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# Smartphones before 13? The mental health price is high, global study warns

Mind health in young adulthood compromised by early smartphone ownership

CLAIRE KEETON

Science confirms what many parents suspect. Owning a smartphone before adolescence heightens the risk of poorer mental health in early adulthood, a global study of more than 100,000 young adults shows.

Young people aged 18 to 24, who got their first smartphone at 12 or younger, were "more likely to report suicidal thoughts, aggression, detachment from reality, poorer emotional regulation and low self-worth", found the peer-reviewed study published this week.

"These symptoms... can have significant societal consequences as their rates grow in younger generations," said neuroscientist and lead author Dr. Tara Thiagarajan from US-based Sapient Labs.

The Smartphone Free Childhood movement in South Africa has noticed similar trends, said SFC-SA CEO Kate Farina. Thousands of parents in 318 schools across all provinces have joined the movement since it launched a year ago.

Giving smartphones to children under 13 (its associated with) significantly higher rates of anxiety, depression and even suicidal thoughts.

"The earlier a child gets a smartphone, the greater the mental health risk — especially for girls," said Farina, highlighting a recent statement on excessive screen time by the South African Society of Psychiatrists.

The movement supports the call for no smartphones to be given to under 13s and no social media under 16, and the latest study highlights reasons to take this stance.

The effects of early smartphone ownership were largely "associated with early social media access and higher risks of cyberbullying, disrupted sleep and poor family relationships



**PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN:** Besides the long-term threat to mind health, the short-term risks to children's safety on social media are huge, as media lawyer Emma Sadleir has demonstrated in legal cases and explained in books. Picture 123RF/NESTUS

by adulthood", the results showed. Besides the long-term threat to mind health, the short-term risks to children's safety on social media are huge, as media lawyer Emma Sadleir has demonstrated in legal cases and explained in books.

She won a major victory on Friday getting Meta Platforms to permanently shut down accounts posting child porn on WhatsApp and Instagram.

The four key recommendations of the study, published in the *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, include holding tech giants accountable to strengthen the active identification of social media age violations and ensure meaningful consequences for technology companies restricting access to social media platforms, implementing graduated access restrictions for smartphones, and a requirement of mandatory education on digital literacy and mental health.

In South Africa, 62% of children have access to a smartphone or tablet by age 10, 83%

wellbeing, which spans 71 countries and is the source of this study's data.

The researchers used the Mind Health Quotient (MHQ) — a self-assessment tool that measures social, emotional, cognitive and physical wellbeing — to analyse Global Mind Project data and generate an overall "mind health" score.

The younger children get smartphones, the lower the average mind health score. For example, one young person who got a phone at five, had a MHQ score of just one compared with an average score of 50 among people who first owned phones at 13.

The Covid-19 pandemic may have magnified the trends, the scientists noted.

Younger smartphone ownership among females was associated with lower self-image, self-worth and confidence and emotional resilience.

Among males it correlated with lower stability, calmness, self-worth and empathy.

While the strong results do not prove a causal link between early smartphone ownership and later wellbeing, there are a wake-up call to adults responsible for children's safety online.

Thiagarajan said: "Our evidence suggests childhood smartphone ownership, an early gateway into AI-powered digital environments, is profoundly diminishing mind health and wellbeing in adulthood with deep consequences for individual agency and societal flourishing."

"That said, I think it is also important to point out that smartphones and social media are not the only assault to mental health and crisis facing younger adults."

Farina said the SFC-SA advocates for a low-tech, slow-paced and intentional approach to digital access for children. "Before children step into the online world, they deserve time for real play, real connection and real-life experiences," she said. — *TimesLIVE*

Premium



**HEALTH HAZARD:** In South Africa, 62% of children have access to a smartphone or tablet by age 10. Picture 123RF



## ADVERT FOR NOTICE BOARD PROJECT DESCRIPTION

BID NO.	Description	Evaluation Criteria	Compulsory Tender & Site Briefing	Closing Date	CDB Grading
MN/SCM/14/25-26	CONSTRUCTION OF 45M2 HOUSE FOR A PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED PERSON (MANYAMAZANA VILLAGE)	80/20	Date: 01/08/2025 Time: 10:00	Date: 25/08/2025 Time: 12:00	26B or Higher
MN/SCM/17/25-26	CONSTRUCTION OF 45M2 HOUSE FOR AN ELDERLY PERSON (DOLORA FARM LOCATION)	80/20	Date: 01/08/2025 Time: 10:00	Date: 25/08/2025 Time: 12:00	26B or Higher
MN/SCM/22/25-26	CONSTRUCTION OF 45M2 HOUSE FOR A PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED PERSON (BOKA TOWNSHIP)	80/20	Date: 01/08/2025 Time: 10:00	Date: 25/08/2025 Time: 12:00	26B or Higher

Tender compulsory briefings for all the above projects will be held at Mnquma Local Municipality, corner King and Mithatha street Buterworth, 4860. Technical Enquiries: Mr. N. Nkomo (Manager: Building and Housing) at 047 050 1276/067 022 6170 email:nnkomo@mnquma.gov.za or Ms. N. Nkomo (Manager: SP) at 047 050 1338/067 022 6170 email:nnkomo@mnquma.gov.za

SCM Enquiries: Ms. Y. Vava (Manager: SCM) at 047 050 1156/072 696 6065 email: yvava@mnquma.gov.za

Evaluation Criteria: The evaluation will be conducted in two (02) stages namely:

Stage 1: Administrative compliance (Compliance with mandatory and other bid requirements will not be eligible for further evaluation and will be deemed as non-responsive).

Stage 2: Evaluation in terms of the 80/20 preference point systems prescribed in Preferential Procurement Regulations 2022

Prior to 40 points

Specific goals = 20 points

BID NO.	The specific goals allocated in terms of this tender	Specific goals points 20 points	Proof Required to score points
MN/SCM/14/25-26	An EME or USE which is at least 51% owned by black people	20	Fully completed and signed MBO 6.1 and Full Central Supplier Database Report (CSD) not older than one month.
MN/SCM/17/25-26	An EME or USE which is at least 51% owned by black people	20	Fully completed and signed MBO 6.1 and Full Central Supplier Database Report (CSD) not older than one month.
MN/SCM/22/25-26	An EME or USE which is at least 51% owned by black people	20	Fully completed and signed MBO 6.1 and Full Central Supplier Database Report (CSD) not older than one month. NO points will be claimed by the bidder if it fails to submit proof required to score points for specific goals.

NO: No points will be claimed by the bidder if it fails to submit proof to score points for specific goals.

**REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:** Potential bidders are urged to submit the following attachments when submitting their proposals, failure to do so will lead to disqualification:

Bid Number	Valid CDB Grading	Company Experience	Site Agent/Project Manager	Building Foreman	Occupational Health and Safety Officer
MN/SCM/14/25-26	26B or Higher	Bidder has successfully completed One (01) Building construction project	Academic Qualification: National Diploma in building with a minimum of 03 years' experience in building construction projects	Academic Qualification: Grade 12 with a minimum of 01 year experience in building construction projects	Grade 12 or equivalent qualification and Occupational Safety and Health certificate with a minimum of 01 year experience building construction projects
MN/SCM/17/25-26	26B or Higher				
MN/SCM/22/25-26	26B or Higher				

**Company Experience:** Bidder must attach Completion certificates with appointment letters in relation to the required services for building construction must be attached as a proof.

**Key Staff:** Bidders must submit detailed CVs with original certified true copies of the required professional qualifications. If the required certified copies of professional qualifications are not attached to the CVs, they will lead to disqualification. (Copy of a certified copy will not be considered).

**CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT AND TOOLS:**

o Concrete mixer

o Plate Compactor

o Single Cab backhoe

**NE: Bidding company must attach proof of ownership for (Concrete mixer and Plate Compactor) certificate of registration for (Single Cab Backhoe) or submit signed letter of intent to lease with proof of certificates of registration for (Single Cab Backhoe) and proof of ownership for (Concrete mixer and Plate Compactor). The signed letter of intent to lease must contain the relevant bid number/project description and construction equipment/fuels leased**

**COMPLIANCE WITH THE TENDER SPECIFICATION:**

- Fully completed by non-erasable ink and signed: Bill of Quantities

- Full CSD Report (Not older than one Month)

- Valid CDB Grading 26B or Higher

- Only the original tender document will be accepted.

- The tender offer submitted shall remain valid, irrevocable and open for written acceptance by the Mnquma Local Municipality for a period of 90 days from the closing date.

- In the case of partnerships/consortiums/joint venture agreement, signed agreement must be submitted with the tender document, and all parties/partners to the partnership/consortium/joint venture agreement must be registered on the Central Supplier Database

- If a bidder submits fraudulent information the bidder will be blacklisted for 5 years.

**NE: Failure to furnish all the above required documents, bidder will be disqualified.**

**OBTAINING OF TENDER DOCUMENTS:**

Tender documents for this project are downloadable at the municipal website: [www.mnquma.gov.za](http://www.mnquma.gov.za) and on eTender portal: <https://etenders.treasury.gov.za/>

**TENDER SUBMISSION AND OPENING**

Tender/Proposals must be submitted by hand at Bid Box, Corner King and Mithatha Street, Buterworth, 4860

Tenders should be sealed, endorsed on the envelope with:

**BID NUMBER:**

**PROJECT NAME:**

On the back of the envelope with:

- Company name and address, contact person and contact details

**CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTANCE:**

The Municipality is under no obligation to accept any proposal/tender and reserves the right to accept the whole or any part of the proposal/tender. No proposal/tender will be considered from persons in the service of the state.

The bidder or any of its directors/shareholders must not be listed on the Register of Tender Defaulters in terms of the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act of 2004 as a person prohibited from doing business with the public sector.

The bidder has not abused the Employer's Supply Chain Management System; or failed to perform on any previous contract and has been given a written notice to this effect.

No late, incomplete, unsigned, typed, couriered and emailed tenders will be accepted.

The tender offer submitted shall remain valid, irrevocable and open for written acceptance by the Mnquma Local Municipality for a period of 90 days from the closing date.

The award of the tender may be subjected to price negotiation with the preferred tenders.

The Municipality reserves the right to extend the tender period by notice in the press and on the municipality's official website [www.mnquma.gov.za](http://www.mnquma.gov.za)

**NE: Preferred bidder will be required to furnish the municipality:**

o CV/ Company Registration: Certified ID copies not older than six (06) months

o Tax compliance status (PIN)

o Certificate issued by the municipality or any other municipality to which it may be indebted to the effect that he or she, in the event of the bidder being a company, also any of its directors, is not indebted to the municipality or to any other municipality or municipal entity for rates, taxes and/or municipal service charges which are in arrears for a period of more than three months and that no dispute exists between such bidder and municipality or municipal entity concerned in respect of any such arrears.

Bidders who reside within the Mnquma Local Municipality (MLM) jurisdiction will be verified with MLM Revenue Section

5 Mthabane (Butterworth Municipality)

## BID NOTICES

King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality hereby calls upon accredited service providers to bid for the following tender advert:

No.	Project Name	CDB Grading	Ref Number	Closing Date	Enquiries	Evaluation Criteria
1.	Computer Hardware management, servicing and repair for a period of three months	N/A	SCM/2025/0001	2025/07/28 12:00	Technical Enquiries may be directed to: Mr. F. Ndlovu (Corporate Services) Email: <a href="mailto:fndlovu@kdsd.co.za">fndlovu@kdsd.co.za</a>	80/20
2.	Provision of 24-Hour alarm, anti-theft, and computer network management services for King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality for a period of three months	N/A	SCM/2025/0002	2025/07/28 12:00	Technical Enquiries may be directed to: Mr. N. Shabalala (Security and Guarding) Email: <a href="mailto:nshabalala@kdsd.co.za">nshabalala@kdsd.co.za</a>	80/20
3.	Provision of three town planning consulting services to undertake town planning work for a period of three (03) years	N/A	SCM/2025/0003	2025/07/28 12:00	Technical Enquiries may be directed to: Mr. N. Tshabalala (Human Settlements) Email: <a href="mailto:ntshabalala@kdsd.co.za">ntshabalala@kdsd.co.za</a>	80/20
4.	Provision of three land surveying consulting services to undertake land surveying work for a period of three (03) years	N/A	SCM/2025/0004	2025/07/28 12:00	Technical Enquiries may be directed to: Mr. N. Tshabalala (Human Settlements) Email: <a href="mailto:ntshabalala@kdsd.co.za">ntshabalala@kdsd.co.za</a>	80/20

Place of tender box: 1st Floor, Mthabane Building, Next to Room 147. All bids must be put in a sealed envelope and clearly marked with SCM Number and Project Name and be placed in a tender box. Tender documents can be downloaded free of charge from the National Treasury tender portal (<https://etenders.treasury.gov.za/>) and the King Sabata Dalindyebo website ([www.kdsd.co.za](http://www.kdsd.co.za)) as from the 28th of July 2025.

**NO HARD COPIES OF THE TENDER DOCUMENT ARE AVAILABLE FOR SALE. ONLY THE ELECTRONIC VERSION WHICH IS TO BE DOWNLOADED AS PER THE ABOVE WEBSITE IS TO BE USED.**

**BIDDERS MUST TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING BID CONDITIONS:**

- Failure to submit comprehensive JV agreement (where applicable), failure to do so will result in a tender deemed non-responsive.
- Individual partners of JV are to comply and submit all relevant documents, failure to do so will result in a tender deemed non-responsive.
- Failure to complete property and/or in full tender forms, MBO 1 to MBO 8 and Annexures A to F will result in a tender deemed non-responsive.
- Failure to sign MBO 5 by any other amounting or exceeding R10 million.
- The bidder to submit Audited financial statements for the past three financial years or any other amounting or exceeding R10 million inclusive of VAT.
- Failure to submit or complete supplementary information will result in the tender being null and void and non-responsive.
- Bidders must submit latest municipal rates statements (not older than three months) showing that municipal rates are not in arrears for periods in excess of three months. Bidders who operate on bonded premises are to submit a valid lease agreement and fully bonded tenders on areas not subject to municipal rates are to submit a confirmation from the Municipality's Finance Department confirming that such a bidder is not liable for municipal rates.
- The KSD Municipality reserves the right to disqualify any service provider whose members and/or shareholders own municipalities & towns.
- All bidders who fail to attend compulsory briefing meeting for SCM NO: 016009425 and SCM NO:012020425, their bids will not be considered.
- All bids must be sealed and clearly marked with SCM Number and Project Name and be placed in a tender box, failure to do so the document will not be considered.
- In terms of the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act 2022 (PPFFA) Points will be evaluated based on the following criteria:
  - Stage 1: Compliance
  - Stage 2: Functionality, with a minimum threshold of 70 points out of 100 points to be obtained by bidder in order to be evaluated further on the next stage.
  - Stage 3: Price and Specificity points
- All claims must be in a form of an e-mail and there will be no queries that will be entertained 5 working days before the closing date.

The tender will be evaluated and adjudicated on the basis of the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act, and the regulations pertaining thereto (2022 Regulations), as well as the King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality Supply Chain Management Policy. The preference point system to be used is provided for and project as per the KSDA SCM Policy.

SCM related enquiries may be directed to the SCM Unit at [pland@kdsd.co.za](mailto:pland@kdsd.co.za)

Mr. N. Palande - Municipal Manager