

# Adolescent Family Dynamics and the Role of Social Media in Shaping Relationships

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## R e v i e w e r s

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## 1. Round 1

### 1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The introduction suggests a dichotomy between positive and dysfunctional family environments but does not fully explore how these environments intersect with cultural factors. For example, how might Tehran's specific cultural context (as mentioned later) influence these dynamics? Could you add more detail on cultural nuances affecting family dynamics and social media use?

The statement "The COVID-19 pandemic further complicated this relationship" (p. 4) is important, but could be more precise. The pandemic led to a variety of new challenges, such as increased screen time or isolation. A brief elaboration on which specific aspects of social media use were influenced by the pandemic (e.g., virtual learning or increased social media consumption for social connection) would provide more specificity.

The description of the semi-structured interview process is clear. However, the exact nature of the questions used during the interviews could be better outlined. How were the questions designed to probe family dynamics specifically related to social media use? Providing an example of a question or topic covered would increase transparency and replicability.

The subcategory "Social Media as a Communication Tool" mentions the use of social media for "connecting with peers" (p. 7). How might these online peer interactions differ from face-to-face interactions? Are there any qualitative differences in how adolescents perceive online versus offline friendships? Exploring this difference would add valuable context to the findings.

The sentence "Our results suggest that adolescents who reported higher levels of familial warmth and communication tended to use social media more positively..." (p. 9) is insightful, but it would be stronger if it directly referenced specific findings from your results. For instance, which specific behaviors or experiences were linked to positive social media use in adolescents from warmer, more communicative families?

The statement "In contrast, adolescents from families with higher conflict levels or weaker emotional support reported more frequent negative experiences with social media" (p. 9) would benefit from specific examples or quotes from the interviews. Including direct participant quotes could strengthen the argument by offering firsthand perspectives on how family conflict manifests in online behavior.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

## 1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The introduction would benefit from a clearer articulation of the research gap. The statement "However, the growing reliance on digital platforms for socialization has brought forth new challenges..." (p.1) introduces the challenges of digital platforms but could be more specific. Could you specify which "new challenges" are the focus of this study, and how they differ from existing literature? Adding this clarity will make the reader immediately understand the study's significance.

The term "family dynamics" is mentioned multiple times without a concrete definition. While it is implied that it refers to parenting styles and emotional support, providing a brief definition or clarification at the outset would enhance clarity. A clear conceptual framework is essential for framing the study. Please define "family dynamics" within the context of this study, especially in relation to social media use.

The sentence, "Studies have shown that a positive family environment—characterized by healthy communication, emotional support, and structured boundaries—can serve as a protective factor..." (p. 2) is useful but could be more precise. It would be helpful to mention specific studies or evidence directly linking these family characteristics to the use of social media. Without direct citations here, the reader might question the strength of the claim.

The mention of "the overwhelming exposure to idealized versions of reality on these platforms" (p. 3) could be strengthened by citing empirical evidence linking exposure to idealized content with specific mental health outcomes like depression or body image issues in adolescents. Please incorporate a reference that specifically connects this exposure with adverse psychological effects in the adolescent demographic.

The sentence "The degree of family support—such as positive reinforcement, encouragement, and empathy—can buffer the negative psychological effects of social media" (p. 3) requires further elaboration. How exactly does family support buffer these effects? Are there specific mechanisms of support that mediate this process, such as communication practices or emotional regulation strategies?

The sentence "These differences underscore the importance of exploring family dynamics in diverse settings, particularly in urban environments like Tehran" (p. 4) is critical. However, the comparison between "different cultural and familial contexts" would be stronger with a brief example of a contrasting urban or rural setting within Iran or another country. This would add depth to your argument regarding the importance of context in family dynamics.

The use of NVivo software for thematic analysis is appropriate, but it would strengthen the methodology section if you elaborated on how the themes were coded. For instance, were codes predefined based on existing literature, or were they generated inductively from the data? Providing more information about the coding process would help readers assess the rigor of the analysis.

The demographic breakdown (e.g., 5 female and 4 male adolescents) is valuable, but you do not specify the age range within the 12-18 age group. How might the age differences within this group affect social media use or family dynamics? Offering a breakdown by age or further discussing the age range would provide more insight into the adolescent experiences.

The data point that 28% of adolescents came from single-parent families (p. 6) is interesting but underexplored in the discussion. Do these adolescents report different experiences or challenges related to social media use compared to those from two-parent households? Expanding on this finding could add depth to the analysis of family structure and social media engagement.

The subcategory "Adolescent Independence" under "Family Dynamics" (p. 6) mentions "negotiating freedom and control" but does not specify how this process unfolds. Are there particular strategies parents use to negotiate this balance? Are there significant differences between mothers and fathers in how they manage adolescent independence? This would be an important area to explore.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

## 2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.