Revista Latina de Comunicación Social
ISSN 1138-5820 / No. 84, 1-21.
https://www.doi.org/10.4185/rlcs-2026-2572

Going Viral to Engage: Social Media and Adolescent Mental Health Literacy

Ferran Lalueza
Open University of Catalonia. Spain.
flalueza@uoc.edu

Eulalia Hernández Encuentra
Open University of Catalonia. Spain.
ehernandez@uoc.edu

Mercè Boixadós
Open University of Catalonia. Spain.
mboixados@uoc.edu

The findings presented here are part of the eHealthLit4Teen project, funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation (Ref. PID2021-127129OB-I00). September 1, 2022, to February 28, 2026.

How to cite this article / Standard reference:

Lalueza, Ferran; Hernández Encuentra, Eulàlia & Boixadós, Mercè (2026). Going Viral to Engage: Social Media and Adolescent Mental Health Literacy. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 84, 1-21. https://www.doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2026-2572

Date of Receipt: September 29, 2025
Date of Acceptance: December 30, 2025
Date of Publication: March 3, 2026

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Aligned with the studies and guidelines that show the potential utility of social media to improve the mental health and emotional well-being of young people, this research aims to identify how content on mental health generates a higher engagement rate on the social media most commonly used by adolescents. **Methodology:** An analysis of social media listening over the course of an entire year on Instagram and TikTok is conducted, together with a survey (N=2,240, aged 11 to 18). **Results:** The results show the great potential of health professionals to generate attention and involvement in adolescents when disseminating content on social media designed to positively impact their literacy in mental health and emotional well-being. However, its effect is conditioned by the proper use of the formats, languages, codes, narrative formulas, and tones of these social media. So, short videos, using a didactic tone whether formal or relaxed, and starring health specialists, generate higher engagement rates than other options, such as the use of non-expert influencers, text and static visual formats, or extreme dramatic and humorous tones. **Discussion:** The results obtained show a high degree of alignment with those reported in previous studies. **Conclusions:** Taken together, the characteristics of mental-health–related content disseminated through social media may shape the reach and engagement achieved among adolescents, thereby maximizing its diffusion and optimizing the potential of these platforms both to advance mental health literacy and to enhance the emotional well-being of young people.

Keywords**:** mental health; social media; adolescence; mental health literacy; emotional well-being viral; engagement rate

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the 2023 Youth, Health and Wellbeing Barometer (Kuric et al., 2023), in Spain, 53.4% of adolescents aged 15 to 19 had or believed they had some psychological problem in the past year. Of these, 38.2% did not seek any professional help to deal with them, nor a 47.5% share this problem with those closest to them.

These data align with those provided two years later by the World Health Organization (WHO), which attributes mental disorders to 1 in 7 young people between the ages of 10 and 19 (WHO, 2025), many of whom do not receive the necessary recognition and treatment (Solmi et al., 2022; WHO, 2025). Ignoring this need impacts the present and future of a community, since it is estimated that one-third of mental disorders begin before the age of 14, and fifty percent before the age of 18 (Solmi et al., 2022), making adolescent mental health a public health issue. In fact, promoting mental health is a priority for the WHO in its Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2030 (WHO, 2021). Similarly, the European Commission recommends increasing awareness and literacy in/for mental health, combining actions at various scales (European Commission, 2023). And the recent report from the PROEMO Network (2025) provides data that reinforces the need to improve mental health literacy in Spain among the general population, and especially among young people, with a focus on early detection and prevention.

1.1. Risks and Opportunities of Social Media

Mental health literacy, recently redefined as the knowledge about mental health issues that underpins actions that can improve it (Jorm, 2025), is the target of various interventions aimed at improving the mental health of adolescents (Amado-Rodríguez et al., 2022), with positive results in improving knowledge, reducing stigma, and increasing help-seeking behaviors. Considering the complex and dynamic nature of the concept (Pelikan, 2019), mental health literacy can be approached as a learning ecology (González-Sanmamed et al., 2020), which takes into account the needs of adolescents and the services available to them, as well as societal demands regarding their mental health and emotional well-being. Similarly, to address mental health literacy, it would be necessary to encompass the actions, resources, and contexts in which it takes place, and the digital context is clearly one

of them when it comes to teenagers and young people (Sechi et al., 2025).

Teenagers are intensive users of social media. In Spain, the population aged 12 to 17 has already used an average of 5.6 social media platforms at some point in their lives and an average of 5.2 during the last month (IAB Spain, 2024), with TikTok and Instagram showing the greatest penetration among this group (IAB Spain, 2024; Lalueza et al., 2024). 31.6% of Spanish teenagers spend more than 5 hours a day using the internet, increasing to 49.6% on weekends (Andrade et al., 2021). For 79.8% of these teenagers, going online involves using social media (del Moral & Clara Burrie, 2024).

In recent years, the intensive use of social media by adolescents has been linked to an increase in their mental health problems, both from the academic field (Abi-Jaoude et al., 2020; Aliverdi et al., 2022; Blanchard et al., 2023; Twenge et al., 2020) and from the perspective of various social entities (Amnesty International, 2023; del Moral & Clara Burrie, 2024). However, several studies have raised questions about the causal relationship herein (Ferguson et al., 2025; Panayiotou et al., 2023; Reich, 2025; Valkenburg et al., 2022), identifying a perception of neutral impact (Virós-Martín et al., 2025) and differential impact (Beyens et al., 2020; Fumagalli et al., 2024), highlighting its role in facilitating peer support and connectivity and promoting well-being (Hamilton et al., 2024; O'Reilly et al., 2023).

In fact, both the World Health Organization (WHO & International Telecommunication Union, 2024) and the European Commission (2023) recommend that mental health promotion interventions adopt a comprehensive approach, encompassing multiple channels and spaces, such as digital media, in addition to community and health centers, schools, and other community settings. Both agencies propose this comprehensive approach, the use of co-creation strategies, and multiple channels and platforms to achieve greater involvement of young people in their mental health care. Along these lines, the American Psychological Association (APA) and the US Department of Health and Health Sciences have published reports highlighting the potential usefulness of social media in mental health interventions (APA, 2023; U.S. Department of Health and Health Sciences, 2023).

Indeed, several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of using social media-based interventions to improve mental health literacy among young people (Ito-Jaeger et al., 2022; Kruzan et al., 2022; Valkenburg et al., 2021), finding them to be as effective as, or even more effective than, face-to-face interventions (Yeo et al., 2024). Engagement has traditionally been identified as an essential element in interventions aimed at increasing mental health literacy or reducing mental health problems. In fact, several studies show that increased mental health literacy can lead to better mental health, as it improves knowledge, reduces stigma, and promotes more adaptive attitudes and behaviors in the face of psychological distress, which is associated with a decrease in symptoms of depression and stress, and with an increase in emotional well-being in adolescents and young adults (Amado-Rodríguez et al., 2022; Furnham & Swami, 2018; Nobre et al., 2021; Yani et al., 2025).

1.2. Going Viral and Engagement

Traditionally, the number of followers has conferred influencer status and even shaped its typology: micro-influencer, macro-influencer, mega-influencer, celebrity influencer (Campbell & Farrell, 2020), based on the belief that, without a large number of followers, it was impossible to achieve viral reach—mass organic dissemination—of content. However, the algorithmic dynamic imposed by TikTok (Wang, 2022), which has already begun to be adopted by other platforms such as Instagram, allows content creators with relatively small follower counts to aspire to reach millions of users.

Thus, the definition of influencer has had to be broadened to explicitly refer to their ability to exert real influence: “Influencers are people on social media that distinguish themselves by the high number of followers and the ability to influence other users” (Conti et al., 2022, p. 86). However, it is possible that other social media

figures who cannot strictly be considered influencers exert a relevant influence in specific areas. In the field of mental health, for example, there are content creators who —without being famous— can end up generating a positive impact based on their own experience, their ability to address mental health issues on social media, and their willingness to help (McCosker, 2018).

Consequently, the number of followers can no longer be considered the only valid indicator (or even the most relevant one) when evaluating the potential influence of a content creator on social media. Pretorius et al. (2022) attribute the success of these hybrid professional-influencer figures to the use of formats adapted to the languages and codes of the platforms where they are present, and to the engagement they generate with their followers. The engagement rate thus becomes the most relevant metric in many fields, including science communication (Velarde-Camaqui et al., 2024) and health (Bressler & Zampella, 2020; Szeto et al., 2021), since it relates the number of followers or —in the case of TikTok— views to engagement figures: comments, likes, and shares. Just as certain formats achieve higher engagement rates than others (Lalueza et al., 2024), the literature review carried out by Draganidis et al. (2024) concludes that the specific characteristics of the content disseminated in mental health campaigns via social media can also condition their real impact (seeking help, behavioral change, etc.).

However, achieving high levels of engagement from adolescents (and young adults) requires that, before intervening, healthcare professionals have a thorough understanding of the virtual environment that constitutes the natural habitat of these groups in order to validate or refute the information disseminated there (Yonker et al., 2015). While reaching the target audience where they are —through information networks and the devices they use in their daily engagement— is a potentially very effective strategy (Merchant et al., 2021), it also presents challenges such as overcoming distrust in health information found on social media (Freeman et al., 2023; Montúfar-Calle et al., 2024) or providing them with useful tools to process and use in their decision-making the overwhelmingly large amount of information that these platforms offer (Jia & Li, 2024).

Given that adolescents are often reluctant to seek help for their mental health (Kuric et al., 2023), searching for information can be a first step, but it is crucial to ensure they have the strategies to conduct the search and that quality content is indeed available. This is especially important because young people's search for mental health information on digital platforms is associated with experiences of emotional distress (Lannin et al., 2020) that require prompt and relevant support.

2. OBJECTIVES

In this context, the objective of this study is to identify the mental health content that generates the highest engagement rate on the social media platforms most frequently used by adolescents, in order to answer the following research question: What characteristics should content shared on social media have in order to maximize its potential effectiveness as a tool for promoting adolescent literacy regarding mental health and emotional well-being?

3. METHODOLOGY

A concurrent mixed-methods design is used, combining cross-sectional surveys and social media listening, following the approach of previous studies such as Byrne et al. (2017) and Lalueza et al. (2024). This descriptive study compares both data collection techniques, allowing for relevant conclusions and avoiding the vagueness of purely qualitative studies that adopt a "dialectical approach," limiting themselves to noting the diversity and contrast of opinions (Adeane & Stasiak, 2024).

The study, which was favorably evaluated by the Ethics Committee of the Open University of Catalonia, complies with the ethical values required in research with human beings.

3.1. Comprehensive Survey

A total of 2,240 secondary school students (ESO[1], in Spanish) aged 11 to 18 were surveyed from 11 schools across 10 districts of Barcelona (7 private/subsidized and 4 public). The sample was balanced across the four grade levels (between 24.4% and 25.8%) and by gender (51% male, 48% female, and 1% non-binary). The sample was randomly selected and is representative of the entire secondary school student population in the city of Barcelona (N=55,372), with a 95% confidence level, assuming a maximum variance of p=q=50%, a 3% margin of error, and a 15% dropout rate. Based on these parameters, the minimum required sample size is 1,232 participants. The selection of centers was carried out randomly, previously setting the variables type of center (public/private), level of complexity (low/medium/high) and school district to avoid selection biases related to the socioeconomic and cultural context of the family.

Within each center, a digital survey was administered regarding adolescents' use of social media to find information on issues related to mental health (MH) and emotional well-being (EW). All selected secondary school students who met the admission criteria responded to the questionnaires: 1) no specific needs that would prevent them from responding, 2) being social media users, and 3) understanding Spanish sufficient to answer the questions.

Between October 2022 and April 2023, individual and anonymous responses were received from students at various schools. Each school established the administration context (dates, location, time, and teachers present), and the project team visited the school to assist with the survey (which lasted 10-12 minutes). Students, families, and teachers had given their prior consent.

Data were collected from 10 ad hoc closed-ended questions and one final open-ended question about how and how often information about MH and EW should be explained on social media; in what format; with what type of content, duration, and type of post; and how to capture attention and build trust. The survey also collected information on which hashtags should accompany mental and emotional health content (images, videos, audio, GIFs, memes, infographics, etc.) on social media to be considered interesting and useful.

3.2. Social Media Listening

Social media listening was used to identify content related to MH and EW with the highest engagement rates on the social media with the greatest penetration among the surveyed adolescents: TikTok (87%) and Instagram (84%). Social media listening —which allows for the identification of trends, the collection of opinions, and the evaluation of the impact of what is being said about a term or brand on social media— has been defined as the metaphor for paying attention online (Crawford, 2009), or the ability to capture and understand information shared in digital and social media (Stewart & Arnold, 2018).

Using the specialized active listening software Meltwater and applying keywords and hashtags related to mental health (drawn from surveys, contributions from mental health experts, and frequency analysis provided by the tool itself), nearly 470,000 posts published over a full year (September 1, 2022, to August 31, 2023) were identified. For each platform, a top 100 ranking of engagement rates was compiled as previously done for TikTok by Basch et al. (2020) and Yeung et al. (2022). On Instagram, the engagement rate is calculated as the number of interactions divided by the number of followers, whereas on TikTok it is divided by the number of views. This difference in how the engagement rate is calculated on the two platforms stems from the disparity in the information available on each: Instagram does not allow users to see the number of views for a given piece of content, whereas TikTok does.

[1] Compulsory Secondary Education

This preliminary ranking was refined to exclude posts that, despite using hashtags or terms potentially related to mental health, were not relevant to the topic (#apoyo [support] is a common example). Additionally, the Influencity software (an influencer marketing platform) was used to exclude posts shared by content creators with less influence among the target audience of this study (adolescents in Barcelona). The 200 posts in the final top 100 from both social media were analyzed according to the parameters of source, narrative prominence, tone, and format, to identify patterns that explain their success in terms of going viral and engagement.

For each parameter, several categories were established based on the pretest conducted to develop the survey questions. To ensure the effectiveness and robustness of the classification system, its exclusivity, exhaustiveness, and specificity were guaranteed. The definition of each category was documented to ensure consistency in the application of the classification, and the assignment of each item to its corresponding category was agreed upon by two analysts working independently and verified by a third researcher. The version agreed upon by the two independent analysts was compared with the coding performed by a third researcher, showing a 92% agreement, which demonstrates a high degree of inter-coder agreement. The discrepancies detected were reviewed and adjusted for the final assignment.

4. RESULTS

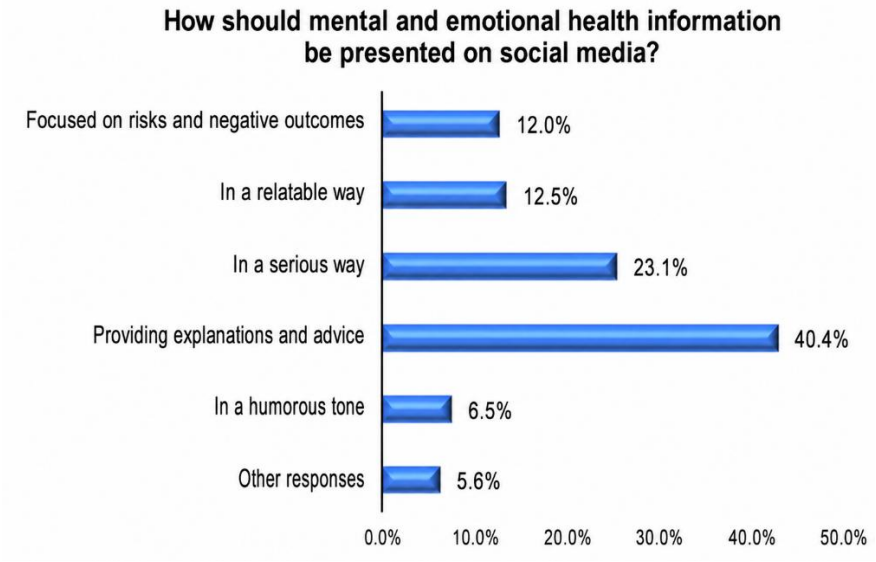
This section presents a breakdown of the results obtained with each of the techniques used (survey and social media listening). The "Discussion and Conclusions" section provides a comprehensive comparison.

4.1. Survey Results

A descriptive analysis was performed, calculating the frequencies of the adolescents' responses. The results are summarized in tables and figures, highlighting the values considered most relevant to the questions asked. The SPSS program on its version 29.0 was used for data analysis.

Figure 1 shows that adolescents prefer that information about MH and EW on social media be conveyed by explaining and giving advice (40.4%) and in a serious manner (23.1%). A total of 12.5% prefer it explained in a more approachable way, and 12% prioritize a focus on risks and negative aspects.

Figure 1. *Distribution of Responses Regarding How Information on MH and EW Should Be Presented on Social Media*



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Teenagers prefer that MH and EW content shared on social media include messages from experts (46.1% and 21.1% selected this as their first and second priority, respectively) and practical advice (14.9% and 24.5%). See Table 1 for a full list of responses.

Table 1. *Types of Content Used to Explain Information About MH and EW*

Percentage distribution of those who ranked options 1st and 2nd in order of priority	1st	2nd
Statements from unknown people	14.9%	12.2%
Statements from famous people	09.0%	14.7%
Messages from experts	46.1%	21.1%
Statistical data	06.1%	20.2%
Practical advice	14.9%	24.5%
Messages from influential people (influencers) giving advice	03.5%	05.4%

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Regarding the format in which information about MH and EW should be presented on these networks (Table 2), adolescents prefer text (36.9% and 28.8%, first and second choice), videos (37.1% and 19.6%), and photos (29.9%, second choice). They do not consider other formats, such as memes and infographics, as suitable for this type of information.

Table 2. *Types of Format Used to Explain Information About MH and EW*

Percentage distribution of those who ranked options 1st and 2nd in order of priority	1st	2nd
Text	36.9%	28.8%
Photos	06.9%	29.9%
Memes	07.6%	07.1%
Infographics	08.3%	13.7%
Videos	37.1%	19.6%

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Most teenagers prefer that information about MH and EW be published as posts (44% and 37.9%, first and second choice in order of priority) and stories (30.5 % and 35.5%), with live streams being the third choice, with a smaller proportion (19.3% and 24.6%), as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *Types of Publications Used to Explain Information About MH and EW*

Percentage distribution of those who ranked options 1st and 2nd in order of priority	1st	2nd
Posts	44.0%	37.9%
Stories	30.5%	35.5%
Lives	19.3%	24.6%

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Table 4 summarizes the information from the questions about what aspects capture their attention and motivate them to trust and interact with social media and background content. They placed the greatest importance on content being presented in a way they enjoy, a relevant aspect for capturing their attention (46.3%), building trust (31.1%), and fostering engagement (29.1%). When someone explains what happened to them, it captures their attention (39%) and motivates them to engage (30.2%), but it doesn't inspire trust (10.6%). The presence of polls, contests, giveaways, or challenges builds trust among teenagers (31.1%).

Table 4. *What motivates people to capture attention, trust, and interact with MH and EW content on social media?*

Percentage of respondents who rated the following as important or very important	Capturing attention	Building trust	Engaging
It shows who created it or who posted it	22.3%	26.9%	21.1%
It's on a social media platform you like	21.5%	19.5%	20.5%
It's told in a way you like	46.3%	31.1%	29.1%
It's in a format (video, audio, GIF, meme…) you like	31.8%	22.4%	25.1%
You like how long it is (whether it's long or short)	22.4%	16.3%	19.4%
Someone explains what happened to them	39.0%	10.6%	30.2%
There's a poll, a contest, a giveaway, or a challenge	16.7%	31.1%	14.4%
It was recommended to you	17.1%	22.5%	22.5%

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Most teenagers believe that the appropriate frequency for publishing new content about MH and EW on social media would be weekly (38.8%) or daily (25.7%) and with an average duration of 15 minutes (SD=16); with a lot of variability.

The hashtags that teenagers find useful and interesting to use with content related to mental health and well-being on social media are mostly: #ayuda (help), #ansiedad (anxiety), #consejos (advice), #depresión (depression), #emociones (emotions), #hablemos (let's talk); #noalbulling (no to bullying), #noestassolo (you're not alone), #salutmentalimporta (mental health matters), and #tupuedes (you can do it).

4.2. Results of Active Listening

In turn, the analysis conducted through social media listening suggests that the number of conversations about mental health on social media is growing. Beyond the seasonal fluctuations affecting certain topics, the trend observed during the study period is upward, indicating greater awareness of the importance of mental health and/or a growing reduction in the stigma associated with the issue.

Table 5 summarizes a significant portion of the results of the analysis conducted on the content comprising the top 100 on each of the two platforms in terms of source, narrative prominence, and tone.

Table 5. *Classification According to Source, Narrative Prominence and Tone*

Classification based on source	**TikTok**	**Instagram**	**TOTAL**	**TOTAL %**
Company or institution	1	2	3	1.5%
Healthcare professional	41	54	95	47.5%
Show business figure	4	1	5	2.5%
Journalism professional	1	0	1	0.5%
Political professional	2	0	2	1%
Influencer	29	4	33	16.5%
Standard user	7	2	9	4.5%
Rebroadcaster	15	37	52	26%
TOTAL Source	100	100	200	100%
Classification based on narrative prominence	**TikTok**	**Instagram**	**TOTAL**	**TOTAL %**
Statement of experience	25	13	38	19%
Healthcare professional	46	20	66	33%
Animated character	2	19	21	10.5%
Impersonal	27	48	75	37.5%
TOTAL Narrative prominence	100	100	200	100%
Classification based on tone	**TikTok**	**Instagram**	**TOTAL**	**TOTAL %**
Dramatic	26	5	31	15.5%
Relaxed	47	57	104	52%
Formal	3	9	12	6%
Didactic	20	27	47	23.5%
Humorous	4	2	6	3%
TOTAL Tone	100	100	200	100%

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

By categorizing the profiles from which content was shared, eight types of sources were identified. Among them, the source type generating the highest engagement rate was healthcare professionals; that is, profiles that identify themselves —either in their profile descriptions, in the links included therein, or in their usernames— as psychologists, therapists, emotional coaches, or similar professionals. Some 47.5% of the mental health posts generating the highest engagement rates (among the top 100 analyzed on TikTok and Instagram) come from this type of source, compared to 26% from profiles that merely repost existing content (for example, adding self-help content as mere repositories or compiling the highlights of a podcast for promotional purposes) and the 16.5% from influencers (sources not attributable to any of the other categories, but very active on social media and with many followers who generate high levels of engagement).

Furthermore, regardless of the source disseminating the content, the narrative focus can be assumed by various figures or be impersonal (not attributable to specific real or fictional people, such as when a Loquendo-type voice synthesizer, an image of a text, or a fragment of a song whose lyrics allude to the issue presented is used; 37.5% of the posts). When the story does have a specific narrative protagonist, this is also mostly a healthcare professional (in 33% of the posts with the highest engagement rate), although the choice of a person who talks openly about their own experiences with mental health is also a recurring theme (19% of the posts).

Regarding the tone of mental health posts included in both the top 100 engagement rate charts (TikTok and Instagram), five categories emerged: dramatic, relaxed, formal, didactic, and humorous, based on the

predominant tone (agreed upon by the three coders). The relaxed tone —primarily aimed at connecting with the audience by building trust and a sense of closeness— clearly prevailed with 52% of the posts, followed at a considerable distance by the didactic tone —which prioritizes conveying instructive content in the most understandable way possible— with 23.5%.

In terms of format, on the social media platform TikTok, all content in the top 100 is in video format, whereas on Instagram, photography predominates (65%), compared to video (33%) and memes (illustrations that serve as visual metaphors for a funny or paradoxical idea; 2%). The average duration of the TikTok videos in the top 100 is 74 seconds, although the range is very wide, given that the shortest video is 5 seconds long and the longest lasts 594 seconds (almost 10 minutes, the maximum duration allowed by the platform at the time of posting).

Regarding content distribution, a slight pattern emerges in TikTok's publication dates: 4 of the 100 pieces of content that generated the highest engagement rates during the analyzed year were published on October 10, coinciding with World Mental Health Day. It is not possible to determine whether this date triggers a particular response from the audience or whether it is content creators with high engagement rates who take advantage of this World Mental Health Day to address the topic of mental health.

Finally, since Meltwater allows tracking the time of publication on TikTok, it is found that the best time of day to post on this social media platform to maximize the engagement rate is the second half of the day (from 12 p.m. to midnight), a time slot when the audience is most active on the platforms.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings provide a descriptive answer to the research question posed: What characteristics should content shared on social media have in order to maximize its potential effectiveness as a tool for promoting adolescent literacy regarding mental health and emotional well-being?

A deeper understanding of the formats of mental health content that increase engagement can enhance the potential of social media to impact adolescents and effectively involve them in their mental health care (Draganidis et al., 2024; Tam et al., 2024). In this context, it's important to note that effectiveness is not linked to the mere passive viewing of content but rather is determined by the engagement rates it generates: the sum of shares, likes, and comments relative to the number of views (on TikTok) or followers (on Instagram). While the literature does not provide conclusive evidence that high engagement rates guarantee effectiveness, it does confirm that they are a key factor in multiplying content dissemination (Almela-Baeza et al., 2023), fostering its virality and thus maximizing its potential impact on mental health literacy.

According to the surveyed teenagers, the most effective content is that which conveys its messages by explaining and offering advice, with both seriousness and approachability. Social media listening validates that approachability works to boost engagement rates, given that more than half of the top 100 posts on both networks adopt a relaxed tone. However, in terms of engagement rates, a serious or formal tone is not as productive as an educational one, indicating that formality can act as a barrier to generating engagement, but this does not necessarily call into question the effectiveness of more serious content in promoting mental health literacy. Humor, on the other hand, is the least valued option among the surveyed teenagers for learning about mental health and is also the least likely to generate high engagement rates, since the percentage of top 100 posts on both networks that openly use humor is negligible. These results align with previous literature that analyzes, from the perspective of young people, the preference for the dissemination of mental health and emotional well-being content with a serious —although approachable— tone, with humor being considered inappropriate for this topic (Adeane & Gibson, 2023; Adeane & Stasiak, 2024).

Regarding who should act as a prescriber for mental health literacy delivered through social media to be

effective, there is again a remarkable correlation between the preferences of the surveyed adolescents and the engagement rates recorded by the social media listening analysis. Thus, almost half of the adolescents consider messages from experts to be the best option. These results are consistent with the prediction made by Yonker et al. (2015), who a decade ago encouraged health professionals to use social media to provide support and rigorous information to adolescents and young adults, taking advantage of the fact that these population segments seek advice and shared experiences on these platforms to improve their emotional well-being.

In one out of every three pieces of content in the aforementioned top 100, the healthcare professional also takes center stage in the narrative. This is relevant because the main factor in capturing the attention and gaining the trust of teenagers is that the content is narrated in a way they enjoy. Furthermore, it is the second most effective trigger for generating engagement as opposed to narratives centered on non-expert accounts of personal experiences. These findings align with those provided by López-Bolás et al. (2019), who consider that health-related content that achieves the highest engagement on social media is that which centers on positive emotions (avoiding the negativity conveyed by dramatic and sarcastic tones), features images of healthcare professionals and patients, and uses real patient testimonials as its narrative structure. Likewise, they agree with studies that state that these health professionals must project an image of seriousness and provide content aimed at offering practical and realistic solutions, without oversimplifying and taking into account the ethical aspects involved in the practice of disseminating content on mental health and emotional well-being aimed at young people via social media (Adeane & Gibson, 2023; Harris et al., 2021).

The preference for healthcare professionals to play a leading role in content about mental health and emotional well-being (in line with the contributions of Adeane & Stasiak, 2024, and Lalueza et al., 2024) contrasts with the marginal role assumed by influencers. Despite the high rate of influencer following among Spanish adolescents on social media (IAB Spain, 2024), these influencers are not considered a reliable source in the field of mental health. This reluctance aligns with the low visibility of this type of creator, given that the most popular mental health content on both platforms rarely comes from influencers. This confirms the diagnosis of Engel et al. (2024), who consider mental health to be an underrepresented topic within the content that influencers dedicate to the general field of health.

As for formal aspects, the characteristics of each platform largely determine the formats used. On TikTok, a social network designed for creating and sharing videos, all content in the top 100 by engagement rate uses this format. In contrast, on Instagram, a social network originally created for sharing photos, content featuring photos nearly doubles that featuring video, with the use of memes reduced to a negligible percentage (likely because, as noted, a humorous tone is considered inappropriate in this context). These data may seem to contradict the results of the survey of adolescents, who express a preference for video and text over photography. However, they are not so contradictory if we consider that a large portion of the photos identified on Instagram are actually text in image format. In any case, the literature on mental health literacy among adolescents highlights the potential of multimodal content to maximize the impact of interventions (Sun et al., 2025).

On the other hand, the survey data indicates that teenagers prefer the post format (permanent) over the story format (ephemeral) and over live streams. The social media listening study conducted does not allow for verification of this preference, given that ephemeral content cannot be retrieved later. However, this preference seems consistent with the deeply ingrained habit among teenagers of saving/bookmarking content for later consumption, and it is also consistent with more general studies on social media use in Spain, which similarly indicate a preference for long-lasting content over ephemeral content (57% vs. 43%) (IAB Spain, 2024). Furthermore, however much engagement a story (whose short expiration creates a "now or never" effect) or a live stream (which allows for real-time engagement) may generate, the impermanence of these formats limits their potential to accumulating views, shares, likes, and comments over time.

Although surveys suggest the average video length is around 15 minutes, the wide range of responses (consistent with the contradictions identified by Adeane & Stasiak, 2024) makes this figure unreliable. This is partly because it exceeds the 10-minute limit established by TikTok at the time of the analysis (TikTok being the platform specifically focused on video publishing of the two analyzed). In this regard, the average length of the top 100 videos on TikTok in terms of engagement rate —74 seconds—may be a more accurate indicator.

Finally, regarding the use of hashtags, when comparing the top 10 suggested in the survey with the top 10 most frequently used on each of the social media platforms analyzed, the only two terms that overlap are #ansiedad (anxiety) and #depresión (depression).

In short, if the aim is to maximize the potential effectiveness of content shared via social media to positively contribute to adolescents' mental health literacy and emotional well-being, the focus should be on factors that increase not only reach (number of views) but also, and above all, audience engagement. In this regard, the optimal content would be a video, approximately 74 seconds long. It would be shared by a healthcare professional, who would also act as the protagonist of the story, and would use a TikTok post (the leading platform among teenagers) during the 12-24 hour time slot. The tone could be formal or informal (teenagers report preferring a formal tone, but this generates less engagement), or even didactic, but extreme options (dramatic or humorous) should be avoided. Using the hashtags #ansiedad (anxiety) and #depresión (depression) could round out the potentially successful formula, provided the content alludes to these topics, even tangentially. All of this is without prejudice to the fact that, as previous research based on the perceptions of adolescents and young people regarding mental health content on social media (Adeane & Stasiak, 2024) indicates, it is advisable to adopt a flexible approach that allows responding to the different preferences of the audience and combining different formulas in terms of style, duration, tone, protagonist, etc.

One limitation of this study is that the descriptive results of the surveys focused on a sample of school-aged adolescents representative of the educational districts in Barcelona (with the intention of conducting a subsequent intervention and testing it; see Casañas et al., 2025), whereas the social media listening conducted does not allow for such a narrow territorial or generational segmentation (Adeane & Stasiak, 2024). However, the high degree of overlap between the survey results and those from the social media listening indicates that this circumstance does not cause significant distortions.

Having identified the most appropriate format, networks, and influencers to maximize the virality and engagement generated by content on mental health and emotional well-being among adolescents, future research will focus on the implementation of such content, evaluating not only its viral reach and impact on adolescent engagement but also its effectiveness in promoting mental health.

6. REFERENCES

Abi-Jaoude, E., Naylor, K. T., & Pignatiello, A. (2020). Smartphones, social media use and youth mental health. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, *192*(6), E136-E141. https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.190434

Adeane, E., & Gibson, K. (2023). Using Web-Based Content to Connect Young People With Real-life Mental Health Support: Qualitative Interview Study. *JMIR Formative Research*, 7, E38296. https://doi.org/10.2196/38296

Adeane, E., & Stasiak, K. (2024). “It's really hard to strike a balance”: The role of digital influencers in shaping youth mental health. *Digital Health*, 10. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/20552076241288059

Aliverdi, F., Farajidana, H., Tourzani, Z. M., Salehi, L., Qorbani, M., Mohamadi, F., & Mahmoodi, Z. (2022). Social networks and internet emotional relationships on mental health and quality of life in students: structural equation modelling. *BMC Psychiatry*, *22*(451). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-022-04097-6

Almela-Baeza, J., Guercetti, J., & Febrero, B. (2023). The Importance of Engagement in the Dissemination of Audio-Visual Content by Spanish Health Influencers on Instagram. *Social Sciences*, *12*(4), 220. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12040220

Amado-Rodríguez, I. D., Casañas, R., Mas-Expósito, L., Castellví, P., Roldan-Merino, J. F., Casas, I., Lalucat-Jo, L., & Fernández-San Martín, M. I. (2022). Effectiveness of mental health literacy programs in primary and secondary schools: A systematic review with meta-analysis. *Children (Basel)*, *9*(4), 480. https://doi.org/10.3390/children9040480

American Psychological Association. (2023). *Health Advisory on social media use in adolescence*. https://www.apa.org/topics/social-media-internet/health-advisory-adolescent-social-media-use.pdf

Amnesty International. (2023). *"I feel exposed". Caught in TikTok's surveillance web*. https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol40/7349/2023/en/

Andrade, B., Guadix, I., Rial, A., & Suárez, F. (2021). *Impacto de la tecnología en la adolescencia. Relaciones, riesgos y oportunidades*. UNICEF España. https://www.unicef.es/sites/unicef.es/files/comunicacion/Informe_estatal_impacto-tecnologia-adolescencia.pdf

Basch, C. H., Hillyer, G. C., & Jaime, C. (2020). COVID-19 on TikTok: Harnessing an emerging social media platform to convey important public health messages. *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health*, *34*(5), 367-369. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijamh-2020-0111

Beyens, I., Pouwels, J. L., van Driel, I. I., Keijsers, L., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2020). The effect of social media on well-being differs from adolescent to adolescent. *Scientific Reports*, 10, 10763. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-67727-7

Blanchard, L., Conway-Moore, K., Aguiar, A., Önal, F., Rutter, H., Helleve, A., Nwosu, E., Falcone, J., Savona, N., Boyland, E., & Knai, C. (2023). Associations between social media, adolescent mental health, and diet: A systematic review. *Obesity Reviews*, *24*(S2), 13631. https://doi.org/10.1111/obr.13631

Bressler, M. Y., & Zampella, J. G. (2020). Response to: "dermatology without dermatologists? Analyzing Instagram influencers with dermatology-related hashtags". *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*, *83*(6), e447-e448. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaad.2020.07.098

Byrne, E., Kearney, J., & MacEvilly, C. (2017). The role of influencer marketing and social influencers in public health. *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, *76*(OCE3), E103. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0029665117001768

Campbell, C., & Farrell, J. R. (2020). More than meets the eye: The functional components underlying influencer marketing. *Business Horizons*, *63*(4), 469-479. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2020.03.003

Casañas, R., Hernández Encuentra, E., Martín, J., Lalueza, F., & Boixadós, M. (2025). Co-creation and validation of a social media resource for mental health literacy among Spanish adolescents. *Health Expectations*, *28*(5), e70469. https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.70469

Conti, M., Gathani, J., & Tricomi, P. P. (2022). Virtual influencers in online social media. *IEEE Communications Magazine*, *60*(8), 86-91. https://doi.org/10.1109/MCOM.001.2100786

Crawford, K. (2009). Following you: Disciplines of listening in social media. *Continuum*, *23*(4), 525-535. https://doi.org/10.1080/10304310903003270

del Moral, C., & Clara Burrie, C. (Coords.). (2024). *Derechos #sinconexión. Un análisis sobre derechos de la infancia y la adolescencia y su protección en el entorno digital.* Save the Children España. https://www.savethechildren.es/sites/default/files/2024-07/Informe_Derechos_SinConexion.pdf

Draganidis, A., Nileshni Fernando, A., West, M. L., & Sharp, G. (2024). Social media delivered mental health campaigns and public service announcements: A systematic literature review of public engagement and help-seeking behaviours. *Social Science & Medicine*, 359, 117231. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.117231

Engel, E., Gell, S., Heiss, R., & Karsay, K. (2024). Social media influencers and adolescents' health: A scoping review of the research field. *Social Science & Medicine*, 340, 116387. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2023.116387

European Commission (2023). *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: On a comprehensive approach to mental health*. https://health.ec.europa.eu/document/download/cef45b6d-a871-44d5-9d62-3cecc47eda89_en?filename=com_2023_298_1_act_en.pdf

Ferguson, C. J., Kaye, L. K., Branley-Bell, D., & Markey, P. (2025). There is no evidence that time spent on social media is correlated with adolescent mental health problems: Findings from a meta-analysis. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, *56*(1), 73-83. https://doi.org/10.1037/pro0000589

Freeman, J. L., Caldwell, P. H., & Scott, K. M. (2023). How adolescents trust health information on social media: A systematic review. *Academic pediatrics*, *23*(4), 703-719. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2022.12.011

Fumagalli, E., Shrum, L. J., & Lowrey, T. M. (2024). The effects of social media consumption on adolescent psychological well-being. *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, *9*(2), 119-130. https://doi.org/10.1086/728739

Furnham, A., & Swami, V. (2018). Mental health literacy: A review of what it is and why it matters. *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation*, *7*(4), 240-257. https://doi.org/10.1037/ipp0000094

González-Sanmamed, M., Estévez, I., Souto-Seijo, A., & Muñoz-Carril, P. C. (2020). Ecologías digitales de aprendizaje y desarrollo profesional del docente universitario. *Comunicar*, 62, 9-18. https://doi.org/10.3916/C62-2020-01

Hamilton, J. L., Torous, J., Szlyk, H. S., Biernesser, C., Kruzan, K. P., Jensen, M., Reyes-Portillo, J., Primack, B. A., Zelazny, J., & Weigle, P. (2024). Leveraging digital media to promote youth mental health: Flipping the

script on social media-related risk. *Current Treatment Options in Psychology*, 11, 67-75. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40501-024-00315-y

Harris, J., Atkinson, A., Mink, M., & Porcellato, L. (2021). Young People's Experiences and Perceptions of YouTuber-Produced Health Content: Implications for Health Promotion. *Health Education & Behavior*, *48*(2), 199-207. https://doi.org/10.1177/1090198120974964

IAB Spain (Ed.). (2024). *Estudio redes sociales 2024. XV edición*. Elogia. https://iabspain.es/iab-spain-xv-edicion-estudio-redes-sociales/

Ito-Jaeger, S., Perez Vallejos, E., Curran, T., Spors, V., Long, Y., Liguori, A., Warwick, M., Wilson, M., & Crawford, P. (2022). Digital video interventions and mental health literacy among young people: A scoping review. *Journal of Mental Health*, *31*(6), 873-883. https://doi.org/10.1080/09638237.2021.1922642

Jia, C., & Li, P. (2024). Generation Z's health information avoidance behavior: Insights from focus group discussions. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 26, e54107. https://doi.org/10.2196/54107

Jorm, A. F. (2025). Refining the concept of mental health literacy: Criteria for determining what the public needs to know. En M. C. Yzer, & J. T. Siegel (Eds.), *The handbook of mental health communication* (pp. 155-163). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781394179909.ch11

Kruzan, K. P., Williams, K. D. A., Meyerhoff, J., Yoo, D. W., O'Dwyer, L. C., DeChoudhury, M., & Mohr, D. C. (2022). Social media-based interventions for adolescent and Young adult mental health: A scoping review. *Internet interventions*, 30, 100578. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.invent.2022.100578

Kuric, S., Sanmartín, A., Ballesteros, J. C., & Gómez Miguel, A. (2023). *Barómetro Juventud, Salud y Bienestar 2023*. Centro Reina Sofía de Fad Juventud. https://www.centroreinasofia.org/publicacion/barometro-salud-2023/

Lalueza, F., Hernández Encuentra, E., & Boixadós, M. (2024). Si no puedes con tu enemigo: las redes sociales como herramientas al servicio de la salud mental adolescente. In J. Sierra Sánchez, & D. Lavilla Muñoz (Eds.), *Conexiones digitales: la revolución de la comunicación en la sociedad contemporánea* (pp. 155-171). McGraw Hill. https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14352/104107

Lannin, D. G., Kanter, J. B., Russell, L., Parris, L., & Yazedjian, A. (2020). Why do adolescents seek online mental health information? *Journal of Adolescent and Family Health*, *11*(1). https://scholar.utc.edu/jafh/vol11/iss1/5

López-Bolás, A., Valderrama-Santomé, M., & Di-Virgilio, F. (2019). Claves del éxito para la viralización de contenidos de salud. El caso de las redes sociales del Hospital Povisa. *El Profesional de la Información*, *28*(5). https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2019.sep.02

McCosker, A. (2018). Engaging mental health online: Insights from beyondblue's forum influencers. *New Media & Society*, *20*(12), 4748-4764. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818784303

Merchant, R. M., South, E. C., & Lurie, N. (2021). Public health messaging in an era of social media. *JAMA*, *325*(3), 223-224. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2020.24514

Montúfar-Calle, Á., Feijoo, B., Díaz-Campo, J., & Palomino-Moreno, H. (2024). Actitud y comportamiento del adolescente frente al influencer advertising sobre cuerpo y dieta en Perú. *Revista de Comunicación*, *23*(2), 213-238. https://doi.org/10.26441/RC23.2-2024-3605

Nobre, J., Oliveira, A. P., Monteiro, F., Sequeira, C., & Ferré-Grau, C. (2021). Promotion of Mental Health Literacy in Adolescents: A Scoping Review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(18), 9500. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18189500

O'Reilly, M., Levine, D., Donoso, V., Voice, L., Hughes, J., & Dogra, N. (2023). Exploring the potentially positive interaction between social media and mental health; the perspectives of adolescents. *Clinical child psychology and psychiatry*, *28*(2), 668-682. https://doi.org/10.1177/13591045221106573

Panayiotou, M., Black, L., Carmichael-Murphy, P., Qualter, P., & Humphrey, N. (2023). Time spent on social media among the least influential factors in adolescent mental health: Preliminary results from a panel network analysis. *Nature Mental Health*, *1*(5), 316-326. https://doi.org/10.1038/s44220-023-00063-7

Pelikan, J. M. (2019). Health-literate healthcare organisations. En O. Okan, U. Bauer, D. Levin-Zamir, P. Pinheiro, & K. Sørensen (Eds.), *International Handbook of Health Literacy: Research, Practice and Policy across the Lifespan* (pp. 539-553). Policy Press. https://library.oapen.org/viewer/web/viewer.html?file=/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/24879/9781447344520_webpdf.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Pretorius, C., McCashin, D., & Coyle, D. (2022). Mental health professionals as influencers on TikTok and Instagram: What role do they play in mental health literacy and help-seeking? *Internet interventions*, 30, 100591. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.invent.2022.100591

Red PROEMO. (2025). *Informe y hoja de ruta 2025 sobre la salud y bienestar emocional en adolescentes y jóvenes*. https://redproem.es/informe-y-hoja-de-ruta-2025/

Reich, S. M. (2025). Understanding the impact of social media on adolescent wellbeing. *Childhood Education*, *101*(1), 66-71. https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2025.2440394

Sechi, M., Saladino, Calaresi, D., Giordano, F., & Verrastro, V. (2025). Adolescent mental health in the digital era: Social media, screen time, and digital literacy. *Journal of Clinical & Developmental Psychology*, *7*(1), 92-115. https://cab.unime.it/journals/index.php/JCDP/article/view/4799

Solmi, M., Radua, J., Olivola, M., Croce, E., Soardo, L., Salazar de Pablo, G., Shin, J. I., Kirkbride, J. B., Jones, P., Kim, J. H., Kim, J. Y., Carvalho, A. F., Seeman, M. V., Correll, C. U., & Fusar-Poli, P. (2022). Age at onset of mental disorders worldwide: Large-scale meta-analysis of 192 epidemiological studies. *Molecular Psychiatry*, *27*(1), 281-295. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41380-021-01161-7

Stewart, M. C., & Arnold, C. L. (2018). Defining social listening: Recognizing an emerging dimension of listening. *International Journal of Listening*, *32*(2), 85-100. https://doi.org/10.1080/10904018.2017.1330656

Sun, G., Wang, C., & Zhang, J. (2025). Effectiveness of Mental Health Literacy Interventions for Adolescents: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *Sage Open*, *15*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251327445

Szeto, M. D., Presley, C. L., Pulsipher, K. J., Harp, T., Rundle, C. W., Sivesind, T. E., Laughter, M. R., & Dellavalle, R. P. (2021). Dermatologist influencers on social media: Instagram Reels and TikTok interactive short

videos. *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*, *85*(3), e185-e188. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaad.2021.04.052

Tam, M. T., Wu, J.M., Zhang, C. C., Pawliuk, C., & Robillard, J. M. (2024). A Systematic Review of the Impacts of Media Mental Health Awareness Campaigns on Young People. *Health Promotion Practice*, *25*(5), 907-920. https://doi.org/10.1177/15248399241232646

Twenge, J. M. (2020). Why increases in adolescent depression may be linked to the technological environment. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 32, 89-94. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2019.06.036

U.S. Department of Health, & Health Sciences (Ed.). (2023). *Social Media and Youth Mental Health: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory*. U.S. Public Health Service. https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/sg-youth-mental-health-social-media-advisory.pdf

Valkenburg, P. M., Meier, A., & Beyens, I. (2022). Social media use and its impact on adolescent mental health: An umbrella review of the evidence. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 44, 58-68. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.08.017

Valkenburg, P. M., van Driel, I. I., & Beyens, I. (2021). The associations of active and passive social media use with well-being: A critical scoping review. *New Media & Society*, *24*(2), 530-549. https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211065425

Velarde-Camaqui, D., Viehmann, C., Díaz, R., & Valerio-Ureña, G. (2024). Características de los videos que favorecen el engagement de los divulgadores científicos en TikTok [Factors favoring digital engagement of science communicators in TikTok]. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 82, 01-18. https://doi.org/10.4185/rlcs-2024-2232

Virós-Martín, C., Jiménez-Morales, M., & Montaña-Blasco, M. (2025). Adolescentes, TikTok e Instagram: percepciones sobre el impacto de las tecnologías digitales en su vida social. *Revista de Comunicación*, *24*(1), 519-537. https://doi.org/10.26441/RC24.1-2025-3774

Wang, P. (2022). Recommendation algorithm in TikTok: Strengths, dilemmas, and possible directions. *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, *10*(5), 60-66. https://doi.org/10.11114/ijsss.v10i5.5664

World Health Organization. (September 1, 2025). *Mental health of adolescents*. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health

World Health Organization. (2021). *Comprehensive mental health action plan 2013-2030*. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240031029

World Health Organization and International Telecommunication Union. (2024). *Going digital for noncommunicable diseases: The case for action*. https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/378478

Yani, D. I., Chua, J. Y. X., Wong, J. C. M., Pikkarainen, M., & Shorey, S. (2025). The Effects of Universal Educational Interventions in Improving Mental Health Literacy, Depression, and Anxiety Among Adolescents: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, *34*(1), e13494. https://doi.org/10.1111/inm.13494

Yeo, G., Reich, S. M., Liaw, N. A., & Chia, E. Y. M. (2024). The effect of digital mental health literacy interventions on mental health: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 26, e51268. https://doi.org/10.2196/51268

Yeung, A., Ng E., & Abi-Jaoude E. (2022). TikTok and attention-deficit / hyperactivity disorder: A cross-sectional study of social media content quality. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, *67*(12), 899-906. https://doi.org/10.1177/07067437221082854

Yonker, L. M., Zan, S., Scirica, C. V., Jethwani, K., & Kinane, T. B. (2015). "Friending" teens: systematic review of social media in adolescent and young adult health care. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, *17*(1), e4. https://doi.org/10.2196/jmir.3692

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS, FUNDING AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Authors' Contributions

Conceptualization: Lalueza, Ferran; Hernández Encuentra, Eulàlia; Boixadós, Mercè. **Software**: Lalueza, Ferran; Boixadós, Mercè. **Validation**: Lalueza, Ferran; Hernández Encuentra, Eulàlia; Boixadós, Mercè. **Formal analysis**: Lalueza, Ferran; Boixadós, Mercè. **Data curation**: Boixadós, Mercè. **Drafting-Preparation of the original draft**: Lalueza, Ferran; Hernández Encuentra, Eulàlia; Boixadós, Mercè. **Drafting, Review, and Editing**: Lalueza, Ferran; Hernández Encuentra, Eulàlia; Boixadós, Mercè. **Visualization**: Lalueza, Ferran; Hernández Encuentra, Eulàlia; Boixadós, Mercè. **Supervision**: Lalueza, Ferran. **Project management**: Hernández Encuentra, Eulàlia. **All authors have read and accepted the published version of the manuscript**: Lalueza, Ferran; Hernández Encuentra, Eulàlia; Boixadós, Mercè.

Funding: This research received external funding from the Ministry of Science and Innovation (Ref. PID2021-127129OB-I00).

Acknowledgments: The authors would like to thank Mari Corominas (Barcelona Institute of Childhood and Adolescence) for her assistance with the randomization of schools in Barcelona, and Lidia Merino (research assistant for the project) for her help with data collection at the schools.

Conflict of interest: None.

AUTHOR(S)

Ferran Lalueza
Department of Information and Communication Sciences. Open University of Catalonia.
Doctorate in Journalism from Pompeu Fabra University and associate professor at the Open University of Catalonia. He is a member of the Research Group on Learning, Media, and Entertainment (GAME). His research focuses on communication within organizations, particularly communication via the internet and, more specifically, social media. He views communication as a strategic tool with persuasive and educational potential. He actively uses social media as a means of knowledge transfer and also serves as editor-in-chief of the academic journal *COMeIN. Revista de los Estudios de Ciencias de la Información y de la Comunicación* (Journal of Information and Communication Studies). He is a teacher accredited by the Catalonian Association of Journalists to conduct workshops on combating misinformation.
flalueza@uoc.edu
Índice H: 11

Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7010-9795
Web of Science: https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/ABF-5622-2021
Scopus ID: https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=56072408800
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=9gw8Qd4AAAAJ&hl=en
Dialnet: https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/autor?codigo=1860710
ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ferran-Lalueza
Academia.edu: https://uoc.academia.edu/FerranLalueza
IraLISID: ESCS7375

Eulalia Hernández Encuentra
Department of Psychology and Education. Open University of Catalonia (UOC).
She holds a Doctorate in Psychology from the Autonomous University of Barcelona and she is an associate professor in the Department of Psychology and Educational Sciences at the UOC, where she combines teaching and research. She is a member of the Behavioural Design Lab, a UOC research group focused on behavioral design and health. Her research focuses on health and mental health promotion through digital platforms, particularly among children and adolescents, as well as on digital health literacy. She currently coordinates the Spanish Network for Health Literacy.
ehernandez@uoc.edu
Índice H: 15
Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0319-861X
Web of Science: https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/H-6992-2013
Scopus ID: https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=36463454300
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=BYCmFAgAAAAJ&hl=ca
Dialnet: https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/autor?codigo=119720
ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Eulalia-Hernandez-Encuentra

Academia.edu: https://independent.academia.edu/Eul%C3%A0liaHern%C3%A1ndezEncuentra

Mercè Boixadós

Department of Psychology and Education. Open University of Catalonia.
Doctorate in Psychology from the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Currently, she is a professor and researcher at the Open University of Catalonia (UOC), where she teaches courses on methodology and data analysis in the Psychology and Education program. In recent years, her research has focused on the application of ICT to the promotion of health and psychological well-being, particularly among children and adolescents. She is a member of the UOC's Behavioural Design Lab research group. Her career combines teaching, applied research, and the development of digital health interventions, with a solid methodological approach and a focus on improving quality of life through innovative, evidence-based technological solutions.
mboixados@uoc.edu
Índice H: 24
Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8407-7336
Web of Science: https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/H-7324-2013
Scopus ID: https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=8911419100
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=bD3vbbIAAAAJ
Dialnet: https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/autor?codigo=154852
ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Merce-Boixados-Angles
Academia.edu: https://www.academia.edu/search?q=merce%20boixados

Revista Latina de Comunicación Social
ISSN 1138-5820 / No. 84, 1-21.
https://www.doi.org/10.4185/rlcs-2026-2572

Related Articles:

Amado-Rodríguez, I. D., Casañas, R., Mas-Expósito, L., Lalucat-Jo, L., Roldan-Merino, J. F. & Fernandez-San-Martín, M. (2025). Alfabetización en salud mental en adolescentes españoles y su relación con las características sociodemográficas. *Revista Española de Salud Pública*, 98, e202403018. https://www.scielosp.org/article/resp/2024.v98/e202403018/

Gómez-Piñeiro, M. & Corbacho-Valencia, J.-M. (2025). Viralidad en las redes sociales de los medios de comunicación audiovisuales españoles: formatos y contenidos. *European Public & Social Innovation Review*, 10, 1-19. https://doi.org/10.31637/epsir-2025-1437

López Ramírez, T. (2023). La investigación sobre el papel de las TIC en la obtención y recepción de contenidos de salud y salud mental: Una revisión de la literatura. *Revista de Comunicación y Salud*, 14, 1-23. https://doi.org/10.35669/rcys.2024.14.e348

Pinilla, N. M., Arroyo, M. D. C. G., Miguel, P. A. S. & Ramos, J. R. (2024). Alfabetización física y salud mental: asociaciones en alumnos de educación física de primaria y secundaria. *Retos: nuevas tendencias en educación física, deporte y recreación*, 55, 581-587. https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/9439461.pdf

Vargas, J. J. & Yébenes Cortés, M. P. (2023). Salud mental y cobertura mediática del COVID-19: una investigación de los efectos del manejo de la televisión y la interrelación eficiente de la ansiedad a través de la técnica dual: sufrimiento vs dolor, para la mejora del estrés generado por la pandemia. *Vivat Academia*, 156, 288-305. https://doi.org/10.15178/va.2023.156.e1464