

# Impact of social media interventions on eating behaviours in young people: a mixed-method systematic review

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## Introduction

- Diet is a **targetable** contributor to adolescent health, weight & wellbeing.
- Globally **there are 4.9 billion** social media users: 60% aged 13-35 y. In the UK, **97% of 16-24 olds** engage weekly.
- **54% of youth** seek health advice on social media, yet face misinformation, unrealistic body standards & unhealthy food promotion/advertisements.
- Social media provides potential for **scalable and accessible** promotion of healthier diets/eating behaviours.
- Need for a review to capture current trends, qualitative user experiences and the mechanisms of how interventions work (or don't).



## Methods

To assess the impact of social media interventions on healthy eating in young people (13-35 years) by:  
[1] synthesizing **quantitative** effects & behaviour change techniques employed  
[2] exploring participants' **qualitative** experiences.

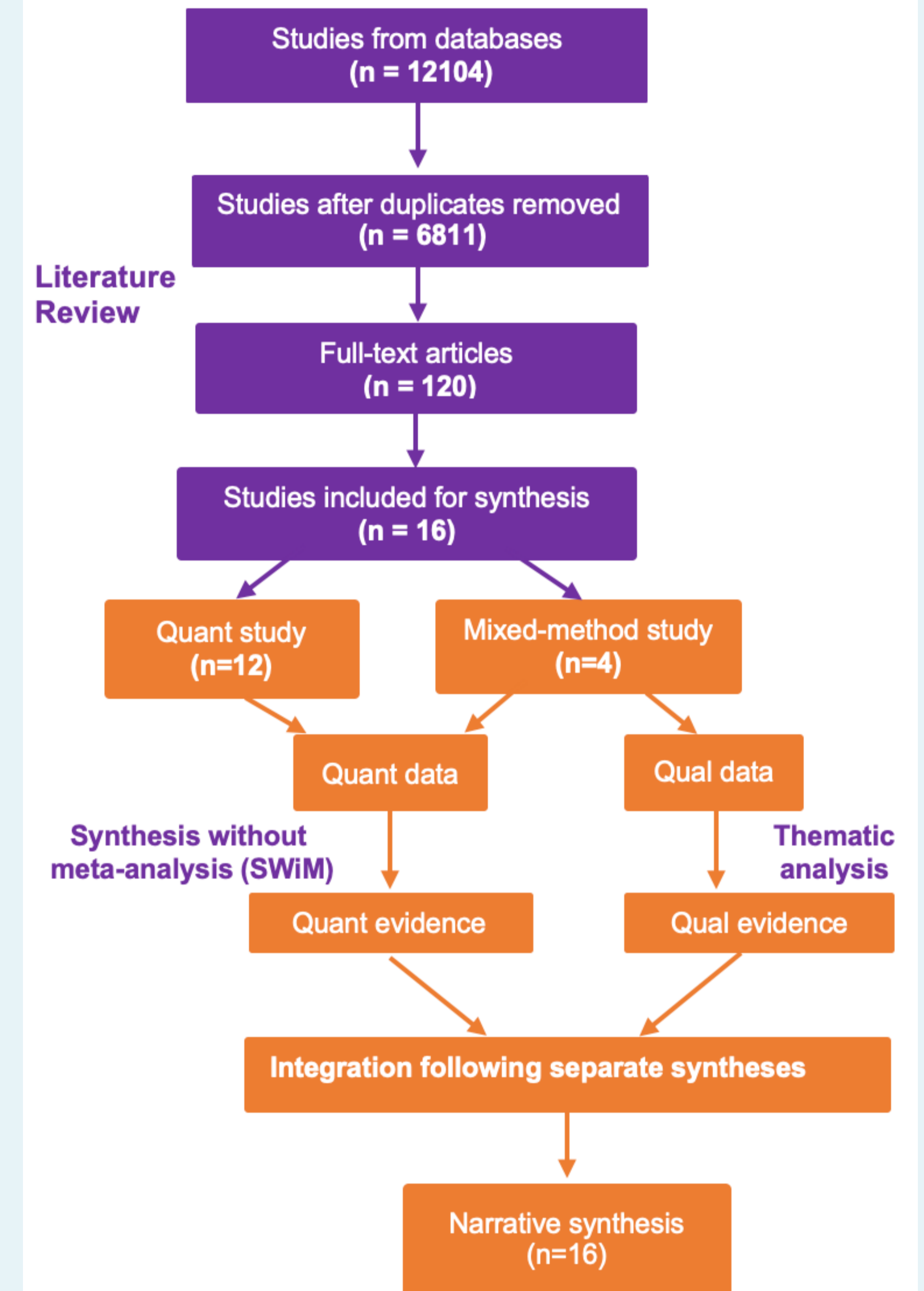
## Aim

- Systematic review of quantitative and qualitative studies (interventions & observational)
- **Search date:** 2/3/2023
- **Databases:** ASSIA, Cochrane Library, Embase, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, Scopus, Web of Science
- **Analysis:** Convergent segregated approach.
- **Eligibility:** Year 2000 onwards
- **Registration:** PROSPERO CRD42023414476



Scan ↑ for the protocol

## Data Analysis



## Results

### Qualitative Findings

#### Content Appreciation

- Participants favour personal narratives, evidence-based dietary information, and practical tips.

"I think that there's a lot of value in taking people's stories, lived experiences, and sharing it with others because I find...It **brings connection and community** within these silos we have and just makes us know that we're not alone in our struggles"

#### User Preferences

- Type 1 user: Values storytelling & strong community connection.
- Type 2 user: Actively seeks practical & evidence-based dietary guidance.
- Both highlight the want for localized content & culturally-tailored interventions.

#### Feedback & Themes

- Content that underscores well-being, mental health & realistic dietary tips is valued.

"It's nice to see a focus more on **"wellbeing"** and **"healthy bodies"**, rather than "skinny" and "losing weight".

"I'm more likely to remember the funny posts."

- Humour enhances engagement & content recall.
- Credibility of intervention tied to trust in the source.
- Signposting to reputable sources appreciated.

### Quantitative Findings

- **19 interventions** (n=16 studies)
- **Study Design:** Quasi-experimental (n=11), RCT (n=6), Observational (n=2)
- **Location:** 🇺🇸 (n=8), 🇬🇧 (n=4)
- **Target Pop:** Undergraduates (18-22 y; n=2390 total)
- **Intervention Duration:** Ave 12.8 weeks, most <10 weeks (n=11); longest at 12 months
- **Intervention Target:** Healthy eating (n= 12), Weight gain prevention (n= 5)
- **Social Media Platforms :** 📘 (n=14), 📷 (n=6), 📺 (n=5)
- **Effectiveness:** Positive impact (n=12), No impact (n=7)
- **Frameworks:** Social Cognitive Theory (n=2), Social Ecological Model (n=2), 'Not reported' (n=8)
- **Behaviour Change Techniques :** 'Information about health consequences' (n=13), 'Feedback on behaviours' (n=9), 'Goal setting' (n=8)

## Conclusions

- Social media is a promising tool to shape young people's eating behaviours → **Tailored, local content is key.**
- Previous interventions show significant positive change to diet → **potential ↑ effectiveness using behaviour change techniques**
- Aligning content & delivery mode with audience preferences is vital
- Emphasising **well-being & mental health resonates deeply** with the target audience.



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