

The Role of Social Networks as a Digital Social Mirror for Identity Development of Adolescence

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Abstract

Social networking platforms have greatly changed the way how adolescents live and interact in the society. It is a global world where they connect, communicate, express themselves, and build up their personal identities. This study looks at how social networks act as a digital social mirror in the development of teenage identities. The research investigates how adolescents use social media to create their self-image, get social approval, form communication habits and social identities. Social networks have become the digital platforms for expressing, interacting, and comparing oneself with others. The present study focuses on the role of social networks as a digital social mirror in the identity development of adolescents in District Faisalabad. In the present research, data was collected through a well-structured questionnaire from 200 adolescents, aged between 10 to 19 years. Two public and two private schools were chosen using a stratified random sampling method. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling from the four schools. The findings of the study show that 65% of adolescents agreed that social media has an affect how they present themselves, 84% said it has improved their confidence in communication, and 71% noticed the changes in their language and communication style. Girls were more likely to say that social networks influence the way how they present themselves to others. In fact, Social networks function as a digital social mirror that helps to shape the identity through self-presentation, social comparison, and the adoption of norms influenced by online figures.

Key words: *Social network, Social mirror, Identity development, Adolescence, Socialization*

Introduction

Socialization is a lifelong process where an individual adopt new behaviors that are subject to ongoing adjustment. It is facilitated through individuals' identities within different groups in the community. Socialization encompasses formative, change-evoking, and educational processes that an individual experience through interactions with others in the society. Socialization as a process that facilitates the transformation of a human being from a biological entity to an intellectual social being (Saleh, 2018).

Identity development is a process that involves exploration and commitment, which adolescents experience. The stages of development are: (1) diffusion, (2) moratorium, (3) foreclosure, and (4)

achievement (Marcia, 1980). Recently, researchers have expanded the two key processes of exploration and commitment into multiple developmental paths and models. The three factor model suggests identity interpretation through three structural processes: commitment, deep exploration, and reconsideration of commitment (Crocetti, 2017).

Adolescence is a time period of developing identities, building peer relations, and learning the skills. During this developmental stage, social networking platforms provide the ways to communicate, learn and interact with the peer group (Berk, 2017). As they are the most active group of social networking platforms through mobile internet usage, these platforms provide spaces for identity formation. On these platforms they interact with peers and influencers, present themselves to online community and receive feedback which ultimately have effect on their personality development during this socialization period of life (Valkenburg, 2022).

The second decade of the twenty first century has seen the strengthening of social networking platforms as the main setting for adolescent social life. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, and WhatsApp have collectively replaced traditional face to face peer interaction as the primary way through adolescents communicate, seek approval, build narratives about themselves, and observe others (Anderson and Jiang, 2018).

Self-presentation refers to behaviors aimed at sharing information about oneself or one's self-image with others. It is triggered by the presence of others who evaluate (Baumeister and Hutton, 1987) and plays a crucial role in identity development (Yang et al., 2018). Self- presentation involves how individuals manage their image to be perceived by others. Social media provides new opportunities for selective self-presentation, allowing individuals to showcase the image they want others to see, which is typical in selfies and online profiles. In addition, the use of social media helps adolescents engage in various social interactions, which broadens their self-perception and evaluation (Schreurs and Vandenbosch, 2021).

The process of identity formation become more complex when adolescents have continuous exposure to digital platform and compare themselves with other peers in online social networking platforms. Confusion also resulted due to diverse and conflicting information on these platforms, making it difficult to form independent opinions and the sense of self for adolescents. The challenges are worsened due to the addictive nature of social media usage by the adolescents, which is hinder in the way of regulation of emotions and their abilities of decision making (Hur and Gupta, 2013). The social networking platforms help to increase the connections, support the peers, access to information and contribute to social and emotional development. However excessive use of these social networking platforms lead to risks including stress anxiety, comparison and cyberbullying that have an effect on adolescents' mental health and self esteem (Best et al., 2014).

Research Objectives

This study pursues four closely related objectives:

- (1) To find out Socioeconomic characteristics of respondents;
- (2) To examine the nature of adolescents' interaction with social networking platforms;
- (3) To analyze the relationship between social networks and adolescents' identity development;
- (4) To provide recommendations for teachers, parents, educators, and policy makers to promote healthy and balance use of social networking among adolescents

Conceptual Framework

The concept of digital social mirror based upon the Cooley's theory of looking glass self. According to this theory individual form the concept of self by how they appear to others, how other judge their appearance and develop a feeling of pride or prejudice. Social networking

platforms have transformed these processes by making it a digital social mirror for adolescents to shape their identity (Cooley, 1902).

Adolescence is a period of development during which individuals explore their identities, give importance to peer relation and internalize the norms. In traditional society of Pakistan, this process has been greatly influenced by family, religion, community and education system. Besides this, social networking platforms become an agent of socialization: a digital social mirror. This digital social mirror not only reflects the image of oneself but also makes and sometimes breaks this image, makes peer relations, influence on cultural values and social behavior. Pakistani society has a unique social and cultural landscape, that is shaped by strong patriarchal norms, religious values, urban-rural differences and importance of economic values. These factors within digital spaces is significantly different from Western context, and present research is based on examining the role of social networks in the socialization and identity development of adolescence through the concept of digital social mirror. The conceptual framework considers social networking platforms as a place where identities are not only expressed, but constructed, negotiated, and transformed.

Review of Literature

Bandura's (1977) theory of social learning explains that adolescents' identities are influenced by observing others. Adolescents give attention to the behavior from the influenced, imitate them and are motivated by likes, comments, followers and peer validation. The four conditions: attention, retention, reproduction and motivation of social learning are influenced through social networking platforms.

Bryant (2017) highlights that social networks have an impact on social interaction with family, peers and society and ultimately on identity formation of adolescents. Additionally, toxic use of social networking platforms leads to the issue of self-esteem and sense of belonging, for example adolescents' experiences psychological issues due to being ignored or excluded on the online platforms. The need of belonging is the need of human life and its failure leads to lower self-esteem and emotional stress. Increasing interaction with peers through social networking platforms also increases the risk of social pressure, cyberbullying, depression, anxiety and emotional stress. Lajnef (2023) considers that the social media personalities influence the development of adolescents' digital identities by influencing their behavior and self-esteem. The adolescents see their influencers as a role model by adopting their life styles, values and standards. The constant interaction with curated content may make adolescents aspire to such lifestyles and have social expectations. Although this process can motivate adolescents to be creative, to express, to set goals, but it can also put pressure on them to conform to unrealistic standards.

Boyd (2014) recognizes that the impact of the social networks on the identity formation, relationships, and interactions of adolescents is complex. The study highlighted that adolescents use social networks as a means of self-expression, communication and online/offline experiences. As these social networking platforms serve as a social learning, community building, it also leads to peer pressure, privacy concerns and cyberbullying. The importance of this study lies in the adolescent's engagement with social networks that change the traditional form of socialization.

According to Vogels and Gelles-Watnick (2023) adolescence grows up in a very different digital world than earlier generations did. Today, technology strongly shapes how teenagers spend their time. Two-thirds of adolescence use TikTok, while roughly 62% use Instagram and 59% use Snapchat. Only a small share of teens uses other sites: Twitter 23%, Twitch 20%, WhatsApp 17%, Reddit 14%, and Tumblr 5%. Adolescence usage of Facebook fell from 71% in 2014–2015 to 32% today.

According to Ding and Li (2023), the COVID-19 pandemic forced teenagers to depend more on digital tools. Schoolwork, friendships, and entertainment all quickly shifted online. With school going virtual, it blurred the lines between study time and personal life. Technology became even more embedded in teens' daily habits. While digital tools allowed classes to continue and kept people connected, excessive screen time has been linked to negative effects. Long hours in front of screens can lead to increased anxiety, depression, and feelings of loneliness among teens. More screen time can also disrupt sleep patterns and harm academic performance, highlighting how complex the impact of digital technology is on young people's well-being.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

A cross sectional design was used to collect data through a well-structured questionnaire to assess the pattern of social networks, peer interaction, communication, relationship, comparison and presentations to analyze the relation between social networks and identity development. This design is suitable for descriptive and analytical research, to collect and analyze the distribution and association of variables at a specific point of time in the target population (Bryman, 2016).

Study Area

The research was conducted in the rural areas of District Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. The rural areas were selected because there has been increasing affordability of internet with the availability of less expensive mobile phones. Secondly, adolescents face the tension between traditional cultural values and western cultures. Thirdly the analysis of different socioeconomic standards in public and private schools. Fourthly the study is significant due to the limited research on identity development of adolescents in rural areas of Pakistan.

Study Population

The population of this study included adolescents aged 10 to 19 years of age study in the secondary schools of District Faisalabad. This age group is appropriate with the adolescents' definition by World Health Organization, that consists of age group between 10 to 19 years of age (WHO, 2023). Adolescents in this age group are the most active group of social media usage and in the stage of developing their identities (Erikson, 1968; Twenge, 2017).

Sampling Strategy

Two public and two private schools were selected by using convenience sampling method from one tehsil of Faisalabad. Stratification was conducted based on school type (public or private) to ensure the inclusion of individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds, as school type is an indicator of socioeconomic status in Pakistan (Andrabi et al., 2008). Purposive sampling was used to select adolescent participants from the four chosen schools. This method was preferred to ensure that participants met specific inclusion criteria, such as being between the ages of 10 and 19, enrolled in the selected schools, and having personal experience with social media use. The 200 adolescents have been selected as the sample size in the quantitative analysis and out of which 50 students were selected from each of four selected schools.

Data Collection Procedures

The primary instrument used for quantitative data collection were a structured, self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was created to understand how adolescents use their social networks and how they perceive these uses affect their development of identity. The data collection process involved three main stages. First, permission was obtained from school

principals. Letters from the institution were provided to school authorities to make the data collection process easier. Second, the structured questionnaires were given to participants during their class time. Clear instructions were provided to all participants before they filled out the questionnaires. The confidentiality of the information provided was strictly maintained.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the structured questionnaires was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0. Frequencies and percentages for participants' demographic features and social media usage patterns were calculated using descriptive statistics. Bivariate analysis was used to understand the relationships between different variables.

Ethical Considerations

The study followed all ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. This involved ensuring the rights and well-being of participants were protected. Written informed consent was obtained from school administrators or parents/legal guardians of all adolescents before data collection began. Participants' willingness to take part in the research was confirmed.

Results and Discussion

Sociodemographic Profile of Respondents

Out of the 200 respondents, 78 (39.0%) were in the category of early adolescence (10-14 years), and 122 (61.0%) were in the category of late adolescence (15-19 years). The result is consistent with Valkenburg and Peter (2011) research on the "Internet enhanced self-disclosure hypothesis," which found that early adolescence use social networking platforms for identity formation.

From the 200 respondents, 100 (50.0%) respondents were from the private schools, and 100 respondents (50.0%) were from public schools. A study by Akram and Kumar (2017) on social media usage patterns among students showed that family and school backgrounds shape how they use the internet, what they do, how often, and why. Students at private schools are more likely to use social media for fun and to follow worldwide trends. Students at public schools often say their internet access is more limited or closely supervised. About 14.5% of the 200 respondents were in elementary school, and 85.5% were in secondary school. Valkenburg and Peter (2011) explored that late adolescence are more likely to use online social networking platforms for the formation of their identity than younger adolescence.

Monthly family income of 52 respondents (26.0%) were under Rs. 30,000 a month, and the biggest group, 89 respondents (44.5%) family income was between Rs. 30,001 and Rs. 60,000. Twenty-eight people, (14.0%,) said their income was between 60,001 and 100,000, and 31 people (15.5%) reported over Rs. 100,000. Most of the people surveyed, 70.5%, came from lower and lower-middle income homes earning under \$60,000 a month. The remaining 29.5% were from middle and high income households making more than \$60,000 monthly. Ali and Tariq's (2020) study on the use of social networking sites by Pakistani teens' found that young people from lower-income families often compare themselves to wealthier peers or online influencers. They watch the lifestyle, try to copy, feeling social pressure and feeling unhappy.

Digital Engagement

Most respondents relied 164 (82.0%) on smartphones, , while 17 (8.5%) respondents used tablets. Only 1 respondent (0.5%) used a desktop computer, while 10 respondents (5.0%) used laptops. Eight respondents (4.0%,) used other gadgets. These results match Subrahmanyam and Šmahel's 2011 findings for teenagers, smartphones are the main way to reach social networks, since they're easy to carry, keep them online all the time, and offer some privacy.

Most of the teens we surveyed, 163 people, or 81.5%, can access the internet, but 37 respondents, or 18.5%, do not. It seems most teens in Faisalabad have this. This means most teens in Faisalabad can get online, so they can use social media and take part in things tied to digital identity. Only a smaller group lacks direct access. Valkenburg and Peter (2011) point out that internet access matters not just for talking to others, but also for the social setting where teenagers form their identities through every day online interactions. Teens who can't access this space may lean more on regular, in-person interactions to shape who they are, instead of using the online platforms this study looked at. In this group of teens, TikTok was the top choice, 67 of them, or 33.5%, used it. After that came YouTube, which 37 people (18.5%) used. Of the respondents, 31 (15.5%) used educational sites or apps, 25 (12.5%) used WhatsApp, and 22 (11.0%) used Instagram. Each of Facebook and Snapchat, and other platforms too, were used by 6 respondents (3.0%). Massarat (2022) says TikTok is the top social media choice for teens worldwide, mainly because it offers short videos, uses an algorithm to find what you'll like, and keeps pushing trends and challenges. TikTok's design rewards eye-catching, looks-focused posts, giving us a solid base to use the "digital social mirror" idea described in this study.

Univariate Analysis: Social Networks and Self-Presentation

These variables represent the core theoretical construct of the study, "digital social mirror," by measuring specific behavioral and attitudinal aspects through which social networks and devices are believed to influence adolescent identity.

Table 1: Univariate Analysis of Social Networks and Self-Presentation

Variables	SD n(%)	D n(%)	N n(%)	A n(%)	SA n(%)	Total n(%)
Imitate influencers or celebrities online	20 (10)	60 (30)	19 9.5	34 (17)	67 (33.5)	200 (100)
Post content on social media	35 (17.5)	47 (23.5)	27 (13.5)	41 (20.5)	50 (25.5)	200 (100)
Prefer online communication over face to face interaction	54 (27)	9 (4.5)	29 (14.5)	59 (29.5)	49 (24.5)	200 (100)
Feel confident while presenting online	35 (17.5)	35 (17.5)	19 (9.5)	41 (20.5)	70 (35)	200 (100)
online interactions influence the behavior and personality	10 (5)	11 (5.5)	97 (48.5)	16 (8)	66 (33)	200 (100)
Social networks affect daily activities, habits and sense of identity	15 (7.5)	34 (17)	43 (21.5)	40 (20)	68 (34)	200 (100)
Social networks helps to communicate with friends	10 (5)	7 (3.5)	51 (25.5)	22 (11)	110 (55)	200 (100)
Social networks improves confidence in communication	2 (1)	10 (5)	20 (10)	52 (26)	116 (58)	200 (100)
Social networks reduce face to face communication with family members	15 (7.5)	52 (26)	25 (12.5)	69 (34.5)	39 (19.5)	200 (100)
Online content affects language or communication style	8 (4)	8 (4)	42 (21)	42 (21)	100 (50)	200 (100)
Social media influences how I present myself to others	16 (8)	7 (3.5)	47 (23.5)	33 (16.5)	97 (48.5)	200 (100)

About 50.5% of adolescence said that they agree or strongly agree that they copy influencers they see online, which fits Social Comparison Theory from Festinger (1954) and later digital versions by Vogel et al. (2014). The researchers concluded that when people see polished online profiles often, they tend to compare themselves to others and may copy what they see, either to deal with their feelings or to reach those same standards.

About 45.5% of respondents shared content themselves, backing Valkenburg and Peter's (2011) idea of Internet-enhanced self-expression. The theory says online spaces lower the dangers of sharing personal thoughts, so adolescence, especially those who feel unsure offline, can try out who they are through posts that are chosen with care.

A majority 54%, of respondents prefer online communication, which matches Twenge's (2017) findings in iGen: that each newer generation leaning towards the talking through screens. The driven them to lower the level of social anxiety. But Twenge warns that continuous exposure can also slow the growth of interpersonal skills of individuals over time.

More than half of the respondents said they felt more confident online, matching Walther's (1996) Hyperpersonal Model. Because people can shape and edit how they show up online, they're often able to present a version of themselves that feels more confident and more ideal than they could in real-life, face-to-face situations. Even with almost half staying neutral at 48.5%, the 41% who agreed is still striking and matches Steinberg's 2008 findings on teen social thinking. Steinberg finds that teenagers react strongly to social feedback, so what happens in online chats can shape their personalities, even if we often miss it.

A 54% agreement strongly backs the study's main point and matches Boyd's (2014) idea of "networked publics." It shows that teens' everyday routines and how they see themselves are shaped more and more by online platform rhythms, like checking notifications, posting, and watching likes and comments.

With high agreement, 66% on easy communication and 84% on building confidence, align with Valkenburg and Peter's Social Compensation Hypothesis (2007). The idea is that online platforms feel less stressful for shy or socially anxious adolescence, giving them a safe place to practice talking and improve their communication skills, which can then help their relationships in everyday life.

When 54% of teens say gadgets cut down on in-person family talks, it backs the Displacement Hypothesis (Kraut et al., 1998; Nie, 2001): the time they spend on digital media usually takes the place of family interaction, not improves it. Crystal's 2008 research in **Internet Linguistics** backs up the 71% strong agreement that online content shapes how people speak. It shows that teens are increasingly using digital habits, like abbreviations, slang, and emoji-style expressions, in their everyday conversations.

The study's "digital mirror" idea gets its strongest backing from the 65% who say social media shapes how people present themselves. This idea links to Goffman's 1959 theory of how people "act" to shape how others see them, later expanded by Marwick and Boyd in 2011, who say social media pushes teens to perform for an "imagined audience," which affects their identity.

About 67.5% of adolescents said social media affects traditional cultural and family values, and 58% strongly agreed, an outcome that feels especially specific to this setting and most important for the study. In Pakistan's social and cultural world, where family honor, community identity, Islamic values, and passing traditions down through generations matter a lot, there's a serious sociological worry that social media could disrupt society. Ahmed and Ullah (2021) describe "digital code-switching" as the push and pull between online culture and Pakistani Islamic values, which creates a special challenges for social learning and calls for actions from teachers, parents, and policymakers.

Bivariate Analysis: Gender × Online Interactions Influence Behavior and Personality Hypotheses

H₀: There is no statistically significant association between gender and the perception that online interactions influence the behavior and personality of adolescents.

H₁: There is a statistically significant association between gender and the perception that online interactions influence the behavior and personality of adolescents.

Table 2: Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents, Online Interactions Influence Behavior and Personality

Category	Male n(%)	Female n(%)	Total n(%)
Strongly Disagree	7 (7.0%)	3 (3.0%)	10 (5.0%)
Disagree	7 (7.0%)	4 (4.0%)	11 (5.5%)
Neutral	54 (54.0%)	43(43.0%)	97 (48.5%)
Agree	7 (7.0%)	9 (9.0%)	16 (8.0%)
Strongly Agree	25 (25.0%)	41 (41.0%)	66 (33.0%)
Total	100(100.0%)	100(100.0%)	200(100.0%)

Chi-Square Test

Table 3: Chi-Square Test: Gender × Online Interactions Influencing Behavior and Personality

Statistic	Value	df	p-value	Cramer's V	Result
Chi-square (χ^2)	7.532	2	0.023*	0.194	Significant*

The analysis shows a meaningful link between gender and how much people feel online interactions affect their behavior and personality ($\chi^2(2) = 7.532$, $p = 0.023$, Cramer's $V = 0.194$). Because $p = 0.023$ is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that boys and girls in their teen years see online interactions as shaping their behavior and personality in very different ways. The frequency table stands out most in “Strongly Agree”: 41.0% of female teens said online interactions shape their behavior and personality, while only 25.0% of male teens said the same. Putting the two agreement groups together, half of the women agreed overall (50.0%), but only 32.0% of the men did, an 18-point gap. On the other hand, boys were almost twice as likely as girls to disagree (14.0% vs.).7.0% In both groups, the Neutral option was the biggest: 54.0% of males and 43.0% of females. This suggests many people felt unsure, or didn’t clearly recognize how online activity affected their behavior. These results fit Bandura’s 1977 Social Learning Theory, which says people learn by watching in different ways, depending on what they pay attention to and what motivates them. Girls may agree more because they’re more likely to compare themselves and copy others’ identities on apps full of looks and lifestyle posts, especially TikTok, the most used platform in the study (33.5%). Meier and Johnson (2022) also reported that teen girls are more likely to compare themselves upward on social media, making them more aware of how online posts affect how they see themselves and how they act. A neutral response rate of 48.5% overall may be important, so it should get extra attention. It indicates that almost half of the teens in the study don’t realize that online interactions can shape their behavior or personality. Schreurs and Vandenbosch’s (2021) SMILE model says many teens don’t have the digital skills they need to think critically about how social media content, shaped by the platform, affects what they think and how they act. It works quietly, without you noticing on purpose.

Overall, the results show that most teens use smartphones, stay online a lot, and spend plenty of time on video and performance-focused apps like TikTok and YouTube. They regularly see a mix of educational and entertaining posts, with plenty of fashion and lifestyle content in the mix. Most

people say social media boosts their confidence in how they talk, how they present themselves, how they choose words, their daily habits, and even how they see who they are, plus, they believe phones and other gadgets have changed face-to-face family conversations. The correlation analysis suggests these self-reported effects are linked. How you present yourself, adjust your language, communicate confidently, copy others' influence, and shape your habits and identity all tend to connect strongly. When family talk gets less, sleep can also suffer, though the connection isn't as strong. It means social media and devices work like digital mirrors. Teenagers aren't just watching, they actively respond to images of themselves, compare those images to social standards, and use feedback, whether they realize it or not, to judge their value. They also try out different ways to present themselves and figure out what will be accepted by others. Smartphones are everywhere, the internet is easy to reach, and social apps often push people to measure themselves against others. Teens also notice how all of this works. Infact digital spaces play a major role how adolescence see themselves, their family, school, and peers. The digital mirrors can help the adolescence to explore who they are, learn, and form healthier identities. Still, lots of content focuses on looking good and living "the right" lifestyle, adolescence copy the influencers and practice it in real-life conversations and excessive usage of these networks disturb their sleeping pattern. This can fuel the social comparison, appearance, approval, and reducing the interaction with the family. Parents, teachers, and policymakers should take steps on this.

Recommendations

From the results on teens' backgrounds, their online habits, and what they think social media and gadgets do for building identity, following recommendations are purposed.

Recommendations for Parents and Families

Since most people use smartphones (82.0%), and 54.0% say gadgets disturb the family time, families should set clear rules for using smartphones and other devices. You can set clear "no gadget" times, like during family dinners, so everyone has real chances to connect and talk together. Since 61.0% of participants are late adolescents aged 15–19, when they're figuring out who they are, parents should closely watch the kind of online content their kids are viewing. With TikTok at 33.5% and YouTube at 18.5%, it's no surprise this matters, half of the people surveyed (50.5%) say online celebrities shape what they think and do. Because most respondents, 70.5%, come from low-income families earning Rs.70,000 or less, parents in these homes should be offered digital parenting workshops through their schools or local community. These workshops can teach them to use digital tools better, especially if they don't have other resources or organized offline activities to rely on.

Recommendations for Schools and Educators

About 65% of respondents say that social networks shapes how they see themselves, while 71% agreed that online content affects their language and communication skills. In the schools, teachers should teach digital and media literacy in the class that would help adolescence to spot misleading online info and see how social media shows perfect versions of people, and tell the difference between an online persona and who someone really is. With 35.5% interest in learning content and 15.5% in education sites or apps, schools should make or recommend reliable digital lessons. It helps pull teens' attention away from entertainment content (31.5%). Since most people agree (84.0%) that social media helps communication, schools should use digital tools to build confidence, especially in class presentations, group work, and peer feedback. School counselors should point out that while many teens understand how online activity affects language and how

they present themselves, just 41.0% say it strongly shapes their behavior or personality, and 48.5% are unsure or neutral.

Recommendations for Policymakers and Relevant Institutions

Over 81.5% of adolescence widely used online and apps like TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat, governments should set age-based rules for online content and build tools that help adolescence to form a digital identity. This might mean setting screen-time alerts and restricting content that pushes appearance or comparison. Policymakers and school leaders should make digital skills and online safety training available in every school, so students from all income backgrounds can benefit equally. Because people disagree a lot about whether online chats are better than meeting in person (only 27% strongly disagree, while 54% agree or strongly agree), leaders and child welfare groups should back studies and programs that track how these preferences shift over time and how they affect kids' social skills.

Recommendations for Adolescents

Adolescents should reflect on what type of content they consume, related to entertainment, fashion, language, behavior and aspirations. This is important as over half of the respondents (54.0%) agreed that social networks influences their self concept. Half of the respondents (50.5) admitted that they copying the behaviour of influencers more than the real life role models of family members, teachers, and community members for developing a more balanced and comprehensive understanding of their identity.

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