-structured interviews, young people referred to how often they use social media, the rationale and motivations behind their use and the positive and negative experiences they had. On one hand, it seemed that with spending time watching TV or being monitored offline by parents and guardians, young people reported that they enjoyed being on social media much of the time because that is where 'life happens.' By 'life happens', participants meant that they can frequently engage and interact with peers and people they have never seen and most likely will never see, they can share and learn information, and they are also able to stay up to date with issues and stay entertained online while fitting their lifestyle, interests and hobbies in with their use of social media. It has great power with its

features and affordances to advertise and spread information widely around the globe. On the other hand, young people referred to the expectations that they felt parents, authorities and the public have of them regarding their use of social media. These expectations turned out to be a fine line between how they used social media when they were between the ages of 10 years and 17 years and how they now use it between the ages of 18 and 25 years.

Across young people's descriptions and narrations during the semi-structured interviews, findings from this study identify five ways and impacts of young people's prolific use of social media as discussed below.

4.4.1 Frequent social media use

While obtaining participants' data, it was noted that more than half of my research participants had at least three active social media accounts. Young people's descriptions reveal that the three most popular social media accounts that they use are Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat where they spend more than five to six hours a day, and even when they are asleep, their mobile devices are usually placed at an arm's reach for easy access when needed. When asked about the number of social media platforms they use, some participants describe and refer to their personal user experience online, stating how often they use social media. For example:

'I use a lot of social media platforms, like Snapchat, Twitter, and Facebook, but the most I use is Instagram. There is no limit. And I am sure I use them seven days a week, 24 hours a day.' (Participant 1)

'I have about like five or seven. I would say I use Instagram and TikTok as well. Whenever I get up in the morning and that is the first thing I check, so it is every day and in terms of hours could be on it for a couple of hours a day. But then that is just one social media. Then I would switch to another one, so probably quite bad. Probably like seven or eight hours a day I guess.' (Participant 5)

'I use five. So, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok. At one point, I had Tumblr, but I do not use that anymore. And Facebook I have, but I do not use it as such. Mostly all of them. I would say I use Twitter the most because it is just a platform, you can post something, then come back, and scroll. And it is easy to just navigate. So, I use that the most and I use it anytime really.' (Participant 12)

'I use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and TikTok. I mostly use TikTok and Twitter, there is just always something fun to watch and I can spend long hours just scrolling, commenting, and sharing content there.' (Participant 24)

As the participants describe, the day sometimes begins and ends using social media platforms on their mobile devices, as they can take trips in and out of the platforms whenever they desire. They went further to explain that having one social media account is not enough, these platforms often offer different content and these contents impact several aspects of young people's lives. These excerpts suggest that the easy accessibility and affordance of social media platforms on smartphones make it convenient for young people to share and interact with people as well as explore other online materials frequently at any time. This insight demonstrates the prominence of social media in the lives of young people.

4.4.2 Rationale and utility of social media platforms

The utility of social media platforms involves any daily or regular activities that young people engage in while online or offline. In using these social media platforms, young people explained that they would usually follow, 'be friend' and connect with various social media accounts of friends, influencers, strangers and popular people and interests around the world. Some participants mentioned that they have both positive and negative experiences of using social media. Some of these experiences would usually contain general news/information, entertainment and content that can influence a young person in one way or the other. When asked about their rationale for using social media platforms and the utility they find on these platforms, some participants responded by stating:

'It's just interactions really and learning as well because I am not one person to always watch the news at nine o'clock or read newspapers or something, or most times I get what is going on through social media. So, information and, you know, interaction and meeting people of the same interests and sometimes random people as well.' (Participant 3)

'It is just all the latest content or that you can find out some different things and because each time we swipe on stuff, it is a completely different video or post, completely latest information. It can just go on forever, just all the different content and information on there.' (Participant 7)

'There's a lot of things to explore. There are different things to suit your interests. And it also provides that platform to get more information about things you are not necessarily into at a point in time, but it just provides that room, that space for exploration and to just know new things and stay up to date.' (Participant 21)

From the perspective of the above participants, utilizing and exploring social media in ways that suit a young person's interests and needs dictates their continuous utilisation of social media. This utility offers a way for young people to learn more about themselves and the world around them as they explained that seeing and learning new things regularly online helps to have a different view of life.

Participant 8 also notes: *'I like the fact that I can see and encounter different things around the world without me going to those places. Also, just that it is for laughs as well, but especially Twitter humour, just like, I mean, it can be a stressful platform, but it can also be used to like de-stress as well.'*

Describing the use of social media like 'taking a break' or 'taking a holiday,' Participant 8 goes on to describe the feeling of being able to 'visit' and be a part of multiple destinations and experiences without physically being there. Here, social media provides an opportunity for Participant 8 to immerse herself in the daily experiences and opportunities encountered while regularly utilising social media.

Participant 11 states: *'It is more of the fact that I can see what other people are doing. And if I want to look for something like on Facebook, it is massive. So, like if I want to look for a household item or an item of soccer, a washing machine or a bed or something like that, I can find something there. So, it is such a broad option or place that you can find something that fits every single interest. And with Instagram, you can flick through the stories like Snapchat, and it is not just images of daily life like Mrs. Hinch, I love that because I can see what she is up to, but like inspiration.'*

In these excerpts, young people revealed their motivations for frequently using social media. It seemed from the views expressed, that being online on social networking sites can provide young people with their first experience of trying to understand certain encounters or circumstances, relationships, identity, and self-development. There is sometimes the assumption in public discourse that young people are wasting their time on social media, mindlessly scrolling. Like many young people, participants acknowledge the importance and

need for young people to explore the features and affordances provided by social media platforms which enables them to acquire varying information and stay connected for as long as necessary. In other words, these excerpts from participants suggest that young people enjoy using social media for things important to them and that have always been important to young people such as personal hobbies and interests, trends, and patterns online, connecting relationships and learning about themselves. Notably, this routine discovery and engagement with social media, interacting with and meeting people of all kinds, sometimes challenges and inspires their sense of self and who they become as a person.

4.4.3 Overexposure to ‘bad news’

Over-exposure to ‘bad news’ and misinformation that can be concerning and harmful was also mentioned as a frequent experience while utilising social media. In describing this exposure, participants mentioned that while there are good parts of using social media regularly, there is also the concerning part of experiencing ‘bad news’ that then affects subsequent engagement with these online platforms, sometimes temporarily. For example:

‘One thing I do not like is that I mean, I like that it is used to spread awareness about things like deaths or social justice, but then at the same time, when something bad happens it is all over, and it is everywhere. And you cannot escape from that news unless you leave the platform or take a break from the platform. So sometimes when there is like tragedy, it can be quite overwhelming. (Participant 4)

‘Um, because it is I think a society where a lot of people have free speech. People do not hold back in what they say on social media. If it is not something that is affecting them, they will still speak on it, and it will be everywhere. Honestly, it is usually difficult to stay away from bad news online. It can be draining in your mind and damaging too personally.’ (Participant 6)

In these incidents, young people went on to express that seeing bad news every day while using social media was mentally draining. Sometimes, this takes away from their daily motivation to engage with social media frequently because as they described a lot of people want to report the same bad news to trend which then creates multiple stamps of the same type of news, which makes it exhausting and less motivating to just keep ‘scrolling.’

4.4.4 Social media addiction

Addiction to social media was expressed as a result or consequence of the excessive and frequent use of social media platforms. Participants note that sometimes, young people feel the extreme compulsion to always use their social media, always devoting substantial amounts of time to it. For example:

'The fact that it can be quite addictive. So, you can spend ages and ages online and the time just flies by. You always want to be online, like it can replace important people in your life.' (Participant 5)

'The fact that it is very addictive. I mean, that is a common issue because nothing tells you how long you have stayed, you could subconsciously just keep on scrolling from one social media to the other because you are enjoying it even when you sometimes have a lot of things to do. For instance, there was a time I would be very restless if I were unable to check my social media because that is where I was living life and enjoying myself.' (Participant 20)

'Sometimes it is just toxic in the sense that there are things that go on there that you do not even want to be a part of but somehow you are already hooked on it, you know like a drug or something. Sometimes, I wonder what would happen if there was no social media. So that is why I say is toxic, sometimes it can take away your time without you even realizing and you just become addicted to socials.' (Participant 25)

These excerpts from participants, describe addiction to social media as being like other disorders such as alcohol abuse and gambling. They further explained that some young people are so engaged with platforms like Instagram, Snapchat and they feel isolated, distressed and sometimes anxious when they are unable to utilise them which creates an unhealthy addiction affecting various areas of their personal and social lives.

Like many young people, participants here express that social media affords a lot of possibilities. The emphasis on young people wanting to be seen and heard on social media all the time can be dangerous and it also underscores the basic human need for attention and affection.

4.4.5 False representation of lifestyle

In describing their frequent social media use, participants noted that there is a tendency for young people to easily present a false self-image identity or lifestyle to others online. They express that young people with false narratives online, hide behind their cameras, keyboards or digital devices and show only what they want others to see, and young people are influenced by these misrepresentations. For example:

'They can pretend to be like a second person online which is different to what they're like in real life so they can use that and bully people or want people to just create false narratives about people.' (Participant 4)

'Yes, I do not think I show all my true self online, I just show the happy, nice, and confident part. But offline I am more I think quiet and laid back, which is different.' (Participant 19)

'False sense of life. The fact that people will only show you their ups and no one ever posts their downs, so it gives you this false sense of lifestyle and pressure, and because of that I think about a year and a bit I deactivated my Instagram account to get away from the false reality.' (Participant 15)

'So, I tend to be free, and I may throw caution to the wind when I am interacting with people online and tend to say some things I would not say when I see the person in real life. Does that mean I am a different person, or I am fake or something, I do not know really because it is what everyone does.' (Participant 17)

Participants go on to describe that sometimes frequently using social media, posting, and sharing your lifestyle, causes jealousy among peers depending on what is being shared. The high number of fake accounts created on social media signals to young people that they sometimes must tread carefully online to avoid the inherent pressure of using social media to influence their offline lives. So even though they are frequently using social media, they exercise caution so as not to be influenced by other people's false sense of lifestyle. In these incidents, a particular type of comment was mentioned 'false sense of life' which participants described as a cover-up for a lack or need in a young person's offline life. The speed at which young people can easily choose to display fake lifestyles online is heightened by the ease, acceptability, and affordability of social media platforms.

'So, there is a lot of things that you learn from social media that kind of influences who you want to be, and, in that process, it might look like I am different things and all over the place. That helps you figure things out at some point.' (Participant 6)

'I think that exposure to the activities on social media can help to you know figure out who you are or who you want to be and how you want to represent yourself. And it also makes it easy for young people to develop different identities you know, which can look like it is a fake lifestyle sometimes.' (Participant 21)

In this context, both participants describe the opportunities social media provides for them to explore and try out different identities in the hopes of motivating self-development. Both explain that the accessibility and affordability of being on social media enables them to develop a sense of 'I can do this' due to the many different identities and lifestyles they have been exposed to. These exposures have and continue to influence their lifestyles which they do not describe as false or fake but as self-development.

4.5 Theme Two: Presentation of self online

Findings from this study suggest that through verbal and nonverbal communication, young people are constantly interacting with one another online. Like many young people, participants have described how they try to take control of their everyday social interactions on social media. Across young people's narrations and experiences, this study has identified consistent presentation of self, inconsistent presentation of self and identity performance.

4.5.1 Consistent presentation of self

When reflecting on the construction and reconstruction of the self online, participants noted that young people should have the same construction and presentation of self as it is offline. When participants were asked about their presentation of self across online and offline platforms, and whether they retain or keep the same identity online and offline, some participants explained:

'Yes. I interact with my friends online and offline in the same way. Um, I mean, I have no reason to hide myself from anyone.' (Participant 1)

'I keep the same identity because people say that the way I type, the things I do and the way I speak on social media is the same way I speak in real life. (Participant 12)

'It just makes me not trust others because I am the same person online and offline.'
(Participant 16)

'Yes, I am the same person online and offline. There is no need for confusion as to who I am and what I do.' (Participant 22)

In the context of social media, expressions from these participants acknowledge that young people should keep the same identity online and offline to permit ease of identification and a better understanding of who someone is. It was shared that frequent access to smartphones and social media makes it easier to obtain first-hand information on someone else and easier to share more of their self-presentation with a larger (sometimes non-judgemental) audience online. Participants further expressed that keeping the same identity online and offline helps prevent confusion and promotes clarity on how they see and perceive themselves and others.

4.5.2 Inconsistent presentation of self

On the other hand, participants' description also reveals that young people can choose how they want to be perceived by others and how best to present themselves to others. They expressed that these presentations of self are usually different from the other and vary from situation to situation. For example, Participant 1 stated:

'I think online, I can come across as quite feisty, quite confident like especially to strangers online. And then when alone in person, I am like a completely different person, I can be cool, calm, and shy. You know, different realities.'

'What I would say with online, I feel like I am a lot more outspoken online and a lot more girly. My personality is not girly in any way, but online I fit with some views. I pose a bit more girly than anything really but like on nights out you take photos and then you post it, but that is not me, but it is like that thing of you have not gone out if you have not posted it.' (Participant 7)

In this excerpt, both participants reveal that their presentation of self is sometimes determined by what is expected from peers on social media. Participant 7 goes on to describe her solution

to the situation as a self-presentational strategy that is accepted and validated by her peers online and offline, thereby giving her control over the impressions they have of her online. Both participants noted that how other peers see and treat them on social media is sometimes filled with tension and anxiety, dependent on the social context. However, when they are alone, they are usually calm, relaxed and more genuine with less pressure. For example, participant 24 notes:

'I would say there is not any difference unless someone says otherwise. Because I have a diverse group of friends, so I connect with them on various levels differently. I do not know if that could be part of having different versions of myself or like being two people, I do not know really.'

This describes some ambivalence in the presentation of self among a group of friends and at the same time notes that different versions or presentations of oneself are usually connected to separate groups of friends. As such, if the audience or group of friends is different, then she would have to relate with them differently which does not have to mean that the participant is presenting a false or fake lifestyle.

'After being bullied at my previous school, I had to delete all my social media accounts and create new accounts with a different identity when I joined a new school because I had to hide my past and was afraid the bullying would continue. It is like if someone was assaulted in a traumatic way, they may choose to change their identity to avoid being remembered or identified and judged and it is easier to do that online.'

(Participant 9)

'To an extent, yes I don't think I am always showing my real self all the time, I mean I won't post a picture of myself after a long day, but I will post a picture, when I'm dolled up or doing something fun, entertaining just so people can see and know that side of me. Like fun, exciting, friendly, and you know fun to be with. Even though that is not what it looks like offline all the time. But it is still me, but it is just a different side.'

(Participant 14)

Interestingly, participants here further expressed that young people could choose to present themselves differently online for several reasons, some of which could be anonymity, and privacy and others could use this as leverage to engage in transgressive behaviours. As Participant 9 further noted, the public nature of the bullying experience intensified the need to

'hide my past'. Here social media acted as an avenue to deconstruct and reconstruct her presentation online. These comments further acknowledge and describe young people's ability to interact and engage with different audiences in different contexts when necessary.

4.5.3 Identity performance

Performance of identity according to participants also plays a role in the presentation of self of a young person. For example, Participant 15 stated:

'Actually, I just don't like people knowing my business like that, so it's a lot easier to just do some make-believe or be a little different online by picking and choosing what I share, I guess.'

'I think, because they could, like use it as an escape, or like a second or different life. So, if something is going wrong physically, or where they are, you can just pretend it does not exist online. And you can like through images, you can create, like an alter ego of yourself.' (Participant 13)

'I do not like people knowing who I am offline, so I usually have a different personality online because when they cannot see you or know what you are up to, you can do as you like without any pressure. I mean it is for good though not for bad things.' (Participant 10)

'People are quick to taunt, troll and cyberbully others and before you know it, there is a fight. So, to avoid that some people just have different performance of their identities online and offline.' (Participant 25)

These comments by participants show a need for young people to select the best information to share with other users or any respective audience on social media for safety reasons. In this context, participant 10 explains that due to some criminal family encounters, she has always preferred to purposely keep her life online and offline different from each other. Given the situational factors that may have been involved, both participants expressed that they can present themselves constructively online which is now a natural part of their everyday life.

'My friends and I are close online, it's like some form of moral boost to be able to do things together that we would not be allowed to do offline which is why we just have

random anonymous names so that nobody would know how to find us.' (Participant 20)

Continuing with this idea, participant 20 also described and acknowledged the process of attempting to guide and create a certain type of image in which other peers perceive and see her peer group. There is a regular online performance or display of desired actions and presentation of self among her peer group wherever and whenever required. This emphasises their control over their self-representations and identities and can choose how they want to be perceived by others and how to best represent themselves online and offline to others.

4.6 Theme Three: Social media and escalation of peer conflict online

Participants' descriptions reveal that there are online social media conflicts by both peers and strangers extending offline and vice versa. When questioned about their understanding of transgressive behaviours online and whether they had any link to offline behaviours and vice versa, participants noted that these transgressive actions or behaviours that happen online sometimes corresponded with transgressive actions and behaviours that subsequently happen offline in real life. For example, Participant 6 noted:

'Um, yeah, especially if they're familiar with each other I think that transgressive behaviours can grow and escalate online and offline until the issue is resolved, it will not just stay offline.'

'I would say it depends if you are aggressive online, then you can have the potential to be also aggressive in person. It goes both ways, so, it almost brings out your hidden personality you know.' (Participant 9)

'Those transgressive behaviours and how young people use social media and what they even use it for online could lead to more anti-social behaviour, bullying, aggression, and violence physically. Because online and offline are more connected than we think.' (Participant 20)

'Well, I think in most cases, both online and offline spaces they link. I mean, because whatever is happening online always tends to come out in the end and becomes physical in the end especially because you know online is where a lot of young people are.' (Participant 23)

These excerpts describe online and offline spaces as mutually influential realms where conflict initiated online among young people in most cases is expected to escalate or continue offline. Participants express that prolonged online conflict among young people usually would have aggression as an encouraging emotion to escalate the conflict offline. In this context, they suggest that when a conflict stays online, it could feel like an unfinished business and until it is further addressed offline (oftentimes with violence and aggression), there is no end to the conflict.

'I feel like when it is something starting online, it can then progress onto offline. So, it starts by manifesting itself and slowly working its way up to something physical, like little things of calling someone an offensive name online and then them reacting to you. This online reaction and any further reactions most times rarely stay online and sometimes usually escalate offline. (Participant 16)

'They would antagonise each other online. So, of course, this starts verbally with social media comments or video dissing, and then it only takes one person to say you are all talk and no action. You know and then it mostly leads to offline aggression and physical violence.' (Participant 18)

Both participants suggest that it is sometimes the features of social media that establish an avenue for conflicts to potentially escalate offline. In this context, it was explained that other peers online would usually join in and contribute to the conflict through social media comment sections. This would usually serve as an encouragement for those involved to not give up the fight online but to continue offline. Participants mentioned that in most cases, this conflict would escalate and continue offline. These social media features are discussed below in Section 4.7.

4.6.1 Cyberbullying

Participants' descriptions reveal that social media platforms give users the confidence to utilise its resources as much as possible. Participants describe that conflict can begin when young people cyberbully their peers by disrespecting one's physical appearance, family, or reputation. For example, Participant 12 stated:

'The issue of cyberbullying gets me. Like, I just see people saying nasty things to other people on social media. It has happened to me as well. So, it just keeps me wondering,

like, are they really people that would just come to people's pages to just troll, taunt, and bully people about things they post? It is disrespectful for people to come on people's pages and say nasty things.'

'Social media gives people confidence to do all manner of things and it can cause issues, you know, trolling people and taunting them because they are different or sometimes because they want to show they have some kind of power. This has put me off using social media as much as I used to.' (Participant 17)

'Some people just prefer to keep a really low profile on social media platforms so as not to attract bullies or violent people.' (Participant 5)

Instagram and Snapchat along with their features were used as tools here to disrespect and cyberbully people without the need for physical dominance or physical advantage. Participants note that cyberbullying acts such as comments, videos or images on social media are persistent, quantifiable, and have some level of permanence online, making it suitable for escalation offline.

4.6.2 Peer misunderstanding

Like many young people, participants highlight the importance of avoiding misunderstanding among peers online. They express that online peer misunderstandings alongside certain features and affordances on social media can increase the potential of a subsequent offline conflict. For instance, Participant 1 stated that:

'I think you can get carried away with it because it can turn to a wild place very fast, so for instance, TikTok, if you're creating videos, I think you kind of just get carried away and then it comes to the point where you're insulting someone else or someone else misunderstands what you're trying to say and then fights and bullying starts happening.'

'Social media is not social. It is a normal thing when people say it is meant to make people social, but it isolates people especially if you have had a misunderstanding with your friends. That is the thing I do not like because it would not just stay online, it will just carry on offline. Either way, it can be very damaging.' (Participant 9)

In this context, participant 9 shared the hurt she experienced when a misunderstanding with a friend played out publicly on TikTok. She expressed that the public nature of the conflict intensified the shame and isolation she felt. She acknowledges that the conflict would have remained a verbal argument but for the prompting of other social media users to escalate it offline.

4.7 Theme Four: Features and affordances of social media implicated conflict

While social media conflicts may sometimes start with something small or insignificant, they can easily escalate into something serious. As participants have noted above, the following features and affordances of social media that contribute to the escalation of social media conflict to offline conflicts are discussed below: The two features and affordances identified in this finding include image and video sharing and comments.

4.7.1 Image and video sharing

Young people suggested that posting or sharing pictures and videos are a feature in social media conflicts. Participants expressed that pictures and videos can be taken of people and used to repost embarrassing or vulnerable situations which then becomes a growing online conflict. For example, Participant 23 mentioned:

'I also know that some young people intentionally post some videos and pictures online to get at some other person or group of friends and you know that way, it is like they are inviting you to come and fight them or something. There was a boy from my school in Nottingham who got killed by a gang because of a video he posted online when he went to another city, it was all over the news. It is a bit difficult honestly, but young people really should be careful what they post online because you do not know who has access to your location and can come and start misbehaving.'

'I feel like when it is something starting online, it can then progress onto offline. So, it starts by manifesting itself and slowly working its way up to something physical and slowly getting there, like trivial things of calling someone an offensive name in a video or an image online and then reacting in such an aggressive way. This online reaction and any further reactions most times rarely stay online and sometimes usually escalates offline.' (Participant 16)

This participant goes on to describe that the conflict eventually resulted in a physical fight at the shops. In the context of online conflict, it was expressed that both image and video features are typically used to document offline fights, allowing for its continuation online in the social media context. As young people have noted, visually documenting the outcome of conflicts plays a significant role in maintaining reputation. It was expressed that if the video of the fight were not captured or posted, it would be as though it never happened.

4.7.2 Comments

From the findings, participants have implicated the comments section as a feature on social media platforms that plays a role in online conflict escalation. It was noted that comments allow users to instantly respond to content posted by others on social media and this comment section acts as a starting place for developing and developed conflict. These comments can include, texts, emojis, memes and tags. For example, Participant 9 noted:

‘Sometimes you will see some young people having a normal conversation and then they start arguing online. And then they will start putting the address in the comments saying like come and meet them wherever for a fight. I have seen this on Snapchat and TikTok. Like people just want to settle things in person and that is how they plan to bring knives along to these fights. So, online violence can lead to offline violence as well which is scary.’

‘It is like they would antagonise each other. So, of course, this starts verbally with social media comments or video dissing, and then it only takes one person to say you are all talk and no action in the comment section. You know and then well I am going to give you action then - and then it leads to physical violence and aggression.’ (Participant 18)

‘There are lots of things that people say online in the comments section that they would never have the courage to say to someone's face. So, social media allows them just to hide behind their laptops and just say whatever they want, reinforcing and amplifying social media conflict. These users sometimes feel invested in other people's lives through social media and feel the entitlement to respond and contribute in that way.’ (Participant 22)

These excerpts further describe the comment section as a tool that allows an engaged social media audience to participate, reinforce, and amplify the original conflict as it unfolds and heighten the possibility of an offline escalation.

‘Sometimes, it is like some young people sell things to or buy things from people online like Facebook marketplace, gumtree, and those sorts, and then plan to deliver or collect the product but intend to only obtain the money or item from the buyer by showing a weapon or something at the buyer’s address. Threatening someone to get free money or an item. This happened to someone I know, and I am sure it is not new.’
(Participant 5)

In this context, as Participant 5 described, the initial engagement between the buyer and seller online may just be one of a goods and services transaction or a normal conversation which then turned out to be a transgressive act offline. This circumstance sees social media as the tool used to perpetrate transgressive behaviour.

4.8 Exceptions: When offline conflict is amplified online

In considering offline-generated conflict, data presented by participants also reveal that there are conflicts which begin or originate offline among young people but continue online. In these moments, social media was not involved in inciting the conflict but in the escalation and continuation of conflict.

4.8.1 Offline influencing online

From the findings, it was revealed that social media provided a tool which is the Instagram platform to continue the argument and conflict after both parties had settled amicably. For example, Participant 24 states:

‘Well, I mean, from what I see on social media, I feel like people have issues they are dealing with. And then, I remember I mistakenly crashed my friend’s car one time. I offered to repair it and she refused, only a couple of months later to take the issue to social media. Yeah, I was dragged and all sorts because that was her only venue to vent her anger and frustration. So yes, sometimes, offline actions or behaviours can also influence your online behaviours.’

It was expressed that offline videos of the damaged car were also taken as evidence and shared or posted on the escalated online conflict which would be viewed by a wider audience. This therefore establishes an online semi-permanence of the offline conflict as it unfolded online.

4.8.2 Preventing amplified conflict online

Findings in this study also indicate that to limit the influence of transgressive behaviours online and offline, some participants implement control and moderation in their use of social media.

Participant 1 mentioned: *'I think I'm probably using social media a bit more now that I'm older and I understand how to control the influence that it brings whether good or bad, you know.'*

'As I got a bit older, I am now generally cautious. I tend not to be mean and offensive towards people both online and offline. And if there is trolling, bullying and threats from the other party online, I tend to just avoid meeting them physically.' (Participant 19)

In this context, both participants indicate that previous experience and being older has provided the understanding and opportunity for them to alter their use of social media. They mention that when their social media use is altered, they can control how much time is spent online, and the activities they participate in and subsequently prevent any conflict among peers online.

'Before I used to give my opinion on anything. Um, my social media account, and whenever I do not agree with something, I am very vocal about it to the extent that it looks like I am bullying or trying to start a fight or something. But now I try to control how much I use it and moderate what I say so that I do not get in trouble with anyone online or offline.' (Participant 7)

'For example, I'd say the language I use is a lot different because I know how harsh and offensive words affect people online and offline.' (Participant 9)

In expressing their understanding of how language and comments used on social media platforms can easily be misconstrued and lead to online or offline threats, both participants 7 and 9 describe moderating their language. By doing so, both participants acknowledge that they can limit the possibility of offending peers and strangers online.

4.9 Chapter summary

In reflecting the personal views and perspectives of research participants this chapter highlighted and explained the part of the data analysis and results as obtained from participant's data during the semi-structured interviews. The key themes and results that emerged from this chapter's analysis: (1) Prolific user; (2) Presentation of self-online; (3) Social media and escalation of peer conflict online; and (4) Features and affordances of social media implicated conflict have enabled a foundation discovery and understanding of some of the important aspects of this research. Findings demonstrated that young people's use of social media may be different but some online and offline experiences are more common than expected among their peers. As such, these themes were closely aligned to young people's use of social media, peer-related activities and how this use influences and creates corresponding actions offline. In establishing and highlighting this discovery, anonymised extracts from the semi-structured interviews were used to gain a feel of young people's individualised yet diverse perceptions of the influence of social media on transgressive behaviour.

In addressing research objective two, these themes revealed that young people are conscious and mindful of identity, presentations of self and transgressive behaviours on social media and how this influence affects their behaviours online and offline. They revealed that their presentation of self is sometimes determined by the social expectations of peers on social media. They also expressed that for anonymity, privacy reasons and as leverage to engage in transgressive behaviours, young people could choose to present themselves differently online. Findings also showed a need for young people to select the best information to share with their peers or any respective audience on social media. This emphasised their control over their own self-representations and identities thereby choosing how they want to be perceived by others and how to best present themselves online and offline to others.

In addressing research objective three, this chapter described social media as a tool used to perpetrate transgressive behaviour. It was expressed that online and offline spaces are mutually influential realms where conflict initiated online among young people in most cases was expected to escalate or continue offline. Findings suggested comments, and image and video sharing as key features on social media that influence transgressive behaviours online and offline, thereby establishing avenues for conflicts to potentially escalate offline. Therefore, in investigating the role of social media in influencing transgressive behaviours among young

people in Nottingham, the findings presented in this chapter address objectives two and three of this research.

As a follow-up to this chapter, the next chapter focuses on the results of the later part of the data collection. It highlights the collective views and perspectives of research participants as discovered during the focus group discussions. The next chapter explores deeper collective meanings and understanding of young people's social media use, identity and self-performance, social acceptance, sources of conflict among peers and how this influences transgressive behaviour. In doing so, this chapter also discusses emergent themes and results from the obtained participants' data by reflecting the views and perspectives of participants in quotes.

Chapter 5: Focus Groups: Data Analysis and Results

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presented data from focus groups with 25 young people residing in Nottingham, UK, making up five groups of five participants each. These groups are made up of the same participants who took part in the semi-structured interviews as discussed in chapter 4 above. The data presented in this chapter is the additional and concluding part of the data generated during the data collection process. The focus group discussions presented in this chapter explored how young people's use of social media platforms influences transgressive behaviour and peer relations collectively. These participants discussed openly among themselves about their online social media experiences and this chapter documents how young people themselves discussed and reflected on the impact of this influence on online and offline transgressive behaviours as well as peer relations. The findings in this chapter presented the key themes and subthemes emergent within the narratives of the data.

Firstly, this chapter focused on exploring deeper collective meanings and understanding of young people's social media use, peer relations and how this influences transgressive behaviour. The focus groups witnessed participants being able to openly share their experiences and at the same time alter their thoughts or thinking process based on another participant's contribution within the group.

This chapter then presented and focused on themes and subthemes that emerged as results from the generated data. These themes focused on individual participant descriptions, quotes, and remarks of their experiences on SNS and how this influences their behaviours, identity, and peer relations. In doing so, data presented in this chapter addressed findings as they relate to all three research objectives: (1) to understand the attitude of young people towards aggressive peer interaction on social media; (2) to investigate how young people address online and offline identity and self-representation of peers on social media; and (3) to explore ways in which social media may influence transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham.

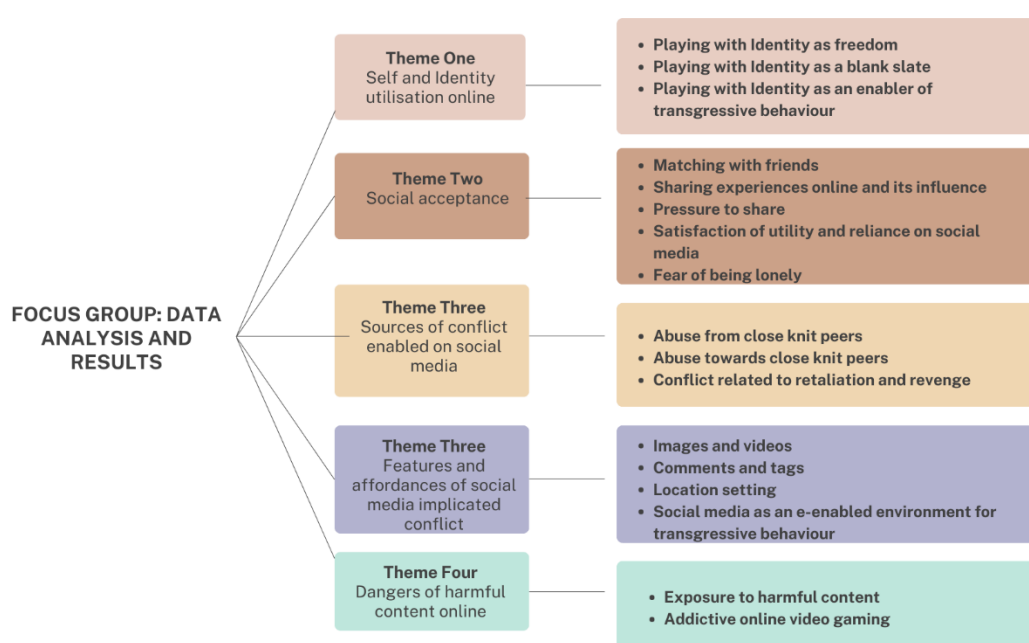
5.2 Key Themes

Upon reviewing the results of the analysed focus group data, the following five themes and their subthemes were identified: (1) Self and Identity utilisation online; (2) Social acceptance;

(3) Sources of conflict enabled on social media; (4) Features and affordances of social media implicated conflict; and (5) Dangers of harmful content online.

In this section, key themes and subthemes pertinent to young people's social media use, peer relations and its influence on transgressive behaviour are presented and discussed, alongside the key elements that made up the themes. In presenting each theme, quotes and extracts from the recorded focus group discussions are provided to highlight participants' personal thoughts and collective experiences on the research topic.

Figure 5 Focus groups – Themes and subthemes



5.3 Theme One: Self and Identity utilisation online

This theme was a recurring narration from the data in explaining and exploring how young people understand their shared use of social media and the kind of influence such use creates on their identity online. Below, this study identifies and presents three ways in which young people explore and utilise their identity and self-presentation online.

5.3.1 Playing with Identity as freedom

While obtaining participants' data, as with the semi-structured interview, it was also noted that at least half of my research participants in the focus groups had at least three functional and

active social media accounts. The three most popular social media accounts that they used were Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat and where they spent more than five to six hours in a day. In using these social media accounts, young people can play with and explore various forms of identity to suit varying needs.

When reflecting on their online identity and how they represent themselves on social media, more than half of the participants believed people should keep the same identity online and offline. This was a similar reflection with participants in Section 4.5.1 where it was expressed that keeping the same identity online and offline helps prevent confusion and promotes clarity on how young people see and perceive themselves and others. Participants in the focus group discussions also expressed concerns that a lot of people have edited versions of themselves, false realities, and false narratives online, they hide behind their cameras, keyboards or digital devices and show only what they want others to see, and young people are influenced by these misrepresentations. For example, Participant 3 mentions:

‘Yes, I feel like social media allows young people to try different identities or edit who they are offline you know. or also just extend their offline selves online. It gives that freedom online to be who you want to be without any immediate consequence, restriction, or anything like that.’

As this participant describes, association and interaction with peers online encourage young people to explore and try out different identities as they engage in different social media activities. In this case, young people use social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat to assume identities such as content creators, actors, gamers, and influencers. This regular exposure and interaction subsequently provide the participant with the freedom to find and develop a more comfortable self that is suitable for the desired audience.

‘With my group of friends, when we are online, there is the freedom to be able to highlight different versions of ourselves by the kind of things we do. It is fun really and it is not something we would have been able to do so easily offline. It is a good thing because it helps me understand different circumstances of life you know as I have been exposed to a lot more online than I would normally be allowed at home.’
(Participant 1)

In this excerpt, participant 1 reveals that social media platforms such as TikTok and Snapchat provide the freedom and opportunity for her to become different characters or identities while

engaging with other peers online. The participant explains that being able to perform as different characters serves to conveniently play with different identities.

'I do not really show my true self on my social media, not in a bad way but I just prefer to like to edit who I am, so just show a part, just so people do not know everything about me you know. There are some things I like to keep private like my family, personal relationships and just my daily routine. I am happy to share other random things about myself but not serious things.' (Participant 5)

This participant in narrating her interactions with friends and strangers online acknowledges that social media permits her to be able to relate with everyone in diverse ways. By saying 'some things I like to keep private,' it suggests that sometimes having a routine of being the same person to everyone and sharing everything all the time is tiring and the freedom to be able to change up and edit oneself and show various parts to different people is always helpful.

5.3.2 Playing with Identity as a blank slate

Playing with identity as a blank canvas online is like having the opportunity for a new beginning. Young people described social media as a place where any current existence in the form of profiles and portfolios can be deleted and restarted. It was discussed that in these situations, a young person may be inclined to protect their identity which is why they may not show their full identity on social media. For example, some people might find the need to have a different or edited identity online to escape their offline realities or because they do not want to be judged by who they are offline or just for safety and security reasons. For instance, Participant 2 stated that:

'... after being bullied previously, I had to start afresh on social media you know just to avoid embarrassment or anything that would make me remember what happened. I guess for me, it is just like a fresh safe space.'

In this case, social media afforded and empowered the participant with the ability to negotiate around a bullying situation. Participant explained that she had been bullied by her peers online on Facebook for an extended period which affected his social media engagement with other peers online. The use of the word 'fresh safe space' suggests the courage and ability to start curating and playing with his identity afresh, something new to help him forget the previous bullying experience he encountered. This participant's sentiment is echoed by some other

young people in this focus group noting that it is easy to start afresh online exploring different identities without the fear of a previous bullying experience happening again.

5.3.3 Playing with Identity as an enabler of transgressive behaviour

Some participants have expressed that having a different identity online is like having two separate lives – one life online and a separate life offline. In narrating how some features on social media enable its users to easily perpetrate transgressive behaviours, participant 2 mentions:

'I am sure some young people do live different lives, like you see them offline in the real world and then online they are a completely different person, it is like they become more confident and braver online to bully, taunt and troll other people or just act completely different.'

This participant acknowledges that often young people are not confident or brave enough to do certain things. In the context of social media, young people can explore and try out different selves and, in this case, the participant explained that the affordance of being online can make young people feel more confident to taunt, troll and bully other peers online. Sometimes, this abuse can start over issues that are small, 'petty' or insignificant but the fast-paced nature and exaggeration of issues on these platforms provide young people with the confidence to react thereby making it a bigger issue or conflict than it originally was. The participant further notes that this prompt reaction online would have been different offline as there are more restrictions in place.

5.4 Theme Two: Social Acceptance

Many participants explained that sometimes, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat can encourage necessary social comparisons about people's lifestyles always in your face, making one feel inadequate, which can be tough for a young person. In the same breath, it was noted that these different social comparisons, good and bad can impact and influence a young person who seeks acceptance and validation from his peers. Below, this study identifies and presents five ways in which young people seek social acceptance from peers online and how this influences their behaviour online.

5.4.1 Matching with friends

When asked about their social media activities and user experiences and how this influences their peer relations and behaviours online and offline, some participants mentioned that when they access various pieces of content, they would occasionally keep these engagements and experiences to themselves but would mostly share with peers with similar interests. Some of these experiences would usually contain general news/information, entertainment, education, and varied content that can influence a young person in one way or the other.

Participant 4 mentions: *'I feel like I am a lot more outspoken online and a lot more girly. My real personality is not girly in any way, but online I fit with some views. I pose a bit more girly than anything really but like on nights out you take photos and then you post it, but that is not me, but it is like that thing of you have not gone out if you have not posted it. So just because my other friends post theirs, it is like I also must post mine.'*

'Yes 100%. I think most young people do it you know. You just must match your lifestyle to that of your friends in some ways you know, it means that you rate each other which is a huge thing in our friendships.' (Participant 7)

'I tried this you know, taking money from my mum all the time just to show up like my friends were showing up you know, I wanted to be at the parties, events, and anything they were doing really. We have been in trouble lots of times with anti-social behaviour and all sorts but after a while, I could not keep up, so we could not stay friends. Because it was not me, I was just pretending you know.' (Participant 11)

'You know, now that I think about it, the way my friends and I use social media sometimes it can be aggressive, and it influences how I use it with other random people and even offline too. Like what I am interested in and how I make decisions. I guess because I am used to doing and sharing these times with my friends.' (Participant 20)

In these excerpts, participants acknowledge that whilst they enjoy matching lifestyles with peers and feeling socially accepted, sometimes having different identities online and offline makes it difficult as it heightens the pressure to always keep up an appearance with peers as also highlighted in Section 5.3.1 above.

5.4.2 Sharing experiences online and its influence

When asked about their social media activities and user experiences and how this influences their peer relations and behaviours online and offline, some participants mentioned that when they access various pieces of content, they would usually always share with peers with similar interests and occasionally keep some of these engagements and experiences to themselves. Some of these experiences would usually contain general news/information, education, entertainment, and varied content that can influence a young person in one way or the other. For instance, Participant 1 notes:

'With my group of friends, I have been exposed to a lot more online than I would normally be allowed at home, some of it is good and some is bad, but it is a good thing because it helps me understand different circumstances of life you know. I share some things with my friends online and offline and they also share things they find entertaining, and I guess important with me.'

'It is difficult to be a loner online, you know, you just must do things with your friends and even random strangers as well, it makes being online fun, I think. And yes, the kind of things my friends are up to online sometimes influence my own decisions and activities as well. You know, this way we can share our experiences actually.'
(Participant 4)

Whilst young people describe sharing experiences on social media platforms with peers as fun and entertaining, their comments also highlight the pressure to share these experiences (Section 5.4.3) and the fear of being lonely (Section 5.4.5). This participant explains that these experiences include sharing news links, sharing entertaining images and videos of popular trends on social media, tagging one another on posts they find interesting as well as sometimes stalking admirers of peers online. It was further revealed that even when peers are not online, this participant would still usually engage in similar activities and when making decisions about what to do online, this participant also revealed that the opinions and lifestyle of her peers influence her choice of activities and engagement on social media.

'That's true and you know when we share things like that it can change your behaviour as well offline so how you used to be before will change because of how you're now using social media.' (Participant 19)

In this context, participant 19 indicates that sharing experiences with peers unconsciously can influence and impact a young person's behaviour. By using the phrase 'things like that,' this participant refers to inappropriate or harmful materials such as videos that display bullying and taunting to the elderly and vulnerable that can serve as a leisure pursuit. This experience is then shared among the wider public for entertainment purposes.

5.4.3 Pressure to share

As participants expressed, across different social media platforms, there seems to be an unspoken pressure to compare and share their lives with that of their peers online. For example, Participant 8 talking about her interaction with peers online on a random day, revealed that:

'I do not know that I am very free with how I use my social media to be honest because there is some kind of unspoken expectation with my friends to share content and engage with each other online. And this affects how I behave when I am online because I do it since others are doing it also.'

In this case, participant 8 explains that when at an outing with friends, everyone takes out their phones and starts taking pictures for social media, like lots of pictures and videos. This is not a typical day without friends for Participant 8 but in order not to look lost or uninterested, she mentioned that she must join in to take Instagram-worthy pictures that would be posted online. These pictures are oftentimes posted for an audience to like and comment.

'With my group of friends, we do our things individually, but we also do a lot of collective activities together online. We have a group where we always share things that we find on social media, anything really and I know that some of those things they have shared have certainly influenced my behaviour and decisions because I want to remain fun and friendly, so I must keep up.' (Participant 13)

As Participant 13 notes, in this case, the pressure to always share what we are up to online with friends influences one's behaviour and decisions. He explained that doing activities such as playing video games with peers or engaging with each other in a group chat keeps the group exciting and everyone usually has a friendly and cool appearance. However, on occasions where I am unable to participate in these activities, participant 18 reveals that he feels alone and separate from his peers. This naturally makes him want to keep up with the

pressure to share and engage with each other online. This participant's point of view is also shared by other young people in this study who have referenced similar opinions. For example, Participant 6 stated that:

'In person, it can be a bit different, but I find that online, I share lots of things with my friends and we plan lots of things online as well maybe because it is for me it is easy to feel lonely online. I also behave differently online like I am more confident around others on different platforms, but in real life, it may not necessarily be the same.'

'Yes, I feel like there is some kind of pressure from friends because if you do not do something like participate or engage in something, they would think you are boring and lonely. So, I agree that unspoken expectation is there which of course then influences your behaviour and decisions online and offline too.' (Participant 10)

5.4.4 Satisfaction of utility and reliance on social media

In describing the reason and motivators for why young people use social media, participants reveal that there is pleasure and satisfaction that come from regular social media engagement. This pleasure and satisfaction encourage young people to continue their utility of social media. For example, Participant 17 notes:

'Most times if I need anything, I just make a post about it online to get my friends' responses and reactions, I may not even talk to my family about it. I do not know, there is something nice and satisfying about people showing interest in you on social media that you do not get in the real world, so I discovered that I use it for any and everything really.'

In this case, social media platforms are usually the first place this participant turns to. As described, it could be on Instagram group chat, Instagram stories, Facebook stories or TikTok posts. As this participant notes, the satisfying nature of having friends show interest in your life and respond to your needs online makes social media easy to rely on for a lot of things. Naturally, young people tend to seek support and validation from peers who may be experiencing a similar process in life. This participant acknowledges the lack of interest and involvement from peers in the real-world environment and tries to gain recognition and belonging from her utility of and reliance on social media. This participant's point of view is also shared by other young people in this study who have referenced similar opinions. For

example, Participant 18 noted: *'... sometimes home is just boring, so it's good to have social media that you can rely on and use to keep yourself company with other people as well.'* Participant 15 also noted: *'I agree, it's just more fun when you share these experiences online with friends and I guess that's why people are so reliant on social media that they are on it for hours and hours.'*

'Yes, I rely on social media a lot because I remember when my friend at school hurt me, I had posted about it online and some of my friends online were giving suggestions on how to retaliate you know. I ended up taking one of their suggestions and did some things I am not proud of to embarrass my friend at school, and it worked, it made me happy and satisfied at that moment, but we are no more friends today. But I cannot say I was not happy that I was able to get back to her.' (Participant 22)

This participant describes the breakup of her relationship which resulted from the hurt of a friend who posted fake stories about her online. Seeking some form of revenge, she turned to Instagram and TikTok for advice. The participant describes that the conflict eventually resulted in bullying and some other transgressive behaviours she did not feel comfortable sharing, but these actions were video recorded and shared online for further humiliation. Nonetheless, utilising social media in this way afforded the participant some pleasure and satisfaction. Like many young people, the participant here highlights the benefit of engaging with and relying on social media for dissimilar needs.

5.4.5 Fear of being lonely

During the focus groups, a few young people expressed their reluctance to be the odd one out and as such would usually succumb to the influence of peers from social media so as not to feel alone. This influence referred to activities surrounding lifestyle, education, career, jobs, finance, sports, wellness, relationships, beauty standards, body image, sexuality, online scams, hate, trolling, peer cyberbullying, cyber-flashing, suicide, stalking, gaming, inciting violence, hate, self-harm, music, pranks, verbal abuse, revenge, and other distressing materials. For example, Participant 8 stated that:

'I don't like to be the odd one out, so whatever my friends are doing that is entertaining, I like to be a part of it, whether it's making fun of people, gaming, following trends or sharing various content online and offline'.

In this case, this participant notes that the fear of being the odd one out prompts him to be a part of everything his friends are up to online. He explains that most times, when his friends do things together and subsequently get to talk about their experiences, there is usually a feeling of unhappiness and being alone even though this would have been a temporary occurrence. A similar point of view is shared by Participant 6, who also mentioned:

'Yes, my friends certainly influence my beauty standards, relationships, and sexuality, especially with what we see, follow, and share online. There is that fear of missing out when you are alone, so it is always better when you are with a group of people.'

In context, both participants acknowledge that if they were unable to engage in activities and experiences with their peers online, then it is as though they are lonely.

'I think it is boring to just you know do things alone, some people like that and that's very boring, it's always fun when you do things with your friends online, there is always so much to do you know, like it doesn't end.' (Participant 14)

'Erm, Sometimes, we may want to be alone and just do our own thing for a little bit, but the majority of the time, I think young people want to do things with their friends, it just makes you feel good that people like you enough to want to do things with you instead of doing things all by yourself all the time. That is quite lonely, even I would not like that.' (Participant 15)

Again, this participant also emphasises the need to be liked and acknowledged as an important emotion when she engages in activities with her peers as opposed to doing things alone. She goes on to describe the feeling of acceptance and belonging when hanging out with peers online and how the fear of missing out on the fun would result in feelings of loneliness and sadness. Like many young people, engaging with peers online and offline provides a sense of belonging and acceptance which sometimes tends to strengthen the friendship group.

5.5 Theme Three: Sources of conflict on social media among young people

Findings in this study identified three sources of social media conflict among young people, namely: abuse from close-knit peers; abuse to close-knit peers and conflict related to retaliation and revenge.

5.5.1 Abuse from close-knit peers

Young people's descriptions reveal that they are aware of maintaining respect and reputation among their peers. It was noted that a lot of conflict results from someone feeling like they were personally abused by close peers. For this study, abuse was most often communicated as abuse towards one's physical appearance, or reputation, particularly through insulting and inappropriate images, videos and comments posted on social media. For example, describing the impact and reaction of abuse from strangers and close peers, Participant 4 noted that:

'If I had a bad, negative or inappropriate comment from strangers online, I will most likely ignore it because I don't know them like that and they don't impact my life, but if it were my family or someone I know, like my close friends, my reaction would be different because I would care about it and best believe we will be meeting up to understand why.'

As Participant 4 describes, this conflict begins when a close friend is insulted or abused by a friend for posting inappropriate things about her lifestyle and living conditions online. Here, TikTok, Facebook and Instagram were used as tools to broadcast the photos and videos. Notably here, social media platforms provided an avenue to post and share inappropriate material, thereby serving as a trigger for later physical aggression. However, because the offender is a close friend, this participant's reaction to the abuse is different as opposed to if the abuser was a stranger.

'I remember in school some random people used to troll me, I did not really know them, and I did not take it seriously like that until one day some people in my class started trolling me. Like, they would even go online and start sending me annoying memes. They bullied me so much I remember being so down and affected by it that I became a shadow of myself.' (Participant 19)

In this case, the participant reveals that abuse from close peers would have more impact on her than if it were from strangers noting that the comments and actions of close peer groups mean more to young people than that of random people online.

Participant 22 further noted that:

'It depends really but because a lot of young people really care what their friends think of them, they want to be liked and accepted so if it's now these people that are bullying you or trying to cause you harm, I'm sure I would care more about that than if it were strangers.' This participant's point of view reflects the above opinions as well as some other participants with similar examples.

5.5.2 Abuse towards close-knit peers

When reflecting on and discussing peer relationships, some participants referred to the supportive and protective presence of their friends. They mentioned the importance of belonging to a friendship group as it makes them feel loved, validated and accepted. It masks any feeling of loneliness young people may be experiencing and when times are rough, they have a group of friends to rely on. These groups of friends would sometimes share the same values, interests, and similarities as one another such as lifestyle, culture, religion, music, sports, and local communities.

'As a young person, feeling accepted by a group of friends offline and online tends to boost one's self-esteem and confidence,' Participant 21 mentioned. This acceptance and confidence among peer groups encourages them to defend one another from any appearance of danger outside the group. For example, if any member of a friendship circle were insulted, threatened, and trolled online or offline, other members of the group would usually feel the need to defend such a person online by engaging in revenge and retaliation.

For some young people, this support from friends can be transgressive and in physically aggressive forms at times. This kind of relationship creates a close bond between the friends in such groups. For example, Participant 8 also mentioned:

'My group of friends, we do and share a lot of things, we are like a family, if you touch one of us, you touch all of us. We always have each other's back, so, it is important to have a group like that because it is not safe alone online or offline.'

In this case, this participant notes that abuse or disrespect to any close-knit peer is disrespect to everyone in the peer group and as such, there is the need to defend one another and have each other's back. His use of the phrase *'if you touch one of us, you touch all of us,'* suggests that abuse or disrespect to a close friend on social media triggers a range of reactions, including an aggressive response from members of the peer group and not just one person.

Participant 6 also mentioned: *'Because I regard my close friends as family, I think I will always try to defend them and have their back like I believe they would do for me as well.'* For context, this participant reveals that in the past he had been in trouble with a group of boys on his way home from school. Fortunately, his friends came to his aid and were able to deter the group of boys. This experience has continued to encourage and motivate the need to defend peers from abuse and insults online. The idea through these examples of defending peers is that if a close friend or family on social media is abused or disrespected, the abuse would usually be addressed and investigated. This can sometimes be led by aggression and violence.

5.5.3 Conflict related to retaliation and revenge

As with an offline experience, becoming abusive online and then escalating to offline violence, some participants mentioned that some young people seem to have fun taunting and pressuring other people online as an act of revenge. For example, Participant 3 expressed that:

'I was dating someone just for a brief time and it did not end well so he decided to share and post some personal information and pictures of me on social media which were quite embarrassing and then I felt like somebody started stalking me. To be honest, I still worry a little when I am out alone and if I am standing next to a stalker. I also worried that this whole thing could have escalated fast online with people physically assaulting and calling me names, but it did not.'

In this excerpt, Participant 3 reveals the distress of a former partner threatening and exploiting her which then led to panics of being stalked. Here, Snapchat and Instagram were used to share inappropriate pictures and other details and as a result, the public nature of this interaction intensified the shame and fear that Participant 3 felt. This participant acknowledges that a breakup can be upsetting for most people, but she believed the abuse and conflict in this case was retaliation and revenge from her former partner for ending the relationship.

'I remember there was this group of boys and girls that would just go online to troll you if you said or did something they did not like in school. They were bullying people online so that when you come back to school you will not be able to you know say anything again.' (Participant 12)

'My cousin got into a nasty fight with some guys online about a girl. And somehow these guys found me as a contact of my cousin because we live together, and we post what we do online. They pretended to want to buy some sneakers I was selling from the Facebook marketplace and that is how they got our address. They showed up at our address a few days later with a machete and were looking for trouble. We were really scared but thankfully, a neighbour called the police, and everything was calm. I was surprised and terrified at how quickly they wanted to be violent from something that started online.' (Participant 1)

In this case, the conflict could have remained a verbal argument, but they found me as a contact of my cousin and traced me to Facebook marketplace. Some participants in the focus group expressed being worried and terrified when these transgressive acts began to happen which in turn seemed to incite or encourage some young people into retaliating or reacting aggressively. This participant notes that certain features on Facebook must have provided the offenders with his details and issues escalated from then on. He goes on to describe that neither he, nor his cousin wanted to start the fight, but they eventually went on to have a bit of fist-fighting before the police arrived.

5.6 Theme Four: Features and Affordances of social media implicated in conflict

As expressed by participants, while young people may benefit from their use of social media by interacting, exploring, and learning from others, they are also regularly at risk of being exposed to offensive online content and materials. These experiences indicate the concern for the safety of adolescents and young people while online. Across the sources of conflict discussed above (Section 5.5), participants expressed that once conflict has started on social media, certain features of social media can heighten the conflict and increase the potential for a subsequent escalation. The following features of social media that act as contributors to the escalation of online conflicts to offline are discussed below: images and videos; likes, comments and tags and location settings.

5.6.1 Images and videos

Participants have suggested that posting images and videos are features in social media that implicate conflict. Some young people described images or videos as part of a social media conflict. Embarrassing or inappropriate images can be posted online which provides a landing

place for other young people to make disrespectful comments about the image posted, which can then turn into a fight. For example, Participant 2 mentions:

'There was a girl in my year at school, it turned into cyberbullying because they were bullying her online and making inappropriate memes out of her pictures and sharing them online. And it was a lot to the point that she had to be self-isolated from the school and like do her lessons privately because people were all bullying her, it stopped eventually, but it was extremely aggressive. I do not think she would have coped if she remained in the school because I remember when my friend was depressed, it was quite easy for her to access harmful materials like suicide and self-harm online.'

Young people recognise and understand their own and their peer's appearance and various social media platforms lend themselves to elevated levels of social comparison amongst its users. In this case, Participant 2 mentioned that the victim's pictures were made into embarrassing and funny memes which left other people leaving provocative and inappropriate comments under the memes post. The aggressive nature of these features, being able to post embarrassing memes and leaving comments led to the victim's self-isolation from school.

Young people also mentioned videos as a social media feature implicated in the conflict. As mentioned in the context of conflict, young people described videos as features they would use when documenting new experiences, activities with peers, offline conflict, and anything else they deem important. This documentation of offline conflict allows for the continuation of the flights on social media. For example, Participant 23 also noted that:

'Something similar happened to me on Snapchat, I used to post some controversial videos and stuff and I remember almost getting in trouble because my location thing on Snapchat was on. It was when people started saying to me that they knew where I was that I became worried and had to turn it off and just stopped posting on there for a while. I was not happy that that location setting was automatically on, it would have put me in serious trouble.'

It is interesting to know that the fact that people can just upload and post pictures or videos of behaviours that are not good on social media is a problem because those posts whether they are even real or fake can cause conflict, and will always influence young people to also maybe copy and repeat the behaviour or take very serious or drastic actions offline, and before you know it, people get hurt and in trouble.

5.6.2 Comments and tags

Participants have suggested using the tag and comment feature contributes to and intensifies social media-implicated conflict. Some young people described leaving inappropriate and threatening comments, sometimes tagging other users and also dropping the location for an escalation of conflict as part of a social media-implicated conflict. Participant 1 mentioned:

'My cousin got into a nasty fight with some guys online about a girl. And somehow these guys found me as a contact of my cousin because we live together, and we post what we do online. They pretended to want to buy some sneakers I was selling from Facebook marketplace and that is how they got our address. They showed up at our address a few days later with a machete and were looking for trouble. We were really scared but thankfully, a neighbour called the police, and everything was calm. I was surprised and terrified at how quickly they wanted to be violent from something that started online.'

In this case, participant 1 notes that the offender had located him as a relation to his cousin through tags on Facebook. This participant explains that he and his cousin would sometimes tag each other on different Facebook images and video posts, and this tag feature is what enabled the offender to identify him as a cousin with who they had a conflict. Participant 19 expressed:

'I think on social media when we post things, we like to tag our friends. The other day my cousin was fighting with someone online about a boyfriend or something like that and they started tagging people, their close friends like to back them up. It just kept going and eventually, someone must have dropped an address and they all met up to continue the fight.'

This participant describes that the fight did escalate offline, but it was more of a threatening situation than an actual fight. She acknowledged that tagging on social media like TikTok in this case allowed the two people to quickly bring in others and expand the possible scope of the conflict.

5.6.3 Location Setting

Young people also described location setting as a social media feature that can be implicated in conflict. Location settings allow users to share their location which any of their followers can view to find and locate new and existing friends online. Although location setting is a feature of multiple social media platforms, all examples of location setting in this current study referenced Snapchat and Facebook. Participants have described this feature as one that can escalate a conflict. For example, Participant 23 noted that:

‘... something similar happened to me on Snapchat, I used to post some controversial videos and stuff and I remember almost getting in trouble because my location thing on Snapchat was on. It was when people started saying to me that they knew where I was and that they were coming for me that I became worried and had to turn it off and just stopped posting on there for a while. I was not happy that that location setting was automatically on, you know it would have put me in serious trouble.’

In this case, the participant mentions that the location setting was automatically enabled on the Snapchat platform which means she would have been at risk of being watched and any escalation of online conflict would have easily taken place given the availability of the user's location. The participant notes that most users may not have been aware of the enabled feature on the platform but that the feature can also be disabled.

Likewise, in describing immediate access to an escalated conflict location, participant 9 suggests that live streaming an ongoing conflict can quickly bring in a larger audience to watch as the conflict unfolds. For instance, participant 9 mentions that:

‘Yeah, there is always someone that would be recording when a fight is going on offline. I remember we had a beef with someone when I was younger, and I was live-streaming a video on Facebook of something I was doing. Somehow, someone that I have beef with saw it and knew exactly where I was and that was how she came with her friends to fight me. I remember finding it strange at the time, but yes that happened.’

This participant describes that there was some fist fight and verbal argument that happened but there were also people live streaming the fight and that brought more audience to the conflict. Because the fight was live-streamed, this participant felt more embarrassed and angrier pointing out the high number of viewers, able to watch the conflict from anywhere. This

participant notes that the proximity of the network allowed the possibility for the rapid speed at which the conflict escalated beyond necessary. She also describes that the public scale amplified her experience and further reinforced the need to fight well.

5.6.4 Social media as an e-enabled environment for transgressive behaviour

To an extent, there can be a total disregard for some of these transgressive behaviours because they have become far too common online. For example, several participants noted that it seemed that a lot of transgressive behaviours that young people experience online are not new, as some participants expressed that these are the same old offensive behaviours that social media seems to now enable online. Participant 12 noted:

'Before all these Instagram, TikTok and the rest of young people have been committing transgressive behaviours offline you know. So, social media now just enables more of these behaviours to be done on a different platform.'

'It is like social media makes the experience of the behaviour 10 times worse depending on you know like if it is bullying and you know the people bullying you, it just gets worse because you cannot even hide in real life or online. But if it did not happen on Instagram or Facebook, it would still happen in school, or you know on the streets.' (Participant 15)

Here the participant explains that the nature and affordance of the online environment such as speed in delivery of actions, ease of access to these platforms and the number of people that can afford this access, make transgressive behaviour appear worse than it is online. Every transgressive behaviour is met with more audience than would have been if it were online and the actions of this behaviour and its consequences are also met with swift responses where necessary. This can have a significant impact on both the offender and the victim. This point of view is shared by some other participants in this study such as Participant 17 mentioned:

'Even with Facebook, when someone posts you know pictures and videos insulting or humiliating someone or a group of people, that post will typically be embarrassing and can influence some kind of retaliation or revenge behaviour. But if there was no Facebook to do that, it can still happen offline but just not to an exceptionally large audience you know.'

'With TikTok, Snapchat and the others, videos of people doing different things go viral and can be seen by lots of people so maybe yes with social media these transgressive behaviours can reach lots of people unlike if it was offline you know. So that benefit is what people are after and not that what they are doing is new.' (Participant 20)

In describing the impact of the Internet's enabled environment on transgressive behaviour, Participant 18 stated:

'without social media, young people may not be able to see the huge impact of say reputation damage for those on gangs or friendship groups and it might limit or reduce their need for retaliation or revenge I think, but although these behaviours are not new, yeah this social media just kind of allows it, it's just a continuation of the conflict, just that it started somewhere I guess.'

In this case, the participant acknowledges that the consequence of transgressive behaviours online tends to heighten any reputational damage sustained by the offenders which would usually present itself to be worse than it would have been offline. This increases the chances for retaliation to save reputational status.

Although there are some transgressive behaviours that a young person might not be able to engage in without digital media, such as cyberbullying and financial crimes, nonetheless, some of these distressing and offensive behaviours would still happen if social media were non-existent because the intentions and influence have always been there.

5.7 Theme Five: Dangers of harmful content online

Participants have described that young people encounter negative experiences such as cyberbullying, harassment, taunting, revenge, trolling and other harmful material that escalates and continues its harmful effect offline. This expresses that young people are regularly exposed to distressing materials and harmful content. Below, participants note the exposure to harmful content online and its impact on young people.

5.7.1 Exposure to harmful content

Participants describe an awareness of online content and materials that once exposed can influence young people. For example, Participant 3 mentioned that:

'I think if I am exposed to a lot of violence, bullying and just bad behaviours online, it will influence my behaviour and that can also actually influence how I use social media and what I do online and offline you know. I used to follow some guys online who enjoy highlighting violent and harmful things for fun. Sometimes it was fun and other times it was quite disturbing.'

In this context, the participant describes regular exposure to harmful content through social media as fun and disturbing at the same time. She mentions that social media would always suggest these kinds of pages and posts to engage in due to the profile page she was already engaged in. As discussed previously, some young people tend to engage in online deviance that provides some form of pleasure and excitement, but depending on the individual, constant exposure to this kind of harmful material such as cyberbullying, and trolling can influence a young person's online and offline behaviour. This participant goes on to explain that he eventually unfollowed the social media page and subsequently reported the social media pages encouraging transgressive behaviours of any kind.

'One minute you are minding your business, the next minute you are watching and being exposed to harmful content online because the algorithms suggested them to you, and it can mess with your mind because it's always in your face'. (Participant 9)

Here, the participant suggests that algorithms on social media tend to push content or materials that are harmful to its users. She notes that on several occasions the algorithms on Facebook, TikTok and Instagram have suggested content that encouraged suicide, obsessive eating, bullying and aggression in a subtle manner. This way, it could be difficult to detect since the message is being portrayed in a fun, entertaining and less serious manner. His use of the phrase *'it's always in your face,'* suggests the ease with which such contents are being created and shared among social media platforms and the difficulty of users to hide from such posts while using social media. This participant goes on to describe the effect of such exposure on his mind and notes that reporting such inappropriate and harmful materials on social media is the only step users can take but they do not seem effective enough.

'It depends but I used to know someone with anti-social behaviour because she was always exposed to various kinds of transgressions at home. We went to school together and she used to tell me that it was normal for her. I remember she said she does not know how to be any different.' (Participant 12)

This participant describes a situation where exposure to multiple transgressive behaviours has been interpreted as the norm by a friend. In this case, both online and offline environments were involved in the exposure and influence of transgressive behaviour. Regular displays of these transgressive and inappropriate behaviours subsequently resulted in his friend being excluded from school. As a result, the participant notes that she chooses to be away from certain transgressive exposures so as not to be influenced by them.

'Honestly, a single exposure to transgressive behaviours for a group of friends or online can make a young person think, right that is cool, I am going to try it. So, it does not have to be multiple exposures I do not think.' (Participant 17)

Participant 20 also noted: *'... sometimes it only takes one time and some other times, it will take a lot of exposure to criminal things before someone can crack.'*

In this case, both participants note that the influence of transgressive behaviour can occur regardless of whether it is a single exposure or multiple exposures to harmful and violent activities. They explain that these exposures vary in terms of the kind of transgressive behaviour experienced and the environment such exposure occurred.

5.7.2 Addictive Online Video Gaming

In a separate case, apprehension about online gaming seemed to grow when parents began to observe a difference in the behaviour of their children. Although not every participant had an interest or experience in video gaming, a few participants in the focus group seemed to agree that the world of online gaming also has its influence on the behaviour of young people because there is constant exposure to violent, harmful, and abusive materials or content on them. Participant 7 stated that:

'My brother began to be so aggressive and violent at home and in school for no reason, my parents had to stop him from playing those online games, yes, I was really scared for him. Sometimes it is good to monitor what young people get up to online.'

In this context, the participant's brother started expressing aggressive behaviour as a way of copying some of the actions witnessed from online video gaming. Participant 7 explained that her brother would be on the game for hours a day and was progressing further and further in the game. She notes that the regular exposure to violence and aggression on the gaming app

also involved his peers as they had an online group within the video games. This participant described her brother's gaming experience as an online addiction which resulted in the gradual influence of aggression and violent behaviours.

'Some online video games are aggressive and violent, and the action can be very addictive, I used to play them before, but I had to stop because of the aggression and violence. So, I am sure these kinds of games like Fortnite and Call of Duty can influence a young person to be violent and aggressive to others as well.' (Participant 12)

Here, this participant describes the kind of online video gaming he was involved with and how his regular gaming with friends online almost became addictive. He explained that he sometimes had the urge to become aggressive with any slight offence. This experience resulted in the participant limiting the time spent gaming and subsequently stopping gaming. This example was also shared by some other participants with similar experiences such as Participant 21 who stated, *'... for example, video games that are very violent, they can influence a lot of the behaviours of young people online and in real life you know because it is very addictive.'*

5.8 Chapter Summary

In reflecting on the personal and collective views of research participants, this chapter highlighted and explained the data analysis and results obtained from participant's data during the focus group discussion. The key themes from the analysis of this focus group: (1) Self and Identity utilisation online; (2) Social acceptance; (3) Sources of conflict enabled on social media; (4) Features and affordances of social media implicated conflict; and (5) Dangers of harmful content online, have enabled a deeper discovery, understanding and analysis of the important aspects from the data to be established. The themes and subthemes closely aligned with young people's use of social media and how this use influences transgressive behaviours online.

In establishing and highlighting this discovery, anonymised extracts from various participants' data were used to gain a feel of young people's shared yet diverse perceptions of the use, exposure, and influence of social media on transgressive behaviour among peers. This demonstrates that young people are conscious and mindful of transgressive behaviours on

social media and how this influences their individual and collective behaviours online and offline.

In addressing research objective one, findings in this chapter revealed that on occasion, young people express retaliation and revenge as a common attitude and reaction to aggressive peer behaviours. It was discovered that young people are less motivated to defend or react to abuse from strangers but more inclined to respond to and defend close peers and family from abuse online and offline. Participants acknowledge that this act of defending is sometimes in physically aggressive forms. They also acknowledge that abuse from close peers would have more impact on them, noting that the comments and actions of close peer groups mean more to young people than if they were from strangers. This, once again draws upon the importance of young people belonging to a friendship group as it makes them feel loved, accepted, and validated. This sense of belonging is what sometimes motivates and encourages young people's attitudes towards peer aggression online and offline.

In addressing research objective two, findings in this chapter revealed that young people tend to take the form of different identities and self-presentation as they utilise social media. Participants describe the awareness of social media platforms as tools providing the freedom and opportunity for young people to explore identity as a blank slate and as an enabler of transgressive behaviour. In addressing identity and self-representation, it was revealed that a lot of young people have edited versions of themselves, false realities, and false narratives online, they hide behind their cameras, keyboards or digital devices and show only what they want others to see, and other peers are mostly influenced by these misrepresentations. As such, through association and interaction with peers on social media, a young person can be encouraged to try out different identities or selves which on the one hand helps in developing a more comfortable self, suitable for the desired audience and on the other hand the inconsistent representations or fake and false identities influence transgressive decisions and behaviours among young people.

In addressing research objective three, and investigating an online and offline relationship, young people revealed the awareness of specific features on social media that act as contributors to the escalation of online conflicts to offline. These features are images and videos; likes, comments and tags and location setting. It was determined that offline transgressive behaviours are usually influenced and encouraged by the nature and affordance of the online environment such as speed in delivery of actions, ease of access to these

platforms and the number of people that can afford this access. Therefore, in investigating the role of social media in influencing transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham, the findings presented in this chapter addressed all three objectives of this research.

The next chapter focused on a thorough discussion of the findings of this research and how the identified themes from the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions relate to and answer the research question, aim and objectives earlier stated. In the same process, this discussion also questions and supports previous research on digital social media, identity formation and behavioural influence where necessary.

Chapter 6: Discussion of findings

6.1 Introduction

This study aimed to investigate and understand the role of social media in influencing transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham. Therefore, this chapter discussed the main findings by drawing connections and relationships to the existing literature in reflection on this study's research question, aim and objectives. This chapter also discussed findings to the following organising themes: responding to peer aggression; constructing Identity and presenting self; and connecting social media and transgressive behaviours. These above-listed organising themes and their subthemes are then discussed in terms of how the findings of this study have answered the research question and its objectives.

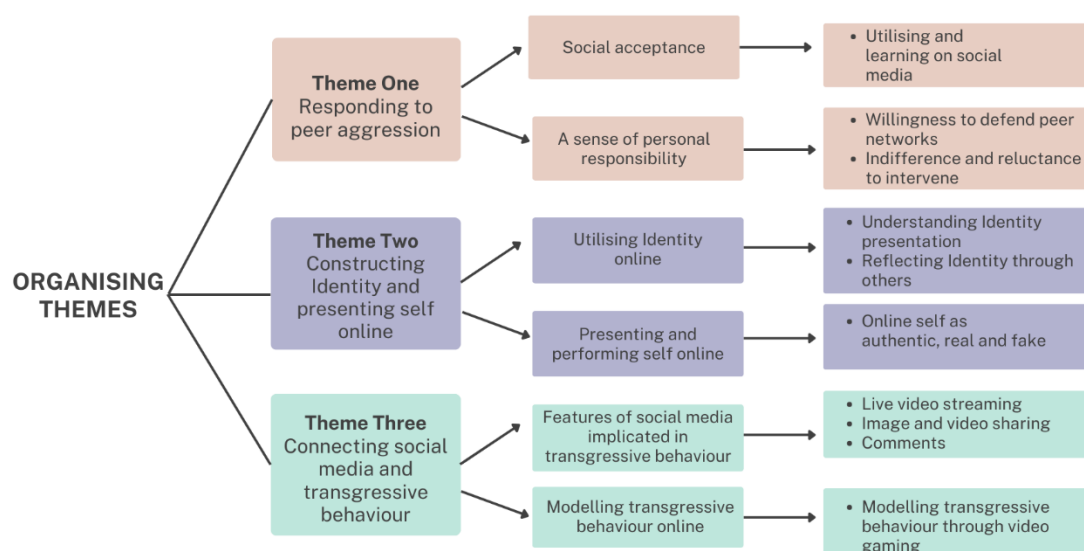
The primary research question in this study was 'What role does social media play in the influence of transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham?' As well as answering the primary research question, the following research objectives were also discussed: (1) To understand the attitude of young people towards aggressive peer interaction on social media; (2) To investigate how young people address online and offline identity and self-representation of peers on social media; and (3) To explore ways in which social media may influence transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham. To address these objectives, the research involved semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, and generated data were subjected to thematic analysis.

Findings from this study indicated that research participants had similar and related experiences using social media and were aware of its influence on transgressive behaviours among young people. During the semi-structured interviews, participants could recall individual experiences of using social media, peer interactions online and offline, incidents of transgressive behaviour, and how these activities also influence their general behaviour and decision-making. On the other hand, participants were more aware of the group dynamics during the focus group discussions. They shared more of a collective experience with their peers using social media, sharing how and whether this has influenced their general and transgressive behaviour online and offline. Some focus group participants seemed to concur with many other participants' contributions and thus adopted them as their own. It was also observed that some participants had a better and more precise understanding of the research topic based on the questions asked during the data collection process. A few other participants

sometimes struggled with understanding the research questions and carefully formulated their responses to those questions. Participants explored and clarified their thoughts, views, and responses in less easily practicable ways in a semi-structured interview. This understanding aided a richer and stronger discussion of the research topic among the focus group participants. Notably, the collective views of participants were remarkably like the individual perspectives and experiences. As such, the results and discussions of this research benefitted from both the individual and shared construction of the social media and transgressive behaviour reality among young people in Nottingham.

Several organising themes were identified across the interviews and focus groups. The three key organising themes as discussed below are: (1) Responding to peer aggression; (2) Constructing Identity and presenting self; and (3) Connecting social media and transgressive behaviour.

Figure 6 Organising themes and subthemes



6.2 Responding to peer aggression

During the semi-structured interviews and focus groups, it was discovered that young people's attitudes and perceptions varied regarding aggressive peer interaction on social media. In answering the research question and exploring the first objective, the following subthemes

discuss factors young people take into consideration when responding to online peer aggression, namely: social acceptance; and a sense of personal responsibility.

6.2.1 Social acceptance

In the current study, a lot of the narratives surrounding peer interaction online described behaviours and circumstances young people would consider socially acceptable. Young people expressed that they had fewer expectations of disapproval and elevated expectations of support, validation, and acceptance of behaviours from their peers. These expectations referred to behaviours that would happen in their neighbourhoods, communities, schools and among peers online. For example, participant 20 notes:

'You know, now that I think about it, the way my friends and I use social media sometimes it can be aggressive, and it influences how I use it with other random people and even offline too. Like what I am interested in and how I make decisions. I guess because I am used to doing and sharing these times with my friends.'

This indicates that friendship groups can serve as a means of self-validation (Mendelson and Aboud, (1999) and facilitate the development of one's sense of self and Identity (Adler and Adler, 1995). Thus, consistent with existing research, findings show that a correlation exists between young people's desire for a sense of belonging, their use of social media and their willingness to partake in collective actions (Liu et al., 2018; Seo et al., 2014).

According to research participants, there seems to be an unspoken pressure to compare and share their lives with those of their peers. For example, Participant 7 notes that:

'Oh, 100%. I think most young people do it you know. You just must match your lifestyle to that of your friends in some ways you know, it means that you rate each other which is a huge thing in our friendships.'

In addition, Participant 10 also notes:

'Yes, I feel like there is some kind of pressure from friends because if you do not do something like participate or engage in something, they would think you are boring and lonely. So, I agree that unspoken expectation is there which of course then influences your behaviour and decisions online and offline too.'

Notably, the emergence of the digital media landscape has brought about a significant shift in how individuals interact and communicate. Young people can use social networking sites to maintain and grow close-knit peer relationships (Dearden and Parti, 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2021). Many young people want to belong and build connections with their peers; they want to be accepted and care what their friends think of them. Thus, consistent with existing research, young people's desire to belong predicts their social media use and willingness to participate in collective actions (Liu et al., 2018; Seo et al., 2014). Findings also show that young people often turn to their peers for support, validation, and security. Those who lack familial support may seek acceptance from their peers and even strangers to fill the void in their home and school environment (Greenfield, 2014; Hall, 2018; 2020). In comparing friendships, young people noted that similar values, beliefs, and shared interests played a big part in establishing and maintaining friendships with social media providing an open space to nurture these friendships. Thus, consistent with previous research, comparisons among young people can be with people they know and interact with and can also be with strangers they see or read about (Jhangiani et al., 2022).

Today, these social comparisons tend to occur on social media where young people can learn about their life experiences, abilities, skills, and relative social status. With a wider range of people online, young people also tend to compare their attitudes and behaviours with those of others. These social comparisons are made more possible and effective through features such as likes, comments, tags, image, and video sharing on social media (Caner et al., 2022), which subsequently amplifies the experiences, interactions and demands of peer expectations (Nesi et al., 2018a, 2018b). Likewise, findings from this study also support the Social Identity Theory, which suggests that we derive a portion of our sense of Identity and self-esteem from the social groups we are a part of (Hogg, 2003; Turner et al., 1994; Tajfel, 1981). Young people form a collective identity based on their peers and make meaningful comparisons with those they see as like themselves (Festinger, 1954). Hence, some young people may view their peers as a reflection of themselves. In cases where their peers behave transgressively, they may either support such behaviour or disassociate themselves through rationalisation.

Findings further suggest that some young people who associate with peers that perpetrate transgressive behaviours on one hand, may be more likely to exercise self-control, and on the other hand may be more likely to perpetrate similar behaviour themselves because they sometimes do not view the behaviour as severe when it is committed by a friend. The underlying reason for this phenomenon is rooted in the fear of social exclusion that some

individuals may experience if they express dissenting opinions. Consequently, social media platforms can inadvertently promote the development of risky online practices, which may have detrimental effects on their users (Nemati and Matlabi, 2017). For example, a combination of their exposure and the mutual need for peer acceptance may lead to engaging in anti-social and illicit behaviours which most times may start as bullying, hate speech, trolling and taunting others on social media (Cohen-Almagor, 2018).

Many young people have experienced various transgressive behaviours, some others are in constant need of validation from close-knit peers and social media provides them with the environment to connect with others regardless of the risks and circumstances surrounding them. For example, in describing his response to aggressive peer interaction online, Participant 1 stated:

'With my group of friends, I have been exposed to a lot more online than I would normally be allowed at home, some of it is good and some are bad, but it is a good thing because it helps me understand different circumstances of life you know. I share some things with my friends online and offline and they also share things they find entertaining, and I guess important with me.'

This expression indicates that the majority of the time, online behaviour with friends becomes the model for how they behave online with other people and offline. As such, consistent with previous research, building and maintaining peer relationships online can subject young people to the social pressure to engage or not in transgressive behaviours that may sometimes find expression offline (Branley and Covey, 2017). Likewise, due to the metrics that provide immediate responses from peers, behaviours among peers online are highly now reinforced through features such as likes comments and followers, which provide a quantifiable form of validation on social media, thereby encouraging the social pressure to engage or not in transgressive behaviours (Elsaesser et al., 2021; Sherman et al., 2016).

6.2.1.1 Utilising and learning on social media

As expressed by young people, being online on social media can provide them with their first and continuous experience of trying to understand certain encounters or circumstances as they share and engage with peers and strangers. For some participants, these circumstances may be ones that they may have been exposed to online and offline as early as 10 years and 13 years old. To an extent therefore, this meant that for every need that arises, social media

is the first place a young person may turn to in most cases because of how they can utilise its functions. This was evident from the statements mentioned above in the focus group discussions.

Findings from this study in Section 4.4.1 show that young people as prolific users of social media platforms, understand the risks and influences on their behaviours and decision-making that relate to being online and interacting with peers some of which can be transgressive. It was established that social media experiences give rise to risks not only from their peers but also from strangers as they daily choose how to use their social networking platforms and respond to online aggression from peers (Section 5.5.1). It was observed that young people enjoy their shared and collective experiences with their peers online and offline and this gives them a sense of community and identity which sometimes influences their individual decisions and behaviours.

Notably, the emergence of digital media as a social environment has also introduced a new dimension to learning, perceiving, modelling and imitating people's behaviour (Aborisade and Adedayo, 2016; Defede et al., 2021). It was expressed that some young people care about the perception of their peers and would usually go the extra length to ensure their lifestyles were matched, even though this was far from the truth about who they are offline. This act usually inferred a close bond between brotherhood and sisterhood with peers. This expression aligns with Mead's concept of social learning, noting that the self emerges from social experience and interactions with others (Mead, 1934). In other words, young people may communicate the same meanings to themselves as to others or their peers because what others think of them, and the perspectives and perceptions of others are necessary for young people to have a sense of self. The concept of self is thus multifaceted, encompassing both individual and social aspects. It plays a critical role in regulating personal beliefs and values, yet many of these beliefs are shared and contribute to the formation of social constructs and interpersonal relationships (Stets and Burke, 2003).

With this understanding, it is also evident that some young people's use of social media may dictate or insist on imitative behaviour among peers and strangers alike. Thus, consistent with previous research, young people are capable of learning and imitating the behaviour of peers and strangers alike, regardless of whether the imitated behaviour or action is attached to positive or negative reinforcement (Bandura et al., 1963). For example, friends dress in a

certain way and display influential or dominating lifestyles or an offline quiet person is very vocal online because his or her friends behave that way.

However, as young people are regularly exposed to the lifestyles and behaviours of more people through the online environment, certain features and affordances of social media such as likes, comments, images and videos, location, immediacy, accessibility and affordability may tempt and permits this influence to occur with ease and behaviours can be observed and possibly easily imitated overtime online and offline. This is so because, as some other participants have suggested, the negative aspects of the Internet cause them to stay away. According to Ahn et al. (2020), individuals need not experience the consequences of their behaviour directly. In other words, these experiences suggest that young people do not just imitate behaviour they see offline, but behaviour they see online from peers and strangers, and even by fictional and non-human characters (Bajcar and Babel, 2018).

6.2.2 A sense of personal responsibility

It was discovered during the focus group discussions that some young people described feeling a sense of personal responsibility when witnessing transgressive behaviours perpetrated against a member of a friendship circle, and it is this sense of responsibility that encourages and motivates the need to defend one another from any appearance of danger or trouble outside the group. This indicated that being part of a close friendship circle offered some young people a sense of responsibility, security, and safety as Participant 4 expressed:

‘Sometimes at home, I am there but not there, but with my friends, I feel safe, I cannot explain it, but I feel safe with them. It is like, you know, I trust them.’

Findings in the current study support previous research in this respect, noting that these peer defenders are likely to be members of strong or influential friendship circles and may be perceived as popular by their peers (Salmivalli, 2010). Some of the young people who would defend their peers in this manner used their personal experience of victimisation as a motivator for being supportive. From the literature review, it was expected that young people with close-knit friendship circles would defend peer behaviour, as discussed below.

6.2.2.1 Willingness to defend peer networks

Findings in Section 5.5.3 suggest that young people who defend peers' transgressive behaviours and retaliate also trust their friends to reciprocate support. Thus, consistent with previous research, this willingness of young people to defend can be attributed to the fact that some peers earn and hold respect on online and offline 'streets' through their willingness to defend and maintain their reputation (Whittaker et al., 2020). They also had confidence that their friends in this close friendship circle were reliable and could be trusted. As such, this affirms that peer groups offer their members support, trust, loyalty, and emotional stability (Mendelson and Aboud, 1999). Hence, this kind of relationship creates a close bond between the friends in such groups. For example, participant 6 mentioned:

'I regard my close friends as family, I think I will always try to defend them and have their back like I believe they would do for me as well.'

Participant 8 also mentioned:

'My group of friends, we do and share a lot of things, we are like a family, if you touch one of us, you touch all of us. We always have each other's back, so, it is important to have a group like that because it is not safe alone online or offline.'

Therefore, in line with previous research, it is evident that the presence and availability of social media acts as a much bigger mirror to young people where they can seek validation and feedback from others, and features such as likes, comments, or followers, provides more online influence in interacting, connecting, and defending transgressive behaviours among peers (Gerlitz and Lury, 2014). Some communications on social networking platforms repeatedly involve feelings of belonging together or friendship, often resulting in more than social relationships (Fuchs, 2017). Young people can learn about their abilities, skills, opinions, and social status by comparing them to those of others (Guyer and Vaughan-Johnston, 2020; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

At the same time, as indicated in Section 5.4.5, findings also noted that some young people expressed their reluctance to be the odd one out and as such would usually succumb to the influence of peers from social media. For example, participant 8 stated:

'I don't like to be the odd one out, so whatever my friends are doing that is entertaining, I like to be a part of it, whether it's making fun of people, gaming, following trends or sharing various content online and offline'.

Participant 10 also noted:

'Yes, I feel like there is some kind of pressure from friends because if you do not do something like participate or engage in something, they would think you are boring and lonely. So, I agree that unspoken expectation is there which of course then influences your behaviour and decisions online and offline too.'

These expressions from participants indicate that the fear of feeling alone and missing out motivates their willingness to respond to and engage in peer aggression. Findings here support existing research explaining that people express or inhibit behaviour to conform to a perceived norm, in this case, among peers (Berkowitz, 2005). Therefore, this can cause young people to act in ways inconsistent with their true beliefs and values (Miller and McFarland, 1991). These misconceptions discourage individuals from expressing their opinions and behaviours, falsely believing that they are not conforming. This creates a negative cycle where unhealthy or transgressive behaviour is showcased, and healthy behaviour is inhibited. As such, this fear of being lonely can also allow abusers and perpetrators of transgressive behaviours (online and offline) to defend their actions due to the (mis)perception that their behaviour is normative (Baer et al., 1991), an experience referred to as 'false consensus' (Pollard et al., 2000). For instance, when young people feel disrespected by content or activities uploaded to social media by their peers, this can generate a concerned perception with compelling social pressure to take specific actions, revenge or retaliate in real life and to protect their perceived status among other peers (Patton et al., 2016).

6.2.2.2 Indifference and Reluctance to Intervene

Some young people expressed that they preferred to ignore aggressive behaviour from their peers because they were concerned about the social influence of popular peers. They feared that famous peers could use their social power to influence others against them negatively. It was noted that this social power of influence among peers could be used online or offline, regardless of whether peers were male or female. This implies that adolescents understand relational aggression and typically assess the potential hazards and repercussions of

confronting and reporting their peers' transgressive actions. Consequently, this dynamic can impact the quality of their interpersonal connections.

Some participants noted that they would be indifferent to altercations between strangers online and offline. They also noted indifference where a little 'beef' exists (not talking to one another due to previous or ongoing altercations and misunderstandings) among their peers even when aggressive and distressing words are being exchanged. However, in situations where these 'beef' began to spill over into bullying behaviours, online trolling, harassment, physical attacks, and other transgressive behaviours, then they would employ a different attitude. They expressed that their attitudes to such transgressive behaviours would involve a willingness to condemn such behaviour, intervene directly by defending the attacker or the attacked, report the behaviour to relevant authorities or just stay away from the situation in order not to be labelled a part of it. For example, Participant 25 noted:

'Depending on the situation, if I cannot defend them when it is happening because I am scared or something, I could just help them report the issue anonymously you know. That is better than leaving them all alone.'

Therefore, findings in this study as mentioned in Section 5.5, indicate that young people express less willingness to directly interfere, or report acts of transgressive behaviour where the victim was someone unknown to them or they did not consider the behaviour to be worrying. It was also noted that sometimes, the type and level of aggressive, offensive, and distressing behaviour displayed by peers and the identity of the victim in some cases will determine a young person's subsequent attitude to such behaviour. For example: Participant 9 stated:

'Yes, I think out of jealousy yeah some of the friends I had before would always find ways to embarrass me, just because they thought I was overweight, they would call me disgusting names online, in fact sometimes I believe they would use fake profiles to send me those messages, to the extent that I was even getting harmful threats. I became scared and depressed, and I had to report to the police. I could have retaliated but I just was not brave enough, I think. I could not even be friends with them after that. Honestly, it is like when it is the ones you know, it hurts you the most.'

Thus, consistent with previous research, peer influence online can be a significant factor in the decisions made by young people to engage or not in transgressive behaviours (Goldsmith

and Wall, 2022; Weerman, 2011). Likewise, peer influence on social media through sharing images and videos, comments and likes are unique ways that social media that heightens social responses from peers some of which are expressed through transgressive behaviours (Sherman et al., 2016). This is because peers can exert a considerable level of influence on the behaviour of others through the imparting of values, behaviour, and social reinforcement, which may be positive or negative (Rokven et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2023).

6.3 Constructing Identity and presenting self

During the data collection process, it was discovered that identity, self-image, and representation of self is a personal development process that most young people struggle with. Social media platforms seem to have stepped in to offer some form of ease, anonymity, and confidence to navigate this process that would otherwise not be available offline. Therefore, in answering the research question and exploring the second objective, the following sub-themes discuss how young people construct identity and present self and how these presentations influence online transgressive behaviour namely: Utilising Identity online and presenting and performing self.

6.3.1 Utilising Identity online

During the data collection process, participants described instances where a young person would choose to explore the formation of identity online. Findings in Section 5.3.1 indicated that in some cases, some young people have or display different identities or choose to remain anonymous online for security reasons towards themselves or their families, some are less confident and struggle with low self-esteem and will choose to have a different identity online as a form of freedom. When reflecting on their online identity and how they represent themselves on social media, participants expressed concerns that a lot of people have edited versions of themselves, false realities, and false narratives online, they hide behind their cameras, keyboards or digital devices and show only what they want others to see and young people are influenced by these misrepresentations. For example,

Participant 3 mentions:

‘Social media allows young people to try different identities or edit who they are offline you know. or also just extend their offline selves online. It gives that freedom online to be who you want to be.’

Participant 1 also notes:

'With my group of friends, when we are online, there is the freedom to be able to highlight different versions of ourselves by the kind of things we do. It is fun really and it is not something we would have been able to do so easily offline. It is a good thing because it helps me understand different circumstances of life you know as I have been exposed to a lot more online than I would normally be allowed at home.'

This finding shows that SNS acts as a space which allows the expression of life's narrative to be edited, modified, re-organised, re-presented, re-configured and even deleted (Fulwood et al., 2016; Manago et al., 2008; Robards and Lincoln, 2017). Thus, in using these platforms to express themselves, and build relationships and connections with others, SNS provide young people with the freedom to constantly construct their identity and self-representation some of which may end up as an edited version of themselves or might suggest that young people are attempting to be different people online. Thus, as is consistent with previous research, this expression and self-presentation among peers increasingly takes place on the Internet (Davis, 2010), and enables young people to control their expression of self far more easily than in an offline environment (Jhangiani et al., 2022).

On the other hand, findings in Section 5.3.3 also revealed that other young people would usually choose to have a different identity online to provoke, perpetrate and publicize transgressive behaviours and avoid the consequences of such behaviour. For example, in narrating how some features on social media enable its users to easily perpetrate transgressive behaviours, participant 2 mentioned:

'I am sure some young people do live different lives, like you see them offline in the real world and then online they are a completely different person, it is like they become more confident and braver online to bully, taunt and troll other people or just act completely different.'

In line with previous research, young people can explore and try out different selves as discussed above (Robards and Lincoln, 2017), and, in this case, the participant explained that the affordance of being online can make young people feel more confident to express transgressive behaviours (Cooper, 2000; Elsaesser et al., 2021). These behaviours include aggression, taunting, cyberbullying, trolling, stalking and other performance crimes which are

typically distributed to a larger public through images and videos while hiding their identity (Nguyen and Barbour, 2017; Surrette, 2015; Yar, 2012).

As young people transition from adolescence to adulthood, their identity formation is constantly being explored and several social factors such as peer relationships, economic status, role models, and image representations on TV and social media can easily influence the construction of behaviour and formation of their identity. Findings from this study support previous research and acknowledge that although the desire for young people to present themselves favourably or constructively is a natural part of everyday life, both individual and situational factors such as the accessibility and availability of social media, influence the extent to which self is constructed and presented in some situations than in others (Jhangiani et al., 2022). This freedom and flexibility enable young people to control their expression of self more easily than in an offline environment which as one participant said, can act as a life mask or controlled expression of one's identity.

Therefore, as is consistent with previous research, young people would instead opt for a type of self-representation that they perceive will win approval and increase popularity among their peers online and offline (Fullwood, 2015). This is evident in the findings of this study from Sections 4.4.5, 4.5.1, and 4.5.2, as some young people freely select the best information to share with their peers and others online because they care how others perceive them, which in turn creates a perceived identity for that young person. This is possibly because receiving validation and acknowledgement from peers in the form of likes, comments, followers, and subscribers may serve to approve a specific representation of self, which may easily be incorporated into one's offline personality or Identity. This finding also supports previous research noting the presentation of self as the performance of actions and staging to build an image or visual perception to an audience for positive and negative actions (Feher, 2019; Goffman, 1959; Rettberg, 2017; Saker, 2017).

6.3.1.1 Understanding Identity presentation

Before engaging in an in-depth conversation with the participants on transgressive behaviours online and offline, it was crucial to understand participants' perspectives on identity presentations. When participants were asked if they have and maintain the same identity online and offline, most of the participants were unsure and took time to answer the questions. For example, participant 4, after thinking for a while replied: *'I'm not really sure, it depends*

on...' Similarly, participant 9, stated with a nervous laugh, *'I've not thought of it like that, that's a tough one.'*

Other participants responded with 'hmmm, uhs' and long silences as they took a while to formulate a response to the question. These participants were unsure of how their identity and self-presentation looked like or fit into one form of identity offline and online. Again, these reactions and responses in line with previous research acknowledge identity as a series of roles humans play in their lifetime and stage those performances wherever and whenever required. These participant's reactions of confusion and silence may also support Goffman's notion that there is no 'true self,' but only roles that create the performer, which is the individual (Feher, 2019; Goffman, 1959).

At the same time, not all participants were speechless or confused about whether they portrayed the same identity online or offline. A few participants responded promptly and assertively. For instance, participant 12, with a more composed laugh, stated: *'Oh yes, I very much have the same version of my identity online and offline, it's like a continuity of who I am regardless of location.'* Similarly, participant 14 also stated: *'I do, what you see is what you get, online or offline.'*

These and similar responses also support previous research, noting that Identity is not a fixed state but a continuous process. Our repeated actions and behaviours shape and create our Identity over time (Butler, 1990). Likewise, participants' display of clarity and assertiveness, may support Cover's (2012) notion as he asserts that *"online acts are just as much a performance as any other 'real life' act and, just as equally constitutes a sense of self and identity"* (pp.179). In effect, online behaviour is an extension of one's offline Identity (Ellison et al., 2006), allowing individuals to reinforce their self-concept and increase their sense of belonging (Bailey et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2021). Therefore, these few participants understood and had the conscious awareness that their online and offline activities portrayed the exact representation of their identities.

6.3.1.2 Reflecting Identity through others

Findings reveal that young people's presentation of self is sometimes determined by what is expected from peers on social media. To a degree, this finding supports previous research noting that how one sees oneself is not strictly an individual occurrence, but rather it involves others (Cooley, 1902). As such, young people can view themselves and adjust their behaviour

based on the perception of how other peers perceive them to be (McIntyre, 1998). In other words, their development of self and Identity occurs through interactions with peers which is based on an understanding of how young people perceive each other.

With the continuous growth and utility of social media networks, this current study suggests that young people are constantly exposed to multiple 'mirrors' of interactions, perceptions and judgments of their close peers, family, and strangers alike. As such, young people can learn about their Identity by observing themselves not only in primary groups, such as their family but also in secondary and much wider groups as permitted by SNS (Cooley, 1902).

Interestingly, findings from this study also briefly noted that the perception of close peers, family and strangers is not always reality because these perceptions are sometimes tainted with incorrect or misjudged signs and signals, thereby leading to incorrect perceptions of how other peers see them. Some young people also noted that on occasion, they develop their social construction and identity independently of peers which arguably 'flips the mirror,' enabling others to base their views on how young people see themselves. Nonetheless, the general findings of this current study reveal that although the development of one's self and identity can be based on young people's understanding of how other close peers and family perceive and assess them, young people's increased utility of social media also makes it possible for this development of self to include the perceptions of other online environments involving strangers, media and video gaming networks. This is because young people are constantly engaging with known and unknown persons in these online environments and any or all these interactions, perceptions and assessments can impact their continued identity development and behavioural construction from online and offline social groups (Jhangiani et al., 2022).

6.3.2 Presenting and performing self-online

For privacy concerns, findings as indicated in section 4.5.3 reveal that some young people may choose to extend and edit the presentation of the self, they display online to limit information that they may prefer to keep or remain private. Interestingly, some research participants expressed that transgressive behaviours are more prevalent because young people can now earn and hold respect online which further encourages the control, they have on the presentation of self online which can be different offline. Although some young people may tend to portray false realities, some participants believe the presence and growth of social media encourage young people to sometimes have extended and edited versions of their true

selves as opposed to completely living two separate lives (Nguyen and Barbour, 2017). For example, participant 24 notes:

'I would say there is not any difference ... because I have a diverse group of friends, so I connect with them on various levels differently. I do not know if that could be part of having different versions of myself or like being two people, I do not know really.'

Also, participant 15 states:

'I just don't like people knowing my business a lot like that, so it's a lot easier to just do some be a little different online by picking and choosing what I share, I guess.'

This, to a limited extent, supports previous research that the online social structure can create a system that easily permits, motivates, and encourages individuals to live the expression of two lives (Presdee, 2000; Wall, 2007). More accurately, findings from this study note that people present themselves differently online depending on who they are interacting with and the context of the interaction (Marwick and Boyd, 2010). Likewise, digital media allows individuals to experiment with Identity, enabling identity performance and feedback (Nguyen and Barbour, 2017). In other words, as participants expressed and described, some young people tend to present the version of self that is needed where necessary, as different environments online and offline sometimes afford young people the opportunity to have multiple, double, or edited selves. This way, they can build relations, connect, and engage with different audiences in multiple and diverse ways (Nguyen and Barbour, 2017).

6.3.2.1 Online self as authentic, real, and fake

In discussing the construction of authentic identities among young people on the Internet, the findings of this study also align with previous research noting that the authenticity of an individual's identity portrayal is a matter of subjectivity, which can be perceived differently by various individuals or groups (Bailey et al., 2020; Williams and Copes, 2005). Some participants have labelled these multiple identities or presentations of self among peers online and offline as fake vs real. It is believed that the utilization of technology for experimentation and self-representation is purported to facilitate young people in reaching a more authentic sense of self (Bailey et al., 2020; Williams and Copes, 2005). This observation implies that social networking sites provide an expanded platform for individuals to showcase various aspects of their Identity that may be challenging to display in real life. This suggests that SNS

present a unique opportunity for individuals to manifest their multifaceted selves more comprehensively. Once more, findings note that there is no one 'true self' and that individuals only present an ideal version of themselves in front of the world's stage when required, which would be online and offline for context in this study (Chua and Chang, 2016; Goffman, 1959).

In addition, findings from this study (Section 5.3.3) reflecting the continued existence of an extended or edited version of self as portrayed by young people online, notes that sometimes this experience and opportunity makes it easier to plan and perpetrate transgressive behaviours as it is believed that these digital platforms act as a shield or a form of protection from being caught or identified by relevant authorities (Goldsmith and Wall, 2022). This implies that young people can persistently adjust their presentation of self and identity performance online according to the appropriate social context, known as the situation and the audiences (Marwick and Boyd, 2010; Mead, 1934; Nguyen and Barbour, 2017).

In summary, with the adoption of 'two lives' being an exception, some research participants understood that multiple versions or presentations of self are the norm amongst young people online and offline. Participants also expressed the value and importance of being able to control the narrative by choosing what online and offline content influences the construction of their identity and behaviour or not. Some participants disclosed that they have friends and know of people who misrepresent themselves and intentionally show false or 'partially edited' identities online and then show their ideal identities offline. This again reveals the selective nature of the presentation of self by young people in any given social context.

Therefore, with the existing knowledge that identities are curated and performed, while some other participants may dwell on social comparisons, some participants mentioned that they do not dwell so much on the behaviours of their friends so as not to be influenced by them. Regarding what their reaction would be upon being aware of transgressive behaviour following this false or selective version of self and identity there was a mixed response, some participants referred to a sense of duty and said they would report their observation to a parent or guardian, while others said they would do nothing so as not to lose that friendship. In effect, for fear of losing a friend or being lonely in a friendship group, they may not necessarily support the behaviour but would also not necessarily criticise, defend, or report such behaviours in question.

6.4 Connecting social media and transgressive behaviour

For years, positivist criminological studies on young people have shown that the influence of transgressive behaviours can be conditioned by psychological, biological, and social characteristics as it relates to offline environments (Brookes, 2021; Herrenkohl et al., 2000; Ling et al., 2019). This influence may be because of factors such as deprivation, exclusion from school, family patterns and peer pressure. It has also been thought that some young people adopt different criminal behaviours which characterises how they may have been raised with negative labelling and stereotyping (Deakin et al., 2022; Tharshini et al., 2021). It was assumed in the literature that these behaviours are fixed and almost predictable, for example, a young person from a deprived background, single-parent household or excluded from education is more likely to engage in transgressive behaviours as opposed to a young person from a more affluent community, two-parent household or still in education. Nonetheless, this study agrees that much of the research conducted in recent years has aimed to identify economic, social, biological, and environmental factors that may influence transgressive behaviour amongst young people.

The current study initially intended to only explore the influence of social media use on transgressive behaviours among young people. However, early in the process of this study, certain offline behaviours amongst young people also influence their online use of social media. Hence, this current study not only explored young people's use of social media and its influence on transgressive behaviours but also highlights how certain offline behaviours influence their online use of social media. As such, this study is not limited to or focussed on the offline environments, as much of criminology research has studied, but instead explores in greater detail the digital online environments which young people during this study have indicated as a much larger environment than offline.

Early in the data analysis stage, it transpired that with the increasing use of digital devices and the accessibility of multiple social media platforms, many young people are no longer necessarily 'hanging out' on physical streets but are increasingly 'hanging out' online. Interestingly, the online environment as described by participants is where young people get to explore life, identity, relationships, individuality, as well as transgressive behaviours in general. This exploration is made possible and enjoyable through various features available to social media platforms that keep users entertained. Therefore, in answering the research question and exploring the third and final objective, the following sub-themes discuss ways in

which social media influences transgressive behaviour online and offline namely: features of social media implicated in transgressive behaviour and modelling transgressive behaviour online.

6.4.1 Features of social media implicated in transgressive behaviour

Findings in Section 4.6 of this study show that young people experienced more positive use of social media but were aware of how other young people use social media for negative purposes. This trend seemed evident across their social media platforms with young people sharing and disseminating harmful content as well as taunting each other online to escalate such conflict offline. Findings revealed that many times the coordination of young people's transgressive intentions usually happens online because it is easier, safer, and quicker to communicate with peers online without fear of detection. Despite that, participants still acknowledged that detrimental or negative social media use among young people does not always stay online in the digital space, oftentimes they extend territory to the offline space.

As such, findings from this study are consistent with previous research noting that a limited number of bystanders typically witness offline transgressive behaviours. In contrast, social media platforms provide young people with a global audience. Consequently, any detrimental use of social media can be accessed and responded to by a vast audience worldwide. Therefore, as a result of online taunts, trolling, insults, and attacks, these harmful interactions can be replayed repeatedly by the public, which can lead to an increased risk of retaliatory attacks both online and offline (Elsaesser et al., 2021; Irwin-Rogers and Pinkney, 2017). Likewise, findings in line with previous research also note that the Internet can be used as a platform either to announce the intent of criminal activity or showcase a crime and as a trigger in the form of posts on social media and other online activities; as well as a tool to coordinate criminal offences (Liem and Geelen, 2019).

Young people in this study indicated awareness of the ways that conflict on social media intensifies the demands of relational peer conflict. During the data collection, young people in both semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussions specifically pointed to comments, tags, location settings, image and video sharing, and video streaming as significant factors in escalating social media conflict. They emphasised that the accessibility of these features to the public increased the intensity of such conflicts.

Findings in Section 4.7 of this study revealed that social media features provide visible spaces where others on various social media platforms can view and contribute to the conflict from anywhere, in real-time. These features include comments, tagging, live streaming, and sharing images and videos. Thus, social media may occasionally escalate and incite serious youth violence (Irwin-Rogers and Pinkney, 2017). Likewise, in line with previous research, findings reveal that the Internet can rapidly escalate online disagreements and enter into physical altercations (Jatmiko et al., 2020).

6.4.1.1 Live video streaming

In the case of video streaming, young people noted that the availability of conflict through video streaming regardless of location, coupled with a vast number of commentaries on the video stream and the public nature of the comments made by those following the conflict, all contribute to heightened intensity of the initial conflict. Participants noted that the number of social media followers joining and witnessing the conflict as it unfolds is a crucial factor in how social media influences the escalation of conflict. Thus, consistent with previous research, findings here note that social media magnifies a young person's encounters, interactions, and obligations to conform to peer expectations. As a result, online conflicts can become amplified, and the public exposure of such conflicts can intensify a young person's experience of the situation, leading them to feel the need to escalate the fight (Elsaesser et al., 2021; Goldsmith and Wall, 2022; Nesi et al., 2018). For example, participant 9 mentions that:

'There is always someone that would be recording when a fight is going on offline. I remember ... I was live streaming a video on Facebook ... Somehow, someone that I have beef with saw it and knew exactly where I was and that was how she came with her friends to fight me. Her friends started livestreaming us as we were arguing and that was when I knew ok this could get viral because there are too many people.'

This participant indicated that the number of people live streaming was able to bring more audience to the conflict who can watch the conflict from anywhere.

6.4.1.2 Image and video sharing

In the case of sharing images and videos, young people provided examples of inappropriate activities that happen offline but again are heightened by the comment feature on social media. For example, Participant 17 notes:

'... even with Facebook, when someone posts you know pictures and videos insulting or humiliating someone or a group of people, that post will typically be embarrassing and can influence some kind of retaliation or revenge behaviour.'

Likewise, Participant 3 also notes:

'I was dating someone just for a brief time and it did not end well so he decided to share and post some personal information and pictures of me on social media which were quite embarrassing ... I also worried that this whole thing could have escalated fast online with people physically assaulting and calling me names, but it did not.'

These findings also reveal that sharing or posting images and videos of peers on social media without their consent provides an opportunity for offline retaliation and revenge. While sharing embarrassing photos has always been possible, these findings note that social media now provides a convenient means to post images or videos from anywhere, instantly visible to one's followers. This presents new avenues for escalating conflicts (Elsaesser et al., 2021).

6.4.1.3 Comments

In the case of comments on social media, as indicated in Section 4.7.2, participants expressed that sometimes young people desire to seek thrills, pleasure, and respect and that these desires together with the comment feature on social media can sometimes influence the decisions of young people to engage and perpetrate transgressive behaviours. Participant 18 notes:

'It is like they would antagonize each other. So, of course, this starts verbally with social media comments on any kind of post, and then it only takes one person to say you are all talk and no action in the comment section, and then others will join in ... drop your address, and then it leads to physical violence and aggression.'

Likewise, participant 19 also notes that:

'.... it is a tough place, one minute you are joking with someone online and the next minute you are planning to link the same person up for a fight because some friends that are linked to your social media network have egged you on in the comments.'

As such, this indicates that young people who would usually not be confident to start physical conflict offline would be more confident about expressing transgressive behaviours online with the influence of peers and the aid of social media features. These findings, in line with previous research, agree that social media comments and likes are a unique form of peer influence that amplifies responses and strengthens connections (Sherman et al., 2016). Likewise, the findings of this study are consistent with previous research indicating that engagement with certain social media features plays a significant role in the initiation and escalation of offline violence (Elsaesser et al., 2021). Furthermore, social media presents a distinctive setting that magnifies and transforms the dynamics of conflict. It is a place where even the slightest issue can rapidly escalate into a major conflict due to social media's public, measurable, and ever-present nature. This, in turn, heightens the urge to engage in confrontations while also creating novel avenues for conflict (Elsaesser et al., 2021).

6.4.2 Modelling transgressive behaviour online

Findings as indicated in Section 5.7.1 revealed that exposure to transgressive behaviours online can influence some young people to perpetrate the same or similar behaviour. Participants expressed concerns by saying that everything on social media influences people one way or the other and that there is constant pressure and influence from social media to perform certain acts and become certain kinds of people. For example, young people can easily learn transgressive behaviours from exposure to harmful materials online.

During the data collection process of this study, it was discovered that learning was a daily, constant, and regular experience for young people. Young people learn values, methods, and motives to become diverse people through this. However, participants further noted that learning among young people does not always have a fixed setting or location, as learning takes place in both online and offline environments. Thus, this finding agrees that through interactions with others, people learn the values, attitudes, methods, and motives to become offenders from their environment (Sutherland, 1939). Although Sutherland's study was before social media, findings in this study support his concept to an extent and suggest it could be extended beyond intimate groups. Likewise, findings in line with previous research also note that associating with peers in virtual or physical settings who condone cyber-offending can significantly affect an individual's propensity to engage in cyber-offending behaviour (Nodeland and Morris, 2020). However, findings also agree that merely learning motives and techniques of crime does not necessarily lead to criminal behaviour (Dearden and Parti),

offending behaviour increases as self-control decreases (Baek, 2018), and associating with peers, who support involvement in offending behaviour online or offline, significantly influences participation in this behaviour.

From the findings in this study, learning can be influenced by several factors, some of which will be copied and imitated, some of which will not be copied. Young people are exposed to the lifestyles and behaviours of diverse numbers of people online rather than offline and behaviours to an extent can be observed and imitated over time. This is evident in the various uses of social media as indicated by research participants in chapter 4. Thus, in line with previous research, findings note that individuals model the behaviour of others through observational learning, for example, watching and listening to the actions or behaviours of others (Bandura, 1961).

However, in this current study, it was noted that behavioural construction among young people can be learned not only from intimate or private settings or groups of family and friends but also from more public and exposed settings such as media, online gaming networks and social media networks. This is because today, young people are exposed to and have access to multiple social media platforms, where learning is not strictly intimate, but involves a vast range of general and extensive social interactions and experiences. At the same time, young people identified and explained that the influence of social media on transgressive behaviour although present, was not fixed. It was further expressed by participants in this study that some young people can exercise self-control and make their own free and rational choices and as such can make decisions to copy or not copy certain online and offline behaviours as opposed to imitating observed behaviour on impulse. In effect, some young people can take better control of the influence of their social media use and its contents on their general behaviours and decision-making (Dearden and Parti, 2021).

As mentioned above, findings in the current study indicate that young people are aware of the dangers of multiple and single exposure to harmful related content online and offline. Previous research has suggested that young people who commit serious crimes are more likely to have been exposed to harmful online content (Clarke, 2012; Lee and Lee, 2017). However, according to participants, it seemed that regardless of whether a young person has had multiple exposures to transgressive-related content online, participants expressed that one single exposure to such content can also possibly influence a young person to perpetrate transgressive behaviours depending on other surrounding factors. Thus, social media

provides a continued environment of both private and public settings for learning to take place. Considering that, previous research, notes that the influence and performance of transgressive behaviours is not always necessarily dependent on the social environment alone. In other words, the biological, psychological and economic characteristics (Brookes, 2021; Ling et al., 2019) as well as the free will of the individual also play a crucial role in one's behavioural construction in deciding if one is more likely to engage on transgressive behaviours after multiple or single exposures and contacts with people that break the law or criminal contents online and offline (Dearden and Parti, 2021).

6.4.2.1 Modelling transgressive behaviour through video gaming

Lastly, with the advancements in graphics technology, video games are becoming more realistic than ever before. However, the unregulated use of such games can profoundly impact individual and group behaviours, leading to concerns for parents, guardians, and authorities. Interestingly, findings, as indicated in Section 5.7.2, indicate that there are some behaviours that young people choose to engage in because they may find them pleasurable and enjoyable irrespective of whether they may be directly or indirectly considered harmful. An example of this is the constant exposure or addiction to online video gaming that includes scenes and actions of violence and aggression. As participant 17 mentioned:

'I remember my brother would regularly act out aggressive actions and behaviours from what he had been exposed to on his online video gaming with his friends and that was worrying.'

Therefore, as is consistent with previous research, findings note that certain behaviours and leisure activities can, directly and indirectly, contribute to the destruction of our shared social life of family, class, and community (Smith and Raymen, 2018). Likewise, participant 12 also states:

'The action can be very addictive, I used to play them before, but I had to reduce my game time and eventually stopped because of the aggression and violence.'

Thus, the type of video game played is a significant factor when studying transgressive behaviour, as exposure to human-like or fictional violence tends to increase aggression. Further, the duration of video game playtime also shapes the influence of violent behaviour (Sherry, 2001) (see Section 2.14.7). In other words, although pleasurable and enjoyable, the

findings of this current study agree with previous research that unregulated and unrestricted use of online video gaming platforms can contribute directly and indirectly to the modelling of transgressive behaviour among young people in different social contexts.

6.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed findings and presented themes from the analysed data of this study concerning the study's research question, aim and objectives. This discussion carefully examined the influence of social media on transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham and established connections to the existing literature review by answering the research question, aim and objectives.

In reflecting on research objective one, this chapter identified and discussed the following theme and subthemes: Responding to peer aggression (Social acceptance and a sense of personal responsibility). Firstly, this section explored and discussed social acceptance as a factor influencing young people's response to peer aggression. Primarily, as prolific social media users, young people are frequently exposed to the lifestyles and conduct of a wider range of individuals online. Consequently, the online behaviour adopted by friends becomes the benchmark for how they interact with others both online and offline. This significantly impacts what young people perceive as socially acceptable behaviour. Discussions also underscore that the availability of social media networks and the need for acceptance within peer groups predict social media use and willingness to engage in collective actions. Consequently, through regular comparison and seeking to satisfy the feeling of belonging and connectedness with peers online, features such as likes, follows, or comments provide more online influence in interacting, connecting, and perpetrating or defending transgressive behaviours among peers where necessary.

Secondly, this section also explored and discussed a sense of personal responsibility as a factor that influences young people's response to peer aggression. Findings and discussions revealed that young people feel a sense of personal responsibility owed to their peers. This is usually expressed when witnessing transgressive behaviours perpetrated against a member of a friendship circle. The fear of feeling alone, missing out, and the sense of responsibility owed to peers are what sometimes encourage and influence the need to defend one another from any appearance of danger or trouble outside the group. Most times, among influential peer groups, there is usually a reputation to be maintained. This is because peers benefit from the support of close friendship groups, reliable connections, loyalty, and emotional security.

For instance, disrespect, insult, or abuse to a friend can sometimes generate a concerned attitude with compelling social pressure to take specific actions, such as revenge or retaliation in real life, and to protect their fame and reputation among other peers.

In addition, this section also expressed young people's reluctance and indifference to intervene in transgressive behaviours. The social power of popular peer groups and the awareness of relational aggression sometimes deter or discourage young people from interfering in acts of transgressive behaviour. Young people are less willing to directly interfere, or report acts of transgressive behaviour when the victim is unknown to them or they do not consider the behaviour to be worrying. In other words, the type and level of aggressive, offensive, and distressing behaviour displayed by peers and the Identity of the victim in some cases determines a young person's subsequent attitude and reaction to such behaviour. This chapter, therefore, notes that the development and discussion of the above-highlighted themes and subthemes reflect the varying attitudes of young people towards peer aggression online and offline.

In reflecting on research objective two, this chapter identified and discussed the following theme and subthemes: Constructing Identity and presenting self (Utilising Identity online and presenting and performing self-online). Firstly, this section discussed how young people utilise Identity online in several ways. Young people's use of social media is sometimes influenced by what is expected from peers online. Although the desire for young people to present themselves favourably is a natural part of their everyday life, the accessibility of social media influences the extent to which young people can utilise and construct their Identity online. However, discussions also underscore that being online can make young people feel more confident about expressing transgressive behaviours and potentially avoiding the consequences of such behaviour. This is because they constantly engage with known and unknown people online. Any interactions, perceptions, and assessments can impact their continued identity development and behavioural construction.

Secondly, this section also explored and discussed young people's online presentation and performance, which influences their construction of Identity and presentation of self. Findings and discussions acknowledge that social media's existence and affordances permit young people's freedom to constantly curate, construct and re-construct their preferred selves. This way, young people can build relations, connect, and engage with different audiences in multiple and diverse ways regardless of whether such a version is deemed as edited, fake, false or living a double life. At the same time, discussions also acknowledge that displaying

different aspects of one's Identity online does not make them any less authentic or genuine. Instead, it shows that the person is being selective in how they present themselves in different social contexts, which is necessary for appropriate representation. Notwithstanding, with a sense of duty, while some young people would report their observation of transgressive behaviour to a necessary authority, others would be indifferent and sometimes do nothing to avoid losing that friendship. Therefore, this chapter notes that the development and discussion of the above-highlighted theme and subthemes reflect young people's online and offline Identity and self-representation on social media.

In reflecting on research objective three, this chapter identified and discussed the following theme and subthemes: Connecting social media and transgressive behaviour (Features of social media implicated in transgressive behaviour and modelling transgressive behaviour online). Firstly, this section discussed the features and affordances of social media that influence transgressive behaviours. This section discussed that engagement with social media features such as likes, comments, tags, image and video sharing, location setting, and live streaming play a significant role in the beginning and escalation of transgressive behaviour online and offline. These identified features of social media provide visible spaces where other users on various social media platforms can view and contribute to the conflict from anywhere, in real-time. As a result, young people who would usually not be confident about starting a physical conflict offline would be more confident about expressing transgressive behaviours online with the aid of social media features that heighten responses and reward connections and engagements.

Secondly, this section also explored and discussed the modelling of transgressive behaviour among young people online. Behavioural construction and transgressive behaviours among young people can be learned not only from intimate or private settings or groups of family and friends but also from more public and exposed settings such as media, online video gaming networks and social media networks. This is because today, young people are exposed to and have access to multiple social media platforms, where learning is not strictly intimate, but involves a vast range of general and extensive social interactions and experiences. In other words, the influence of social media use on transgressive behaviour, although present, is not fixed. Young people can exercise self-control, making their own free and rational choices, and as such, can decide to copy or not copy certain online and offline behaviours as opposed to imitating observed behaviour on impulse. Therefore, this chapter notes that the development

and discussion of the above-highlighted theme and subthemes reflect how social media influences transgressive behaviour among young people.

In considering further whether the study answered the research question, the next chapter provided an overview of the study, highlighting the research motivation, research design, research question as well as its aims and objectives, and the themes emanated from obtained data in discussing the contribution of this study to this area of research. This next chapter also examined the study's methodological and researchers' limitations and its research implications. Findings and details of how these limitations have influenced the application or interpretation of the results of this study, how research implications affect policy, practice and targeted population are also discussed, as well as a valuable awareness of existing government initiatives on the findings of the study. The next chapter further identified and discussed future considerations and suggestions related to policy, policing, social media networks, parents, guardians, and young people. Lastly, the researcher provided a personal reflection on the journey of completing this study.

Chapter 7: Conclusion - Research limitations, contributions, implications, considerations, and reflection.

7.1 Introduction

The concluding chapter of this thesis provided an overview of the research by revisiting the aims and objectives of the study and illustrates how these have been achieved. Secondly, a summary of the key findings from the analysed data is discussed to identify contributions to new knowledge or support existing research. This chapter also examines the study's methodological and researchers' limitations and its research implications. Findings and details of how these limitations have influenced the application or interpretation of the results of this study, how research implications affect policy, practice and targeted population is also discussed as well as a useful awareness of existing government initiatives on the findings of the study. This chapter further identified and discussed future considerations and suggestions as it relate to policy, policing, social media networks, parents, guardians, and young people. Lastly, this chapter provided a personal reflection on the journey of completing this study.

7.2 An overview of the study

As discussed in previous chapters of this study, social media has transformed how young people experience conflict because online threats can quickly lead to offline violence (Elsaesser et al., 2021). Evolving technology and social networking platforms have been increasingly suspected in a growing number of unlawful activities and transgressive behaviours by its users, ranging from gang violence to assisted suicide, sex offences, cyberbullying and even homicide (Whittaker et al., 2020; Yardley and Wilson, 2015). Several cases have involved groups of young people in various parts of the UK taunting each other on the Internet through music videos and social media activities, some of which tend to develop and escalate to physical and violent revenge and retaliations offline (Densley, 2020). Due to the continuous growth in how young people communicate, establish, and maintain relationships online and the increase in offending behaviours among young people, issues on the effect and influence of social media use remain a prime concern for parents, enforcement authorities and the public at large (Reyes et al., 2023).

While recent studies (Elsaesser et al., 2021; Goldsmith and Wall, 2022; Nesi et al., 2018a, 2018b) have done much to advance our understanding of some Internet-related offences,

notable gaps for its continuous study remain, such as the relationship between the digital space and transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham.

This study aimed to understand the role of social media in transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham. It explored how the increased use of digital media may influence how transgressive activities take shape and how these activities may construct identities and enhance capabilities among young people in Nottingham.

To investigate this topic thoroughly, a multiple qualitative research method was employed to address the research question. This approach was deemed most appropriate as it allowed for a comprehensive understanding and analysis of the unique online social sphere and reality experienced by young individuals (Creswell, 2007; Todd et al., 2004). This multiple qualitative research method started with a semi-structured interview, and findings from this were used to design a follow-up focus group discussion. Using this approach, this study successfully captured how young people individually and collectively construct meaning in terms of their thoughts, patterns, perceptions, emotions, attitudes, behaviours, and practices (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Merriam, 2009). Therefore, the young people's experiences and information shared in this study were diverse and valuable. A thematic analysis approach was also used to analyse the data because it provided an insightful discovery and explanation of how young people in Nottingham use social media and their attitude towards its influence on transgressive behaviour among peers.

The data for this study was obtained by adopting a purposive sampling of young people aged 18 to 25 years in Nottingham. These young people were from the Nottinghamshire Youth Commission, and they represented and provided a diverse range of experiences which was important to this study. The participants were asked a series of questions about the study's research question: What role does social media play in the influence of transgressive behaviours and vice versa among young people in Nottingham? The discussion of the research question was guided by three objectives: (1) To understand the attitude of young people towards aggressive peer interaction on social media, (2) To investigate how young people address online and offline identity and self-representation of peers on social media, (3) To explore ways in which social media may influence transgressive behaviours among peers in Nottingham.

The analysis of data from this study provided results supported by literature relevant to youth crime and SNS. As a result, four themes and their sub-themes were identified from the semi-

structured interviews as follows: (1) Prolific user (frequent social media use, rationale and utility of social media platforms, over exposure to 'bad news', social media addiction, false representation of lifestyle); (2) Presentation of self-online (consistent presentation of self, inconsistent presentation of self and Identity performance); (3) Social media and escalation of peer conflict online (cyberbullying and peer misunderstanding); and (4) Features and affordances of social media implicated conflict (image and video sharing and comments).

Likewise, five themes and their sub-themes were also identified from the focus groups as follows: (1) Self and Identity utilisation online (playing with identity as freedom, playing with identity as a blank slate, playing with identity as an enabler of transgressive behaviour); (2) Social acceptance (matching with friends, sharing experiences online and its influence, pressure to share, the gratification of utility and reliance, and fear of being lonely); (3) Sources of conflict enabled on social media (abuse from close-knit peers, abuse to close-knit peers and conflict related to retaliation and revenge); (4) Features and affordances of social media implicated conflict (images and videos, comments and tags, and location setting); and (5) Dangers of harmful content online (exposure to harmful content and addictive online video gaming).

7.2.1 Research themes and research focus

The overall focus of this research was to explore and investigate social media use among young people aged 18 – 25 years and assess its possible influence on transgressive behaviour. The themes derived from the available data reflect the aim, objectives and research question under study. The following themes and sub-themes identified and discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 revealed social acceptance as a factor influencing young people's response to peer aggression online. These themes and sub-themes include - Social acceptance (matching with friends, sharing experiences online and their influence, pressure to share, the gratification of utility and reliance, and fear of being lonely); Sources of conflict enabled on social media (abuse from close-knit peers, abuse to close-knit peers and conflict related to retaliation and revenge) and Responding to peer aggression (Social acceptance and a sense of personal responsibility). The above themes and sub-themes are crucial to the overall research focus as they explored and discussed a sense of personal responsibility as a factor that influences young people's online and offline responses to peer aggression. Findings and discussions revealed that young people feel a sense of personal responsibility owed to their peers. The fear of social exclusion, missing out, the need for acceptance and the sense

of responsibility owed to peers are what sometimes encourage and influence social media use and the need to defend one another from any appearance of danger or trouble outside the group. Consequently, through regular online and offline comparisons, features such as likes, follows, or comments provide more online influence in interacting, connecting, and perpetrating or defending transgressive behaviours among peers where necessary. In other words, the type and level of aggressive, offensive, and distressing behaviour displayed by peers and the Identity of the victim in some cases determines a young person's subsequent attitude and reaction to such behaviour. These themes and subthemes, therefore, contribute to the overall research focus as they reflect the varying influence of social media use on the attitudes of young people towards peer aggression online and offline.

In addition, the following themes and sub-themes also identified and discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 revealed social media's impact on young people's behavioural construction of self and identity. These themes and sub-themes include - Prolific user (frequent social media use, rationale and utility of social media platforms, over exposure to 'bad news', social media addiction, false representation of lifestyle); Presentation of self-online (consistent presentation of self, inconsistent presentation of self and Identity performance); Self and Identity utilisation online (playing with identity as freedom, playing with identity as a blank slate, playing with identity as an enabler of transgressive behaviour); and Constructing Identity and presenting self (Utilising Identity online and presenting and performing self-online). These themes and sub-themes are crucial to the focus of this study as they explored and analysed the representation of self among peers using social media. Findings and discussions revealed that the accessibility of social media influences the extent to which young people can utilise, construct and present their self and Identity online. Closely aligned with young people's prolific use of social media, these themes and sub-themes revealed that oftentimes, the presentation of self and Identity online is determined by the expectations of peers and the freedom afforded by social media use. In other words, the ability to control the presentation of self and Identity through features and affordances of social media use impacts behavioural construction which can encourage and influence the perpetration of transgressive behaviour.

Finally, the following themes and sub-themes also identified and discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 further revealed the role social media plays in the influence of transgressive behaviours. These themes and sub-themes include - Social media and escalation of peer conflict online (cyberbullying and peer misunderstanding); Features and affordances of social media implicated conflict (images and videos, comments and tags, and location setting); Dangers of

harmful content online (exposure to harmful content and addictive online video gaming); and Connecting social media and transgressive behaviour (Features of social media implicated in transgressive behaviour and modelling transgressive behaviour online). These themes and sub-themes are also crucial to the overall focus of this study as they revealed that the use of social media platforms by young people is constantly made attractive and enjoyable through various features and affordances. Engagement with these features and affordances such as likes, comments, live streaming, tags, speed in delivery of actions, and ease of access, play a contributing and significant role in the origination and further escalation of online conflicts to offline environments. Thus, behavioural construction some of which can be transgressive can be modelled through engagement with multiple social media platforms where learning is not strictly intimate but involves a vast range of general and extensive social interactions and experiences.

Therefore, with continuous reflection on the research question, aim and objectives, the above themes and subthemes identified and discussed in this study provided insight into the role of social media use and its influence on the construction of transgressive behaviour among young people. As demonstrated, it is not necessarily the presence of social media that raises the concern for transgressive behaviours but its use and navigation by young people and to an extent their existing offline behaviours.

7.3 Summary of key findings

The results and understanding that emerged from this study show that social media use among online peer relations, in several ways, influences transgressive behaviours among young people in Nottingham. These are explored in the following section.

Firstly, young people identified likes, comments, tags, location settings, video streaming and image and video sharing as specific social media features that magnify online threats, increasing the likelihood of offline violence and transgressive behaviour. They emphasised that the public, quantifiable and easily accessible affordance of these features on social media amplifies the intensity of online conflict. Thus, social networking platforms provide the space and environment for new and existing offline conflicts to be planned and perpetrated online with the possibility of offline escalation or retaliation among young people. In keeping with the findings of previous research, this study acknowledges that young people in Nottingham can use social media and its features to heighten conflict and increase the potential for a subsequent offline escalation among peers (Elsaesser et al., 2021; Goldsmith and Wall, 2022;

Nesi et al., 2018). It was noted that the number of social media followers joining and witnessing a conflict as it unfolds is a crucial factor in how a social media conflict heightens and escalates offline. Thus, consistent with other research, in the case of comments on social media, it was expressed that sometimes young people desire to seek thrills, pleasure and respect and that these desires, together with certain features on social media, can sometimes influence the decisions of young people to engage and perpetrate transgressive behaviours (Elsaesser et al., 2021; Sherman et al., 2016). As such, findings here indicate that young people who would usually not be confident about starting a physical conflict offline would be more confident about expressing transgressive behaviours online with the aid of social media features and affordances. Thus, once conflict has started on social media, the identified features of social media in this thesis can heighten the conflict and increase the potential for a subsequent escalation offline.

Secondly, participants expressed awareness that how some young people view themselves is often based on how other peers perceive them to be. In line with earlier studies, it was also noted that social media platforms afford young people the freedom to experiment with Identity, thereby encouraging flexibility in the formation and utility of their Identity online (Fullwood, 2015; Fullwood et al., 2016; Robards and Lincoln, 2017). This means that young people are constantly exposed to multiple mirrors of interactions, perceptions, social comparisons and judgments of their close peers, family, and strangers alike with their social media networks' continuous growth and utility. As such, some young people freely select the best information to share with their peers or opt for a type of self-representation that they perceive will win approval and increase popularity among peers and others online because they care how others perceive them to be, which in turn creates a perceived identity for that young person. This finding is consistent with previous research in noting the selective approach of social media users to presenting Identity (Bailey et al., 2020; Marwick and Boyd, 2010; Nguyen and Barbour, 2017).

Thirdly, it was discovered that learning is a daily, constant, and regular experience for young people and that learning among young people does not necessarily always have a fixed setting or location, as learning of any kind takes place in both online and offline environments. Therefore, as an extension to Sutherland's (1939) limited approach, which was before the emergence of social media, as learning occurs today, young people are exposed to and have access to multiple social media platforms, where learning is not strictly intimate but involves a vast range of general and extensive social interactions and experiences. In other words,

although Sutherland's analysis may have been suitable for the time, the continuous growth of social media has changed the learning process. This creates an understanding and awareness among young people of online and offline materials that they are regularly exposed to, such as violent video gaming and instances of social media algorithms suggesting contents that encourage suicide, obsessive eating, bullying and aggression in a subtle manner. Again, contrary to Matsueda and Lanfear (2020), it was revealed that regardless of whether a young person has had multiple exposures to transgressive-related content online, one single exposure to such content can influence a young person to perpetrate transgressive behaviours depending on other surrounding factors.

Findings also note the continuous cycle of distressing and offensive behaviours among young people in Nottingham, as peer relations and offline behaviours also influence how young people use social media. As such, findings are broadly in line with earlier studies (Bandura, 1961; Nodeland and Morris, 2020; Sutherland, 1939) that note that through interactions with others, close peers and strangers, young people are capable of constructing and reconstructing their Identity and also learning the behaviour, values, attitudes, methods and motives to become offenders from their online and offline environment. However, consistent with other research (Baek, 2018; Dearden and Parti, 2021), this study highlighted that some young people are usually capable of exercising self-control and making their own free and rational choices. In essence, these young people can decide to copy or not copy certain online and offline behaviours instead of imitating every observed behaviour on impulse, including learned transgressive behaviour.

Furthermore, an unexpected finding highlighted that the fear of feeling lonely and missing out is a critical factor in how young people use social media to relate and engage with peers online and offline. This fear of social exclusion and reluctance to be the odd one out sometimes influences how they use social media. It also influences and encourages young people to express inconsistent representations of self while trying to keep up with the self-presentation of their peers online. In keeping with the findings of previous research, young people described a demand for peer expectations, social comparisons, and a sense of belonging (Fuchs, 2017; Jhangiani et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2021) when connecting and interacting with peers online (Nesi, Choukas-Bradley, and Prinstein 2018a, 2018b; Salmivalli, 2010). They also describe feeling a sense of personal responsibility when witnessing transgressive behaviours perpetrated against a member of a friendship circle. Consistent with previous research (Cohen-Almagor, 2018; Seo et al., 2014), young people's need to belong has been shown to

predict their use of social media and their willingness to engage in collective actions. As such, it was noted that the fear of feeling lonely and this sense of responsibility sometimes determines or influences how young people use social media and respond to and defend one another from any appearance of danger or trouble outside a peer group.

Taking the social power of popular peers into consideration, and how this could be used negatively to influence other peers against each other, some young people also preferred to look the other way from aggressive peer interaction. This means that some young people would typically weigh up the dangers and risk of being victims themselves, should they decide to oppose and report the transgressive behaviours of their peers, which tends to affect the nature of their peer relationship. Nonetheless, findings also discovered that sometimes, the type and level of aggressive, offensive, and distressing behaviour displayed by peers and the Identity of the victim in some cases and the fear of missing out are likely determinants in a young person's subsequent attitude to such behaviour.

Finally, this study demonstrates that it is not necessarily the existence of social media that raises the concern for transgressive behaviours but its use by young people and to an extent their existing offline behaviours. These experiences therefore appear to fluctuate and vary from person to person. It was expressed that due to the negative online experiences faced by many, some young people are now cautious and guarded with how they use social media as they believe it is an illusion of a private space lacking adequate safety mechanisms to protect young people from various transgressive offences such as cyberbullying, abuse, harassment, stalking online as well as from escalating into the real world. Undoubtedly, young people's navigation of online platforms to discover themselves, build relationships and connect with people can be viewed as an intricate journey of daily living involving many aspects of self-discovery. It is important to mention that much of the influence on transgressive behaviour stems from the pressure of peer groups, the formation and development of individual Identity and self, and exposure to harmful and inappropriate materials online. Overall, the individual shared and collective experiences of young people's use of social media and its influence on transgressive behaviour were valuable contributions of this study.

The findings in this study do not address and engage with structural intersectional issues. According to Crenshaw (2013), intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a specific individual or group. This creates overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. Today's sociologists now consider a wider range of categories in their intersectional approach,

including age, religion, culture, ethnicity, ability, deprivation, social exclusion and physical appearance, in addition to race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality (Crenshaw, 2013). Despite the importance of intersectional concerns in academic research, this study focused primarily on analysing the use of social media among young male and female individuals aged 18 to 25 years and its impact on transgressive behaviour. It should be noted that the sample utilised in this study was not stratified to account for intersectional issues such as race, class, religion, ethnicity, deprivation and social exclusion. The focus of this study was instead narrowed down to delve deeper into the specific relationship between social media use and transgressive behaviours among young people, without becoming overwhelmed by the complexities of intersecting social issues. This measure allowed for a more focused investigation, making it easier to identify trends, patterns of social media engagement and correlations directly related to the research question, making the research process more straightforward than addressing how those behaviours intersect with social inequalities. Taking this approach, has also enabled findings from this study to offer more actionable, recommendations and interventions for addressing the impact of social media on transgressive behaviours in Nottingham without needing to account for systemic inequalities. Consequently, the study was conducted based on the available data, aiming to derive understanding from those individuals most knowledgeable about the subject matter.

Nevertheless, the analysis in this study points to a need for more research, in particular research that examines in more detail the influence of transgressive behaviour on specific social media use, specific social media platforms, and the fear of missing out among peers. This will provide a richer and fuller understanding of specific social media activities, behaviours, and platforms that need stricter intervention measures, immensely benefiting future research in this field and parents, carers, schools, and policymakers.

7.4 Research limitations and future research

In this section, the researcher examines a crucial part of this study: its methodological limitations. Despite the significance of this study's findings and contributions to youth violence, I acknowledge limitations that may affect its results and areas of future research.

My intention was not to make generalisable claims but to develop knowledge and understanding of the relationship between young people's use of social media and offline violence among peers. The analytic focus in the present study was on cases where the specific use of social media instigates or encourages offline violence to identify how the use of social

media might be addressed in violence prevention online and offline. One limitation faced with the qualitative design of this study was that this research adopted a purposive sampling method. As the target population was small and specific, this study aimed to capture underlying reasons, patterns, motivations, and trends related to social media use and its influence on transgressive behaviours among young people. This study included young people from the Nottinghamshire Youth Commission in Nottingham, where participants were easily and readily accessible. The Nottinghamshire Youth Commission is ethnically diverse, and I gained the age range and gender balance in the data-gathering process, which was beneficial to this study. The rationale for this type of sampling was to enable the inclusion of participants aged 18 - 25 years who represented a broad range of views in Nottingham that were easily and readily accessible for my study.

Notwithstanding the apparent bias with purposive sampling (Kolb, 2012), this method can be applied to a different population group with similar demographics and, as such, has some applicability in a broader scope. Nonetheless, a random probability sampling method could have been used to give every member of the target population an equal chance of inclusion and access to participants who are representative of my target population, thereby aiding richer results. As participants were self-selected from the target population, study results may be more challenging to generalise to the larger population in the UK (Mansell et al., 2004). As such, there is the potential that different outcomes might have been achieved with a much larger sample of participants and the adoption of random probability sampling. Thus, the experiences of aggression, threats and transgressive behaviours on social media in this study may not necessarily represent the general views of young people in the UK. Caution should be employed when applying findings to other cities, as results may differ depending on the researcher, participants, setting, and context (Hannes, 2011).

Another potential limitation was the minority and majority influence, permitting participants to clarify individual opinions and to share and compare their ideas to those of other participants (Acocella, 2012; Morgan, 2002). This was prevalent during the focus group discussions where, on occasions, participants altered their views with the knowledge that the researcher and other participants in the group were observing them. According to Acocella (2012), the mere presence of individuals within a group setting may restrain a participant's ability to divulge their genuineness of opinion. This phenomenon may result in the individual providing responses that align more closely with socially desirable expectations, driven by a fear of deviating from the group norm or facing social censure. For example, during one of the focus group

discussions, participant 11 shared a view contrary to that of the rest of the group and later retracted that response to agree with other participants in the group. There may have been several reasons behind this. Firstly, this participant may know some of the other participants in the group and may have felt more comfortable being on the same page as the others. Secondly, it is also possible that Participant 11 thought I was interested in a unanimous response and did not feel comfortable being the one with a different viewpoint. Nonetheless, this experience could have affected the richness of the data as some information from Participant 11 that may have been valuable to this research would have been missed.

To address some of the limitations and ensure that all participants in the data collection process had an equal opportunity to contribute to this study, I adopted some strategies. As a researcher, openness was vital in recognising the value of each participant's contribution to the study as a collective and shared contribution that captures an underlying experience of social media use and its relation to transgressive behaviour. I also gave participants multiple opportunities to express additional viewpoints that may have been overpowered by a dominant participant or multiple participants speaking simultaneously. Likewise, participants were encouraged to email the researcher after the conclusion of the session with further contributions they could not express to the group but thought to be important for my study.

Notwithstanding, although this study explored the general aspects of social media use among young people, I acknowledge that a focused study on the characteristics of specific features and affordances of SNS and its direct or indirect influence on transgressive behaviour among young people can be further explored. At the same time, participants from this current study comprised young males and females from mixed ethnic groups. Thus, it is suggested that future research can explore the use of specific SNS by a single gender and specified ethnic group and its influence on transgressive behaviours. These studies can encourage tailored response(s) to conflict or harm among young people before and after its escalation.

I believe the current study provides valuable insights for academics and practitioners. However, these limitations make it difficult to claim that this study thoroughly and extensively describes a qualitative discovery. This indicates an evident limitation that, if applied, could have further reinforced the quality of data collection and analysis in this study.

7.5 Contributions

This thesis offers general insights and knowledge of the academic literature. It significantly contributes to the existing literature by offering original perspectives of paramount importance.

A contribution to youth, social media, and crime studies

A significant contribution of this study was to examine the role social media plays in the influence of transgressive behaviours among young people and their peers in Nottingham. Much of previous research (Brookes, 2021; Herrenkohl et al., 2000; Ling et al., 2019; Smith, 2014) has focused on background factors such as economic, biological, psychological, and social in investigating transgressive behaviours among young people. This research focuses on the digital environment and experiences of young people's social media use to understand its influence on online and offline transgressive behaviours. This is significant as young people's prolific use of social media and their offline violent transgressive behaviours sometimes aided by the features and affordances of social media in Nottingham are underreported. Notably, previous research (Goldsmith and Wall, 2022; Reyes et al., 2023; Patton et al., 2013; Helbing et al., 2015; Elsaesser et al., 2021) across different contexts has suggested that the impact social media has on transgressive behaviours among young people with real life/offline communities may be complex, dynamic, and incessant. Thus, this study acknowledges this complexity and further notes that it is not so much the presence or existence of these social media platforms that is the concern in Nottingham but how their use can trigger online threats that escalate to offline transgressive behaviours among young people. This is one of the few studies that have attempted to investigate the relationship between young people's social media use and transgressive behaviours in Nottingham.

Adopting multiple qualitative methods involving semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions is also significant to this study's contribution because it provided opportunities to develop new individual and collective understandings of how young people's use of social media and peer relations influence online and offline transgressive behaviours in Nottingham. The application of this method for this study involved an opportunity to challenge already existing narratives of similar studies across other parts of the UK (e.g., Donato et al., 2022; Goldsmith and Wall, 2022; Irwin-Rogers et al., 2018; Henry and Powell, 2015; Huber 2022; Powell et al. 2018). This study, therefore, contributes to the knowledge of social media as a tool for learning and escalating conflict among young people in Nottingham.

In addition, earlier studies (Rokven et al., 2017; Weerman, 2011; Wood et al., 2023) note that offline peer influence was key in anti-social and criminal behaviours among adolescents and

young people. The results of this study go beyond these previous findings by demonstrating that fear of being lonely and missing out also mediates a path between young people's social media use and its influence on transgressive behaviours. On the one hand, connecting to SNS to increase one's sense of belonging can increase the feeling of utility satisfaction and well-being (Section 5.4.4). On the other hand, young people's prolific use of social media makes them more aware of other ways their peers are connecting in other online environments (Servidio, 2023). Consequently, instead of satisfying the need to belong, this exposure and increased use of SNS may also ironically increase young people's perception of loneliness and missing out on aspects of their peers' lives they deem relevant despite their presence and interaction on social media. Therefore, as discovered in this research, this fear of feeling lonely and missing out sometimes drives and encourages young people's prolific use of social media, ironically increasing the identified fear of missing out. Consequently, their prolific use and the continuous feeling of absence from their peers' social experiences may lead to problematic smartphone use (Servidio et al., 2008; Servidio, 2023) and problematic use of SNS (Cheng et al., 2021; Ho et al., 2017) such as depression and anxiety, subsequently resulting in social media behaviour addiction (Andreassen et al., 2017; Ponnusamy et al., 2020; Servidio, 2023) and thus potentially influencing transgressive behaviours.

It is the contribution of this study that if not effectively managed (Frost and Rickwood, 2017; Webster et al., 2021; Vannucci et al., 2020), this negativity or problematic use of social media may lead the way for young people to experience mental, physical, and social problems subsequently influencing transgressive behaviours. In keeping with the findings of the studies mentioned above, this thesis enriches the study on the long-term effects of social media addiction and the fear of missing out on criminal behaviour among young people, thus contributing to the ongoing study of youth, social media, and crime.

7.6 Research implications and considerations for practice

This study aims to raise awareness of how young people use social media platforms and how this can influence online and offline transgressive behaviours among peers in Nottingham. It is the hope that this study has gone some way in addressing this knowledge gap. In answering and discussing the research question 'What role does social media play in the influence of transgressive behaviours and vice versa among young people in Nottingham,' three research implications and future considerations have been made based upon the findings of this study. These implications and considerations, as discussed below, focus on provisions for policy,

policing, SNS, parents/guardians and young people in the hopes that they will easily identify and prevent the escalation of transgressive behaviours online and offline and encourage better online safety and protection for young people.

7.6.1 Policy, policing, and social networking sites

With the continuous growth of online spaces, SNS seem to indirectly encourage these transgressive behaviours due to the absence of tougher measures on social media sites to clamp down on online harm against its users. Therefore, consideration should be given to the setting up of an independent regulatory body responsible for monitoring online content creations, which would ensure the protection and safety of young people from the effects and impact of harmful content and activities. For instance, early warning signs of increased conflict among peers online can be identified and picked up by assigned or designated youth workers and the police in those communities. For various communities in different cities, these designated authorities would be familiar with codes, words or slang used by young people within social media environments to indicate the threat or occurrence of transgressive behaviour. This will enable authorities to target perpetrators and pick up triggering incidents of conflict or harm amongst young people online easily and efficiently. Acting on this information can attempt to reduce and prevent the risk of escalated online tension or imminent conflict among young people offline. In doing so, no doubt there will be a need to ensure a balance between people's right to privacy and freedom of speech and safeguarding young people online. This consideration implies that there is a need for the UK government to ensure the availability of the necessary funding and resources to perform or carry out this level of observance by youth workers and the police in their respective communities.

- **Online Safety Act (2023)**

With the UK Government's recently passed Online Safety Act of 2023, which seeks to protect children and young people from harmful content online, this study notes that more can be considered to enhance the effectiveness of its enforcement. There is a need to develop an effective, responsive, and transparent assessment criterion for social media platforms. These platforms should also regularly conduct risk assessments to ensure their existing protections meet regulatory criteria. This study also suggests that the Online Safety Act (2023) includes the prohibition of disinformation, misleading content, and false news that young people are regularly exposed to online. With their prolific social media use, young people revealed that they are also subjected to the influence of misrepresentations and misleading content on SNS,

much of which they are unable to verify. In practice, all social media platforms can develop an online watch program to help limit and remove the visibility of disinformation and misleading content. Likewise, an online agency within the police force or specific youth organisations such as the NYC or the VRU could be set up across various communities in different cities. This online agency would be responsible for overseeing the offline effect of adverse social media experiences among young people aged 18 – 25 years. This is vital because when content of this nature spreads and becomes viral through online engagement, there can be a cumulative effect of harm on its young users.

- **Social media platform affordances**

In addition, SNSs acting as a functional and active observer can implement systematic reminders of their position towards transgressive content, behaviour and material on their platforms, thereby initiating the process of their duty to limit harm online. In other words, SNS should not only explicitly identify and state in their terms and conditions the characteristics of transgressive behaviours, content and materials online, but users should also be prompted as a way of a reminder or a nudge, of its characteristics in the form of random online adverts or notifications that people can see regularly while on social media platforms. This will enable users to be reminded of and easily identify behaviours, actions and contents that fall within this category and report them accordingly. This is important because many young social media users are unaware of behaviours, actions, materials, and contents that are transgressive, illegal and breach social media community guidelines and, as such, should be reported.

Authenticating the age of social media users online remains a complex challenge that requires thoughtful considerations and solutions. SNS can invest in artificial intelligence models to help estimate the age of new and old account users who are perceived to be underage. For example, using a face-based age prediction technology, Instagram is developing technology-driven ways to bring age verification tools to its platform. This is an approach other social media networks are encouraged to implement as the continued exploration of relevant and accessible age assurance measures should clarify that the account holder's self-declared age is genuine.

Also, with various social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, there should be transparency to all algorithm feeds, showing users content and activities from accounts of friends and connections they only follow in chronological order rather than algorithmically selected content. This study acknowledges that this suggestion is counter to

the business model of most social media platforms and that Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have moved away from chronological feeds. However, this study suggests that restoring chronological feeds to user accounts can limit the appearance of multiple exposures to transgressive behaviours online. The findings and themes discussed in this study show that while young people are prolific social media users, they enjoy interacting with, sharing experiences and matching lifestyles with peers online. It was also disclosed that algorithms on these platforms, directly and indirectly, suggest less suitable content that they may find inappropriate, disinteresting, and sometimes harmful, making scrolling addictive and exhausting. In other words, young people who do not want to view certain types of legal but potentially upsetting and harmful material must be allowed to reduce its appearance on their feeds.

In addition, young people prefer to engage directly with peers and connections they know and follow; this way, they can safely compare lifestyles to a controlled and select group of people. Again, this encourages less exposure to inappropriate or unsuitable materials likely to cause harm or influence transgressive behaviours from other user accounts. However, this study also acknowledges that young people can occasionally search for activities and content on an explore or discover page on social media that matches their interests outside of their selected feed. This is one way young people utilise social media. Nonetheless, this study suggests this approach because continuous exposure to an extensive range of online behaviours and social media content can heighten the anxiety surrounding the fear of missing out and feeling lonely among young people, thereby influencing their Identity and behavioural construction. Young people may feel social pressure, causing psychological distress due to inconsistency between imposed ideals and their egos (Oswald et al., 2020). Again, consideration of this suggestion will fundamentally increase transparency and emphasise social media providers' duty of care and stance in safeguarding their users from harm online.

Furthermore, as findings from this study emphasise, features such as comments, sharing inappropriate images and videos, tagging and live streaming on social media can significantly contribute to the escalation of conflict. One potential mitigation strategy is regulating or moderating comments, tags, and content sharing. Alternatively, disabling these features on one's social media profile may also be helpful. For example, with Facebook, this study suggests that features such as the number of likes and reactions can be disabled. Young people have noted that these features create a culture of comparisons and social validation among its users, leading to unhealthy online and offline habits. To reduce social media

pressure among its users, in 2019, Instagram trailed this suggestion (Wallace and Buil, 2021), where users were offered the option to hide the number of likes received on either specific posts or their whole feed in the app. Therefore, this study suggests that users are given the option to automatically disable all comments for multiple posts or contents on their profile feed and not just individual posts. This is to protect the mental health and safety of its young users from offensive and transgressive comments online that can also escalate to violence offline.

Correspondingly, social networking providers can employ the notion of 'designing out cybercrime' (Wood et al., 2023) by eliminating the opportunity to use certain features to start and escalate harm. To illustrate, location setting is used to stalk and harass social media users on Snapchat. One possible solution to address the harm caused by Snapchat's location tracking feature is to modify the app to send notifications to the devices it accesses. This would alert users who may not know their location is being tracked. Additionally, the app should inform users that the location feature will trigger a notification on the accessed device. Introducing this notification and reminding Snapchat users before they use the feature would help prevent users from secretly tracking, stalking and harassing others. Likewise, in protecting children and young people from harmful content and activity online, SNS can review their use of higher-risk features, such as live streaming or private messaging, by requesting approval from an adult via the family centre supervision tool.

These suggestions imply that consideration needs to be given to how young people can access SNS, its features and affordances, that they are protected from harm and that online transgressive behaviours are mitigated. As discussed in previous chapters, almost any offline behaviour can be performed online. As such, there must be effective collaborations between youth workers, the police, and any other necessary agency so that transgressive behaviours are recorded appropriately to inform future initiatives and interventions. These frontline services should better understand how social media features and affordances influence transgressive behaviours among young people. With these collaborations, critical lessons learnt should be shared across multi-agency units so that the most effective responses to transgressive behaviours online and offline can be identified and meaningful interventions put in place. These provisions are important to tackle transgressive behaviours across multiple social media platforms and prevent young people from being able to exploit gaps that allow the continuous perpetration of transgressive actions.

7.6.2 Young people as users

The role of young people in the influence of transgressive behaviours online must be considered, as this influence is also made up of individual behaviours. As discussed above, meaningful and effective intervention requires a multi-agency collaborative approach. Social networking operators cannot rely on technical solutions alone to prevent behavioural issues among young people.

According to the findings in this study, there should be more access to offline structured and supervised activities in youth facilities that will provide a safe alternative to spending a large part of their time on social media. For example, youth facilities can provide structured skills for learning workshops, team-building sporting activities and mentorship forums. This can encourage and foster better relationships and communication skills; help build self-confidence and self-esteem and also help young people learn how to resolve conflict without recourse to transgressive behaviours online and offline. Young people should be encouraged to deter from enabling the spread of these transgressive behaviours online by choosing not to trigger, share or produce harmful materials and report these kinds of behaviours appropriately. Young people who are experiencing or have experienced online abuse, feeling suicidal and depressed from social media conflict should have somebody reliable and easily accessible to turn to for help and support when needed. The role of this specialist support giver must be identified to encourage young people to get help when needed. For example, an online resource run by youth organisations such as the Nottinghamshire Youth Commission (NYC) and the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) in Nottinghamshire. The lack of clarity or a vague description of what support can be provided by these organisations will deter young people from reporting incidents and seeking help. As such, an effective preventative response such as one-to-one counselling sessions should involve working with young victims of transgressive behaviours to help them overcome the experience without seeking revenge.

The younger people use social media, the more they are exposed to harmful materials and positive and valuable opportunities. Risks and opportunities are intrinsically connected. As the world is heading for a more digital age, the solution is to provide more education around safe social media use instead of preventing them from using these social media platforms. This suggestion implies that youth support workers, schools, parents, and guardians should help young people in and out of school think systematically about their influence on another young person's online and offline behaviour. This help can be rendered through offline local

community programs or online engaging workshops tailored to parents and their young ones. Young people also need to take time to think about the consequences of personal actions versus group actions and be able to make an informed and enlightened decision on whether to participate in transgressive acts void of fear and rejection from peers. There is also the need to educate and enlighten young people on what harm and safety look like online and offline. This will enable a young person to easily identify transgressive behaviours online or offline and then take appropriate steps to report such behaviour.

7.6.3 Parents, carers, and guardians

This study suggests that parents, guardians, and professionals working with young people in any capacity be provided with sufficient, regular, and updated training on social media use and an up-to-date understanding of transgressive behaviours online and offline. This awareness is crucial as it will help highlight the importance of overseeing young people's social media activities and establish meaningful, long-term interventions in Nottingham. Therefore, all stakeholders and relevant enforcement authorities such as the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) should continue to develop appropriate public and private projects, planned initiatives and campaigns that would seek to educate concerned parents and guardians on the role of social media on transgressive behaviours among young people.

Parents and guardians must openly communicate about using social media appropriately with young people. Whenever possible, parents and guardians should also use these platforms themselves so that they can provide adult supervision when needed. This degree of adult supervision may be an awareness of how young people under their care use social media. For instance, to check on a child's safety online, parental supervision tools such as family pairing and family centres are currently available on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok for users between 13 and 17 years old. This tool allows parents to link their social media accounts with their children's social media accounts to control privacy and content settings. It allows parents and guardians to monitor and manage app usage and screen time, direct messages, set restrictions, see who they follow and who follows them back and control comment filters. Consequently, it is possible that more features can be added to these tools to provide options for concerned parents and guardians to pair their social media accounts with young people considered in this study to monitor potential abuse or escalation of harm to their young ones online.

- **Safety online and charitable organisations**

Currently, the findings of this study align with the provisions set out by the NSPCC and the UK Safer Internet Centre advising parents, carers and guardians to make informed decisions on keeping their young ones safe online. This online safety advice includes information on starting a conversation with a child about online safety, reporting online safety concerns, helping them manage their mental health and setting up parental controls. Parents, carers, and guardians can get advice and support for transgressive behaviours such as sexual assault, inappropriate and explicit content, online abuse, sharing nudes and semi-nude images or videos, cyberbullying, criminal exploitation, and exposure to harmful content such as suicide content.

In addition, this online safety advice expressly provides parents, carers, and guardians with specific information on staying safe on popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Twitter. This information promotes discussions on the risks of social comparisons, the addictive focus on likes and comments, the age ratings and features of social media platforms, and safety and privacy settings.

Therefore, the continued targeted support, guidance and relevant training for parents should be made available by providing more effective parenting and community programmes to all those with direct contact with children and young people where appropriate in Nottingham. These programs can be carried out at physical locations to promote community support or should be highly engaging if conducted online to retain the attention and commitment of both parents and young people. Likewise, these measures should be available through health care centres, schools, youth centres, community libraries and other local settings where services are essential within the community. This provision should not be limited to specific geographical locations or genders but should be readily available to any family needing support. This consideration may blur the line between privacy and supervision; nonetheless, well-thought-out provisions to enable parents and guardians to keep their young ones safe from online and offline harm could prevent distorting the line between privacy and supervision.

7.7 Reflection on completing this study

While research studies are essential, Shah (2006) points out that sharing the experiences involved in the research process is also essential. The motivation for this study developed from volunteering at various organisations focusing on the development of young people. With this experience, I developed an interest in exploring and understanding links between online

and offline transgressive behaviours among young people and how conflict among online peers escalates into retaliation offline.

I had several reflections in mind as this study was approaching its completion. The experiences at the onset of the journey were exciting and, at the same time, stressful. The excitement was because there was an opportunity to study a research area that I was passionate about, and I was looking forward to all the discoveries the study would achieve. At the same time, the onset of this study was stressful as my supervisory team was changed twice in the first year and a subsequent time in my third year. This undoubtedly affected my research's timeline and trajectory as it commenced. Subsequently, another change of supervisory team also took place in my final writing-up year of study.

Notwithstanding this, I regained the excitement and confidence in the study after meeting with my new and current supervisory team, who have supported me immensely throughout this research. It was a wonderful opportunity to carry out this study. One of the most rewarding experiences for me was sitting with young people and listening to their views on the influence of social media on transgressive behaviours. The other exciting and rewarding experience in conducting this study was analysing the data. I enjoyed discovering themes from the collected data, drawing correlations, and making meanings of those identified themes to answer the research question.

I encountered a few challenges in completing this study, including working on my PhD during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This period of my study was physically and mentally challenging as it caused a delay in obtaining ethical approval from the university, which inherently delayed my data collection process. The pandemic also meant that I had limited or no access to physical interaction with other research students or the University premises, thereby leading to a struggle to work on my research in isolation from home. This period was undoubtedly challenging as I managed to work through the pandemic with encouragement and support from my family and research supervisors.

Another challenge was securing interviews with young people (research participants) at a suitable time. I worked on the assumption that providing participants with a £10 Amazon gift card as an incentive would encourage prompt participation, but this was not the case. This challenge suggested that either young people were unsure of my research topic or my project information sheet needed additional information or context. It is also possible that their perspective on social media use and transgressive behaviour is limited, and they did not think

they could make any meaningful contribution to the research. I discussed this challenge with the Youth Commission workshop facilitator, who informed me that part of the reluctance was due to participants' other commitments in ongoing youth conferences and workshops. With this understanding, I persevered with hope until I could secure the interviews and focus groups with the participants.

Lastly, as someone hardworking and confident in my research skills, I found that on several occasions, I struggled to be confident in my abilities to conduct and complete this research when I had my first and second child. It felt like I was unprepared for life as a new mum and a student researcher. At times, I felt guilty, lacked self-confidence, and struggled to balance motherhood and academic research. I was encouraged to take one day at a time, and I was able to set realistic goals for myself and gradually worked my way into self-belief again.

Overall, this study has given me a richer awareness and understanding of young people's individual and collective use of social media and its relation to transgressive behaviours. Undertaking this study has been a valuable opportunity that has allowed me to gain a deeper appreciation for the importance of research. It has given me a fresh perspective and helped shape my views on the subject matter. Additionally, I have better understood philosophical stances and how they can inform our understanding of reality, change, and human behaviour. I further recognise the various paradigms that incorporates ontological, epistemological, and methodological perspectives, which has given me a strong foundation in research. My findings suggest that young people's use of social media can potentially impact their transgressive online and offline behaviours. The extent of these effects may depend on situational factors and an individual's self-control.

Despite these challenges, I am thankful for these experiences and having a supporting husband, colleagues, and supervisory team along my journey, as their constructive feedback allowed me to improve and learn. These experiences are necessary to shape me into the resilient individual I have become. I hope this study's findings will provide better prevention and intervention strategies that enable young people in Nottingham to feel safe online and offline. I am optimistic about this study's value for future research on youth crime and SNS. I hope this research topic will be further explored in the coming years, as the insights gained from this study are invaluable. It has been a pleasure to complete this study, and I look forward to seeing how it can contribute to the field in the future.

7.8 Chapter summary

This chapter has given a brief overview of the PhD study. This overview emphasised what this study set out to do, how this research was carried out and what this study found, and a summary of this study's key findings was presented. This overview captured the reality of young people's use of social media and how it influences transgressive behaviours among peers online and offline in Nottingham. Although the findings of this study are consistent with some previous research about young people and transgressive behaviour, nonetheless, the methodological research limitations were highlighted and discussed. Following this, the contribution to knowledge of this research was also discussed, as well as the practical research implications of this study.

Also, based on the findings of this study, three future suggestions and considerations were discussed, highlighting the implications of these considerations as they relate to transgressive behaviours and online safety among young people in Nottingham. These considerations focused on provisions for policy, policing, SNS, parents, guardians, and young people in the hopes that they will aid a better recognition and prevention of the escalation of transgressive behaviours online and offline and encourage better online safety and protection for young people.

Finally, at the conclusion of this study, I reflected on my course as a researcher and my journey in completing this study with discussions on my triumphs and challenges as a researcher.

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Glossary of terms

A brief description of the main social media sites addressed in this study is provided below.

Facebook is currently the world's largest and most high-profile social media platform. It started in 2004 as a website for Harvard College students but has now become a global platform. Facebook is now part of Meta Incorporation, which owns other popular platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and Threads. Users must provide personal information and upload a profile picture to join Facebook. They can then add friends to their accounts and share content and messages with them.

Twitter (now 'X') is a social media site where users post short messages called "tweets". Launched in 2006, it has over 541 million active users as of July 2023. Users create a profile with text and images and can follow one another. Unlike Facebook, Twitter allows users to use pseudonyms without revealing their identities. In October 2022, Elon Musk, the CEO of Tesla, purchased Twitter, and since then, it has undergone significant changes, including its rebranding as "X".

Instagram is a platform for social networking that allows businesses, influencers, and coaches to engage with their target audience. Introduced in 2010, it has become the most popular image-based social media platform, with over 2 billion monthly active users. Instagram's user base has grown steadily over the years, making it a dependable source of information for users to manage various aspects of their lives (Kerr et al., 2020; Rech and Wambach, 2016).

Snapchat is a social media application solely for mobile devices and enables users to share photos, videos, and text that disappear after a maximum of 10 seconds. It's an excellent way for brands to connect with younger audiences as it reaches 70% of people between the ages of 13 and 24, with a user base of 750 million.

TikTok, a popular social media application launched in 2016, prides itself on being the go-to place for short-form mobile videos. It aims to inspire creativity and bring joy to its users. With 1.2 billion monthly active users, TikTok's growth has been phenomenal. In just a year, the app became the fastest-growing app worldwide. Its focus on short-form videos with trendy audio and visuals has taken the world by storm, with other platforms trying to replicate its success.

YouTube is a video-sharing website that Google acquired in 2006. It was the first platform to offer online video streaming, helping commercial content providers combat internet piracy. Video bloggers can earn money through advertising and sponsored content. Brands can use YouTube to reach new audiences with engaging videos, including through YouTube Shorts, similar to TikTok. YouTube is a popular platform with 2.5 billion monthly active users, making it the second most popular platform.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Project Information Sheet

Title of study

The influence of social media on transgressive behaviour among young people in Nottingham, United Kingdom.

Invitation Paragraph

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study.

Before you decide whether to participate in this research study, you must understand your role and why the research is being done. Please take your time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. A member of the research team can be contacted if you would like more information or if you have questions on anything that is not clear.

Purpose and aim of study

The purpose of this research is to explore and understand the role and relationship between social media and online peer influence on anti-social behaviour among young people in Nottingham. This study will take into consideration young people's self-representation online and offline, social media activities and the physical expression of anti-social behaviour which aims to identify key knowledge gaps and the need for intervention. In effect, this research will seek to understand how young people's behaviour in Nottingham may be influenced by social media use.

This study involves semi-structured interviews followed by focus group discussions. In each case, the emphasis is on encouraging young people to share their experiences and thoughts on the role and relationship between social media and transgressive behaviour among young people in Nottingham.

Background

In recent years, the nature of young people's relationships with each other and technology has evolved due to the rapid increase of information and communications technology. Researchers have noted that virtual spaces (online social interactive platforms) tend to turn into threatening environments, where specific activities and online behaviours may trigger and increase the potential for deviant behaviour beyond online platforms among young people. There have also been cases involving groups of young people across the United Kingdom provoking each other on the Internet through music videos and social media posts, thus resulting in offline physical retaliations.

As a high percentage of young people in the United Kingdom now own smartphones and have access to social media platforms, studies show that parents, schools, enforcement authorities and the larger community remain concerned as to how peer-related activities on social media can influence young people's behaviour.

For this reason, I wish to explore how transgressive behaviour may be translated offline through social media use among young people in Nottingham.

Your participation

By participating in this study, you are helping to get a better understanding of how social media affects anti-social behaviour in young people in Nottinghamshire. As a young person, your input is valuable to this research project, and we hope you will continue to participate. However, it is important to note that you are under no obligation to take part and you can choose to withdraw your involvement in this study at any stage.

What does participation in this research mean for me?

If you consent, you will be invited to participate in an informal interview followed by a small and open focus group discussion. The informal interview will last about thirty to forty-five minutes, while the focus group discussion will last about thirty minutes to one hour. Details of the date, time and location will be provided to you in advance.

Your participation will involve answering questions about the use of social media, engagement with peers online and its influence on anti-social behaviour among young people in

Nottinghamshire, particularly how you present yourself and your identity online and how this relates to the rest of your life. Your participation aims to bring about a better understanding of the relationship between social media and anti-social behaviour, as such, I encourage you to be honest in your responses.

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, this research will be conducted online by making use of the Microsoft Teams video conferencing platform. The interview and focus group discussions will be recorded via notes as well as the Microsoft Teams video conferencing platform used. While audio and video will be recorded, this will subsequently be converted to an audio-only (MP3) file for storage and analysis, while the video file will be deleted. These notes and audio recordings will be stored securely and solely used for this research and will not be otherwise published except where separate permission has been granted to publish these recordings for other purposes.

Do I have to take part in this research?

It is completely up to you to decide whether to take part in this study. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a participant consent form before the interviews start. Taking part is entirely voluntary and refusal or withdrawal will involve no penalty or consequence, now or in the future.

Benefits of taking part in the project

Your participation will help discover and identify the role of social media on anti-social behaviour among young people in Nottingham.

The results of this study are further intended to assist policymakers, schools, parents, practitioners, enforcement authorities, community groups and researchers in developing online and offline intervention strategies for young people. Research results will be published in academic papers and presented at academic conferences.

As an incentive, participants will also receive a £10 Amazon Voucher. This incentive will be sent to each participant's contact email address upon completion of either the semi-structured interviews or focus groups.

Your identity and storage of information

Participant identification will be eliminated in this research by coding participant data to maintain anonymity, making use of pseudonyms in transcripts, data analysis and beyond, and ensuring that specific details that could make a participant identifiable (such as name, date of birth, location and other personal details) are altered. To eliminate the further possibility of identification of research participants, all generated data, findings and analysis will be stored securely and accessible only through password-protected files in a locked computer system to which only the researcher will have access. During and after data collection, confidentiality will be respected in all circumstances and participants will be duly informed should cases arise that could lead to a breach of confidentiality and information being revealed.

A transcript of the interview and focus group sessions in which all personal identity information has been altered or removed will be retained for a further two years after its use. Under the Freedom of Information Legalisation Act 2000, you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

What will happen to the results of this research?

At the end of the project, the researcher hopes to share the main findings and outcomes with academic audiences, practitioners and policymakers to benefit the wider community. Results will also be presented at conferences and written up in journal articles.

As results are normally presented in terms of groups of individuals, if any individual data are presented, the data will be anonymous, without any means of identifying the individuals and participants involved.

Who is funding this research?

This research is self-funded.

Ethical review and approval

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee, Leeds Beckett University, School of Social Sciences.

Support services

During the interview and focus group sessions, should any shared or disclosed information serve as a reminder of any traumatic experience or existing tensions among participants, concerned participants are encouraged to contact any of the following appropriate services for support:

- **Get Connected**

Support and signposting service for young people under 25

Telephone, email, text and web chat support <http://www.getconnected.org.uk/>

- **Bullying UK (part of Family Lives)**

Support for young people, parents, schools and adults regarding bullying

Tel: 0808 800 2222; www.bullying.co.uk

- **Kooth**

Free online support and counselling for young people; www.kooth.com

- **Youth**

Directory of free and confidential counselling, advice or information services

<http://www.youthaccess.org.uk/>

- **Young Minds**

Information on mental health and well-being for young people, parents and professionals <http://youngminds.org.uk/>

If needed, contact with the appropriate support services can be made before and after the interview and focus group sessions.

Who do I complain to if I am not happy about the study?

If you are not happy about any aspect of this study, please contact:

Dr. Christopher Till c.till@leedsbeckett.ac.uk; Tel: 0113 81 21886

Or

Dr. Katie Dhingra k.j.dhingra@leedsbeckett.ac.uk; Tel: 01138126730

Who do I contact for further information about the research?

For further information, please contact Hannah Fabiyi;

Email: t.fabiyi2844@student.leedsbeckett.ac.uk;

Tel: +44 7929 025 697

Thank you.

Appendix 2

Consent Form

Title of study

The influence of social media on transgressive behaviour among young people in Nottingham, United Kingdom.

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY IS VOLUNTARY

I, the under-assigned, confirm that (please tick the box as appropriate):

1	I have read and understood the information about the project as stated in the ProjectInformation Sheet dated [DD/MM/YY], or it has been read to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and myparticipation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I understand that I can refuse to answer questions and withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I would not be penalized for withdrawing, nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	I agree with the semi-structured interview/focus group being recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	I agree to maintain the confidentiality of the focus group discussions.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	I understand and agree that my anonymized information can be quoted and used in research outputs, publication, sharing and archiving as stated in the Project Information Sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	I understand that any personal information that can identify me - such as my name, and address, will be kept confidential and not shared with anyone other than the researcher.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	I permit the anonymized information I provide to be deposited in a data archive so that it may be used for future research.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	I agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Participant name:

Signature: _____

Date _____

Researcher/Interviewer name:

Signature: _____

Date _____

Please retain a copy of this consent form.

For information please contact:

Name of researcher: Hannah Fabiyi;

Email: t.fabiyi2844@student.leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Appendix 3

Research Interview Questions

1. What are your interests/hobbies?
2. What do you think your interests/hobbies say about you as a person?
3. In what way does social media accommodate your interests/hobbies?
4. How many social media platforms do you use, and which do you visit the most?
5. How often do you access your social media platform(s) per day/week?
6. What do you enjoy about engaging with or using social media?
7. In what way do your interests/hobbies affect how you use social media?
8. What do you not like about using social media or what difficulties have you encountered using social media?
9. What kind of things do you learn from using social media?
10. Do you copy or imitate the things you learn from using social media?
11. Do you keep the same friends online and offline?
12. What do you look out for when making friends?
13. Describe your relationship/engagement with your peers like online and offline.
14. Do you keep the same representation of yourself/identity online and offline?
15. Do you think some young people represent themselves differently online and offline?
16. How does this affect your perception of their identity/behaviour (if in any way)?
17. How do you think social media may have influenced your behaviour online and offline?
18. What do you consider as violent or aggressive behaviour?
19. How can you tell when someone is being aggressive to you online and offline?
20. In your experience of using social media, have you experienced any violent/aggressive behaviour toward yourself or others online?
21. How do you think these violent/transgressive behaviours online and offline may link together?
22. Can you explain what the motivation behind such behaviour(s) may be?
23. How has this experience affected your engagement with/use of social media?
 - your own offline and online behaviour?
 - your relationship with your peers online and offline?

24. Can you share whether (and how) your behaviour and use of social media has changed since you got older?
25. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix 4

Focus Group Discussion Questions

1. How did you first hear about social media?
 - What encouraged you to join various social media platforms?
2. What transgressive trends have you observed happening on/via social media?
 - Is there any trend that stands out to you?
 - Are these trends old or new?
 - Does this affect how you use social media and how?
3. What factors influence your decisions and your behaviour on and off social media as a young person and what kind of things do not?
 - Do you feel free (or pressured) to post whatever you like online?
 - Do people's perceptions of you cause you to take any action online and offline?
 - Would it be any different if it were strangers as opposed to friends and family?
4. How important is belonging to a friendship group/circle as a young person?
 - What are the positives and negatives?
 - How important are shared interests, values and beliefs among you and your peers?
 - Does this relationship determine how you use social media?
5. Do young people keep the same identity online and offline?
 - Do you think they should? Why?
6. What words, phrases, images, or behaviours come to your mind when you think of youth violence?
 - Why?
 - Are there certain transgressive behaviours that would occur offline without any social media influence? Are there certain transgressive behaviours that are enabled by social media?
7. What encourages transgressive behaviours online and offline amongst young people?
 - How do you deal with transgressive behaviour targeted at you, your peers, and strangers online and offline?
8. Do you feel the Internet is a safe space for you as a young person? And what do you do in this safe space, hide, explore, etc?
9. Should the use of social media be a cause for concern for young people?
10. Suppose you were in charge and could make one change that would make the offline and online space safer, what would you do?

Appendix 5

Demographic Information of Participants (18 – 25 years)

Young Person	Age	Gender	Length of Interview
Participant 1	22	Male	00h.45m
Participant 2	20	Female	00h.50m
Participant 3	20	Female	00h.45m
Participant 4	19	Female	00h.40m
Participant 5	21	Female	00h.46m
Participant 6	21	Male	00h.45m
Participant 7	22	Female	00h.55m
Participant 8	20	Female	00h.45m
Participant 9	21	Female	00h.30m
Participant 10	21	Male	00h.50m
Participant 11	21	Male	00h.47m
Participant 12	20	Male.	00h.35m
Participant 13	22	Male	00h.51m
Participant 14	20	Female	00h.55m
Participant 15	21	Male	00h.40m
Participant 16	23	Male	00h.50m

Participant 17	23	Female	00h.47m
Participant 18	21	Male	00h.50m
Participant 19	22	Female	00h.45m
Participant 20	20	Male	00h.56m
Participant 21	19	Female	00h.39m
Participant 22	20	Female	00h.42m
Participant 23	22	Female	00h.44m
Participant 24	23	Female	00h.43m
Participant 25	22	Male	00h.45m