

## Mastering Digital Personas: Balancing Social Connectivity and Privacy for Tanzanian Adolescents' Well-Being

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### ABSTRACT

The rise of social media has transformed digital platforms into essential arenas for public discourse, allowing extensive user participation in content creation and modification. This shift enhances interaction and expression but also presents challenges in digital identity management, particularly regarding reputational integrity and information privacy. This study assesses the impact of digital persona management on the well-being and interpersonal development of Tanzanian adolescents aged 14 to 22. A mixed-methods approach, the research combines quantitative data analysis with qualitative structured interviews to gather insights from a diverse group of social media users. One hundred fifty teenagers were surveyed about their online activities and overall well-being, and five focus groups with 40 participants were conducted for deeper perspectives. Results revealed that social media is a double-edged sword for teenagers, offering significant benefits and risks based on personal characteristics and usage habits. While social media can enhance social connectivity and self-expression, it also poses threats such as cyberbullying, privacy breaches, and unhealthy social comparisons, negatively affecting adolescents' mental health and social relationships. The study underscores the need for comprehensive digital literacy programs that promote responsible social media use and suggests integrating digital persona management into educational curricula to boost adolescents' resilience against adverse impacts. Additionally, it calls for policies to protect young users' privacy and ensure safe online environments. This research contributes to digital identity management theory. It offers practical recommendations for educators, parents, and policymakers, emphasizing the importance of ongoing research to adapt to the evolving digital landscape and safeguard adolescent well-being.



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## 1. Introduction

With an estimated 3 billion users globally, social media has deeply integrated into daily life (David et al., 2021). Among these users, adolescents and young adults stand out as the most active participants in the social media sphere, which plays a pivotal role in shaping their well-being and relationships (Ezzat, 2020). Adolescents find themselves at a pivotal juncture where personal identity intersects with the ever-evolving landscape of social networking. With the advent of social media platforms, young people now have unprecedented opportunities to express themselves, build relationships, and mold their online personas (Hodkinson, 2012). Understanding how teenagers navigate this complex terrain, construct their digital identities, and strike a balance between their online and offline personas becomes increasingly crucial as the digital world becomes more deeply ingrained in their lives. This paper studies the significance of adolescents actively managing their social networking profiles, specifically focusing on how their digital persona influences various aspects of their lives.

### 1.1. Background

In an era characterized by unprecedented interconnectedness, the advent of digital technology has precipitated profound transformations in communication, significantly influencing adolescents. The proliferation of social media platforms has established them as the main channels through which public debate is carried out, allowing users to actively participate in creating content (Adjei et al., 2020). However, this phenomenon underscores critical concerns regarding managing digital identities on these platforms, particularly in preserving reputations and safeguarding information privacy. The proliferation of social networking platforms has fostered a novel realm of interaction, fundamentally altering how young people globally navigate their digital personas (Faccennini & DePaul University, 2021).

Social networking platforms have become ubiquitous, transcending geographical boundaries and cultural differences. Adolescents worldwide actively engage in the digital realm, where online identities often hold as much significance as their physical selves (Chan, 2022). The widespread availability of smartphones and internet connectivity has expedited this digital transformation, with social media as a primary communication channel, self-expression, and youth networking (Faccennini & DePaul University, 2021). This digital era presents substantial opportunities for adolescents to connect, learn, and explore diverse perspectives. However, it simultaneously introduces a range of challenges, including concerns related to privacy, cyberbullying, addiction, and the potential for detrimental social comparison. The digital landscape's rapid evolution necessitates a nuanced understanding of its implications on adolescent development. Adolescents at a critical stage of identity formation often find themselves navigating a complex interplay between their online and offline selves. The digital realm offers a platform for self-expression and social validation, which can be both empowering and fraught with risks. The ability to curate and control one's online persona can lead to positive outcomes such as enhanced self-esteem and social connectivity. Conversely, the pressure to conform to online norms and exposure to cyberbullying can adversely impact mental health and well-being (Taylor, 2023).

In Africa, the proliferation of digital technology has brought both promise and complexity to the lives of adolescents. Despite infrastructural and economic disparities, the continent has witnessed a rapid increase in internet access, mainly through mobile devices. African adolescents increasingly turn to social networking platforms for peer communication, access to interpersonal resources, and engagement with global trends (Kowalski et al., 2014). In this context, social media offers a unique space for self-expression and cross-cultural

dialogue. However, it also introduces challenges related to digital literacy, online safety, and the potential amplification of existing social inequalities.

The Tanzanian context exemplifies a dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity. Like many African nations, Tanzania is undergoing a digital revolution, particularly among its youth population. The country's young people are embracing social media to connect with friends and family, access interpersonal content, and explore personal and professional growth opportunities (Cross, 2021). While offering significant advantages, this digital engagement also brings forth critical issues such as digital access disparities, cyberbullying, and misinformation. The issue of digital access disparity is particularly pronounced in Tanzania. While urban areas enjoy relatively better internet infrastructure, rural regions often lag, creating a digital divide that can exacerbate social inequalities. Adolescents in urban centers have more significant opportunities to harness digital platforms for personal growth and social purposes, whereas their rural counterparts may face access and digital literacy limitations. This difference emphasizes the necessity of focused efforts to close the digital gap and guarantee fair access to digital resources.

Cyberbullying presents another significant challenge within the Tanzanian adolescent demographic (Cross, 2021). The anonymity and reach of social media platforms can facilitate harmful behaviors such as harassment and bullying, which can have severe psychological impacts. Adolescents may experience increased anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal as a result of cyberbullying. Addressing this issue requires comprehensive strategies, including implementing robust online safety measures and promoting positive digital citizenship. Meanwhile, misinformation is an additional concern in the digital age, with social media platforms often serving as vectors for the rapid spread of false information. For Tanzanian adolescents, navigating this landscape requires critical digital literacy skills to discern credible sources and counteract misinformation. Educational initiatives to enhance digital literacy are crucial in equipping young people with the tools to critically engage with digital content (Al-Samarraie et al., 2022).

Understanding how Tanzanian adolescents manage their social networking profiles is crucial for promoting positive online experiences and harnessing the potential of digital platforms for personal growth and social opportunities. Digital persona management involves deliberately modulating one's online identity to reflect personal values, aspirations, and social connections. Effective management of digital personas can enhance adolescents' social capital, foster positive self-esteem, and support academic and professional endeavors. Conversely, mismanagement can lead to reputational damage, privacy breaches, and adverse psychological outcomes. To promote responsible digital persona management, it is essential to integrate digital literacy education into the school curriculum (Faccennini & DePaul University, 2021). Such education should encompass a range of topics, including online safety, privacy management, and the ethical use of digital platforms. Additionally, parents and guardians play a critical role in guiding adolescents' digital behaviors and fostering open communication about online experiences.

According to Adjei et al. (2020), policymakers also have a pivotal role in shaping the digital landscape to protect and empower young users. Policies to enhance internet infrastructure, ensure data privacy, and combat cyberbullying are essential in creating a safe and equitable digital environment. Collaboration between government entities, educational institutions, and technology companies is necessary to address the multifaceted challenges of the digital age and support the holistic development of adolescents.

The emergence of social media platforms and the introduction of digital technologies have significantly changed how teenagers communicate. While these platforms offer significant opportunities for connection, personal growth, and self-expression, they also present complex challenges related to digital identity management, privacy, and online safety. In the Tanzanian context, addressing these challenges requires studies investigating different approaches, including enhancing digital literacy, bridging digital access disparities, and implementing robust policies to protect young users. By understanding and addressing these dynamics, Tanzanian societies can harness the potential of digital platforms to support the well-being and development of Tanzanian adolescents.

## 1.2. Problem Statement

Tanzanian adolescents on social media platforms willingly share an extensive range of personal information; these platforms are designed to encourage information sharing and the expansion of networks. Nevertheless, only a few adolescents adopt a fully private approach to social media by employing various strategies to restrict and prune their profiles. The approaches to managing online identity and reputation vary significantly based on the size of the user's network. Even though a minority of adolescents opt for private settings for their digital identities, social networking platforms like Facebook, MySpace, Telegram, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter (X) enable this group to share their personal information with extensive networks of friends, making their profiles widely accessible to the public. Despite the opportunities for personal growth, social connection, and information dissemination offered by social media, these platforms also introduce various challenges and risks. Consequently, this study aims to address this gap by studying the motivations, strategies, and emotional consequences of adolescents' management of their social networking profiles, ultimately shedding light on the profound significance of managing their digital persona and well-being for adolescents.

## 1.3. Literature Review

### 1.3.1. Theoretical Literature Review

#### *Social Identity Theory*

Henri Tajfel and John Turner's Social Identity Theory, first introduced in 1970, offers a valuable framework for examining how individuals shape their self-concept and identity within social structures. This theory proves particularly relevant in understanding how adolescents navigate and manage their digital personas, a critical component of their social identity in our study. It provides insights into their motivations, whether aligning their online image with specific online communities or adhering to the norms prevalent on social media platforms. By applying the Social Identity Theory, we can gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing adolescents' behaviors and decisions in the digital realm, contributing significantly to our comprehension of digital persona management among young individuals.

#### *Cognitive Dissonance Theory*

Leon Festinger first proposed the idea of cognitive dissonance theory in 1957. It states that people feel uncomfortable when their attitudes or beliefs conflict with how they behave. In the context of this study, Cognitive Dissonance Theory is employed to investigate the stress that adolescents may undergo when they project different aspects of their identity on social media compared to their real-life selves. This hypothesis serves as a valuable tool for comprehending the psychological processes that underlie teenagers' attempts to harmonize their online personas with their offline identities and the strategies they employ to alleviate

cognitive dissonance. Cognitive Dissonance Theory's core is the premise that when two ideas are incongruent, individuals experience a discordant cognitive conflict, also known as dissonance. Because cognitive dissonance is inherently uncomfortable, people endeavor to resolve it by adjusting one or both beliefs.

Integrating these concepts lays a robust theoretical groundwork for understanding the intricacies of adolescents' digital identity management on social networking platforms. These ideas delve into the motivations, behaviors, and psychological mechanisms involved, offering valuable insights into why adolescents craft and maintain their online personas. This theoretical framework not only aids in analyzing and interpreting data but also provides meaningful perspectives on the profound importance of digital identity management among young individuals.

#### **1.4. Empirical Literature Review**

Infancy, early childhood, late childhood, adolescence, and adulthood are the five stages of human development. The most widely recognized adolescent transition, puberty, causes significant bodily changes in teenagers as they approach adulthood. Adolescents go through a time when they build an older identity and become more receptive to the influence of others, frequently modeling adult behaviors. Exploring the evolution of early human selfhood and identity reveals the dual impact of social media on adolescents' emotional and identity development, as noted by Wood and Brownhill (2018). This highlights digitalization's significant role in shaping self-perception, blurring the boundaries between online and offline experiences. Social media platforms can offer positive and negative influences, impacting how adolescents perceive themselves and interact with others in both virtual and real-world settings. Understanding this dynamic relationship is crucial for comprehending the complexities of modern identity formation and its implications for adolescent development in today's digital age.

Huang et al. (2021) distinguish between two key concepts: online identity reconstruction, which is focused on creating distinct online and offline identities to achieve a desired, possibly positive, or even false self-presentation, and online identity construction, which is primarily concerned with forming self-definitions and self-images online based on personal attributes and social roles. This distinction suggests that myriad intricate mechanisms form diverse online identities and selves and that these processes may also influence offline identities in the real world. It emphasizes how our actions in the digital sphere influence our sense of self-worth in the same manner that our diverse digital self-portraits influence our actions. The adolescent brain shows increased responsiveness in cognitive regions, according to Liu et al. (2019), making them more vulnerable to the influence of endorsements in social media posts. According to Statista (2020), teenagers who use social media regularly are exposed to marketing and endorsements from social media influencers. Adolescents may find it difficult to differentiate between opinion-based and factual marketing, unlike adult users who can do so easily.

Kreling et al. (2021) investigate the concept of authenticity, highlighting two crucial dimensions: authentic self-awareness, involving self-exploration and self-identity, and authentic self-expression, which pertains to the continuous, genuine expression of one's self-based on self-awareness. Kreling et al. (2021) underscore the importance of state authenticity, characterized as the feeling of being in harmony with oneself at a particular moment, especially when self-presentation on social media through Stories and Posts. Understanding the relationship between authenticity and mental health requires thoroughly analyzing how social network site features affect state authenticity. This is especially important in light of the

higher prevalence of mental health issues in Generation Z (Hodkinson, 2017), where excessive use of social media is identified as a significant contributing factor.

A growing body of research indicates that digital technology has a significant impact on behavior, cognition, and brain function (Small et al., 2020) This demonstrates that the effects of digitalization extend to the neurobiological levels. This suggests there is more to digitalization's impact on humans than first meets the eye. Digitalization has far-reaching and progressive consequences on both the world and individuals. As a result, mounting evidence and emerging phenomena point to the potential formation of a new self-identity in the Age of Digitalization, which may be called the "Digitalized Self." Adjei et al. (2020) examined the factors influencing personal information disclosure on social media within a Ghanaian tertiary institution. The research investigated the determinants influencing users' decisions to share personal information on social media and their underlying factors. The findings revealed a lack of user awareness, respect for the limitations of social media privacy settings, and the importance of users being able to discern the credibility of parties involved in social media interactions. Additionally, a discrepancy was noted between users' privacy concerns and their privacy-related social media behaviors.

Hodkinson (2017) notes that younger generations, such as Millennials and Generation Z, are strongly inclined to consume media through digital channels, including social media, streaming services, and mobile devices. Furthermore, these generations are more likely to be "prosumers," actively engaging in media consumption and creating and sharing content online.

## 2. Methods

This part covers the research design, sampling, data type, data collection tools, and data analysis.

### 2.1. Research Design

Managing digital personas in adolescents is a complex subject that demands a multifaceted approach. This study employed a hybrid research methodology integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative aspect studies the frequency of social media usage, platform preferences, and digital self-monitoring. On the other hand, qualitative research provides insight into lived experiences, challenges faced, and strategies employed. To comprehensively explore this subject, thematic analysis, and focus group interviews are utilized to investigate subjective elements, identity formation, privacy concerns, and social and emotional aspects. This methodological approach enhances the validity and robustness of the findings, affording a more comprehensive understanding of how young individuals navigate the digital realm while concurrently shaping and safeguarding their online identities.

### 2.2. Calculation of Sample Size

In most survey-based studies, the Cochran formula is utilized to ascertain the appropriate sample size. This study also adopted the Cochran formula for this purpose.

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1 - p)}{e^2}$$

Where:

- $n_0$  = Sample size
- $Z$  = Z-score (the number of standard deviations a data point is from the mean), which corresponds to the desired confidence level. (**1.96** for a 95% confidence level)
- $p$  = Estimated proportion of the population that has the attribute of interest (if unknown, 0.5 is often used as it provides the maximum sample size)
- $e$  = Margin of error (or precision), typically set at **0.05** (5%)

$$n_0 = \frac{1.96^2 * 0.5 * (1-0.5)}{0.05^2}$$

$$n_0 = 384$$

Therefore, this study sample of 400 adolescents gives a statistically significant and generalizable result on the 95% confidence interval with a 5% tolerated margin of error. This makes it possible for the study to generalize its findings to the rest of the adolescents in the population. While in the qualitative phase, participants were recruited using a purposive sampling technique of 30 adolescents. The chosen sample size stemmed from the data saturation approach that implies no new information or subthemes to surface when a certain amount of the data is gathered. The included participants were picked in terms of age, gender, and preferred social media platforms to cover as much ground as possible regarding experience and understanding of the management of a digital self.

## 2.2. Sampling

### 2.2.1. Quantitative Sampling

In the quantitative phase, the researcher included 400 adolescents, which was considered adequate to achieve statistical reliability and external validity of the findings. The sample was determined based on the Cochran formula at a 95% confidence interval and a 5% margin of error. A random sampling technique was employed so that every subject within the population had a chance of being selected for the study. This produces a more representative sample size than the study requires (Todorović et al., 2023).

Participants were selected based on specific inclusion criteria: Youth between the ages of 14 and 22 who are social media users. The age inclusion is based on the United Nations Youth Report 2020 that half the world's population is under the age of 25, and nearly 25% of people on the entire globe are between the ages of 12 and 24. The population accessed by the researcher is 400, and the sample acquired by the researcher also has 400 values, which means no kind of reduction has been made at the time of data collection. Personnel were recruited through social media posts and directly interviewed on set criteria to enhance the quality of the subgroup.

### 2.2.2. Qualitative Sampling

In the qualitative phase, a purposive sampling technique was used to recruit 30 adolescents from the entire population. This technique enabled excluding the subjectivity in choosing participants and selecting them on purpose based on specific parameters like age, gender, preferred social networking sites, and others, hence diversifying the experience captured. The purposive sampling approach proved key to acquiring a multitude of viewpoints

on the management of digital persona. They were recruited purposively from the quantitative participants, who provided different digital persona management experiences to enrich the researcher and the audience's understanding of the phenomenon. The aim was to attain the point of data redundancy whereby no more information central to the research questions could be obtained from interviews.

### **2.3. Data Collection**

Data collection involved structured questionnaires and focus group interviews, encompassing a broad spectrum of adolescents. The quantitative phase encompassed demographics, social media usage patterns, and strategies for managing digital personas. A representative sample was chosen for statistical analysis. Data were collected online and in-person, with intermediary validation checks in place. The qualitative phase studies the aspects of digital identity, privacy concerns, and tactics for handling online personas. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure diversity regarding participants' age, gender, and social media platform preferences. Interviews took place in confidential and comfortable settings, with participants' consent, and were further enriched with comprehensive field notes to capture nonverbal cues and contextual information.

### **2.4. Data Analysis**

In the subsequent phase of quantitative data analysis, descriptive statistics such as means, medians, and standard deviations were employed to summarize key variables. Frequency distributions and histograms were generated for categorical data. Correlation analysis using techniques like Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied to investigate the associations between variables, including the links between social media activity, digital persona management, and perceived impacts. Furthermore, regression analysis was utilized to predict the influence of various factors on adolescents' digital persona maintenance activities, encompassing demographic data and social media habits.

In the case of qualitative data, verbatim transcription was carried out to ensure participant confidentiality in the transcripts. Using the qualitative data analysis program Nvivo, topics that appeared often in the transcripts of interviews were found using thematic coding. A codebook was developed to classify the data methodically, and themes and subthemes were produced to organize the coded data into logical storylines. The methodology heavily relied on triangulation, allowing for a comparative analysis of qualitative and quantitative findings to identify areas of convergence and divergence. Additionally, member checking was conducted to validate the qualitative findings, involving participants in verifying the accuracy and validity of the results.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1. Quantitative Results**

The study sample consisted of 400 adolescents aged 14-22 years, with a mean age of 15.5 years ( $SD = 1.8$ ). The gender distribution was 52% female and 48% male. This shows a balanced gender distribution, ensuring that findings are relevant to male and female adolescents. Participants represented a diverse range of social media platform preferences, including Instagram (85%), Snapchat (72%), TikTok (65%), and Twitter (40%). Instagram is the most preferred platform. Platform preferences help tailor interventions and support strategies to the most used platforms.

The average daily social media usage was 3.5 hours (SD = 1.2). A significant portion (60%) of the sample reported using social media primarily in the evening. Platform preference analysis showed Instagram was the most frequently used platform (45%), followed by Snapchat (30%), TikTok (20%), and Twitter (5%). High daily usage indicates social media's significant role in adolescents' lives, necessitating focused studies and support. Evening usage patterns suggest the need for monitoring and support strategies during these peak times. Furthermore, platforms like Instagram and Snapchat are critical for understanding and addressing digital persona management.

Table 1 Summary of quantitative findings

Variable	Statistics
Sample Size	400 participants
Age (years)	Mean = 15.5, SD = 1.8
Gender Distribution	52% female, 48% male
Social Media Platform Preferences	Instagram: 85%, Snapchat: 72%, TikTok: 65%, Twitter: 40%
Daily Social Media Usage	Mean = 3.5 hours, SD = 1.2
Primary Social Media Usage Time	60% in the evening
Most Frequently Used Platform	Instagram (45%), Snapchat (30%), TikTok (20%), Twitter (5%)
Digital Self-Monitoring	70% engaged in regular digital self-monitoring
Correlation - Social Media Usage and Self-Monitoring	$r = 0.45, p < 0.01$
Regression Analysis - Digital Persona Management	Gender ( $\beta = 0.25, p < 0.05$ ), Platform preference ( $\beta = 0.35, p < 0.01$ )
Perceived Positive Social Media Impact	65% felt it positively influenced social connections
Perceived Privacy Concerns	40% expressed concerns about privacy and image maintenance
Correlation - Social Media Usage and Privacy Concerns	$r = -0.30, p < 0.05$

Source: Research findings (2024)

Most adolescents (70%) engaged in regular digital self-monitoring activities, such as reviewing their posts and adjusting privacy settings. A positive correlation ( $r = 0.45, p < 0.01$ ) was found between the frequency of social media usage and the extent of digital self-monitoring. Regression analysis indicated that gender ( $\beta = 0.25, p < 0.05$ ) and platform preference ( $\beta = 0.35, p < 0.01$ ) significantly influenced digital persona management activities, with females and Instagram users showing higher levels of engagement in persona management. High levels of self-monitoring indicate awareness and proactive management of online identities among adolescents. Frequent social media users are likelier to monitor their digital personas, suggesting a link between usage and self-regulation. Gender and platform preference influence digital persona management, highlighting the need for gender-specific and platform-specific support strategies.

Participants reported varying impacts of social media on their digital personas. 65% felt that social media positively influenced their social connections, while 40% expressed concerns about privacy and the pressure to maintain a particular image online. A moderate negative correlation ( $r = -0.30, p < 0.05$ ) was found between the time spent on social media and perceived privacy concerns. Social media's role in enhancing social connections suggests its

potential as a tool for positive social development. Significant privacy concerns highlight the need for better privacy education and support for adolescents. More time spent on social media is associated with more significant privacy concerns, suggesting a need for balanced usage and privacy awareness.

## 3.2. Qualitative Results

### 3.2.1. *Understanding Digital Persona Development*

Adolescents expressed a keen awareness of the deliberate aspect of establishing and managing their digital personas on social networking platforms throughout the focus group interviews. A common issue was the concept of 'identity performance,' in which participants revealed how they meticulously controlled their online presence to match their desired image. Many mentioned an internal negotiation process in which they weighed authenticity against the need to fit in with specific online networks. *"You want to be real, but you also want to be liked," Sarah, a 17-year-old participant, noted. It is like being on stage sometimes, displaying your best qualities.*"

#### *Concerns about privacy and digital boundaries*

Privacy concerns have evolved as an important part of maintaining a digital persona. Participants commonly discussed their struggles to retain privacy in an age of information sharing. Several participants voiced worries about oversharing, including Emma, a 15-year-old participant who stated, *"It's difficult to draw the line between what's personal and what's public. Sometimes, you just unintentionally share too much."* These discussions emphasized the conflict between revealing one's life online and maintaining personal limits.

#### *The Effect on Self-Esteem and Emotional Well-Being*

Participants candidly described the emotional cost of maintaining their online identities. For some, the continual comparison to peers' carefully manicured lives and the desire for online validation took a toll on their self-esteem. According to Mark, an 18-year-old participant, *"You see others posting these perfect moments, and you start feeling like your life isn't measuring up."* The mismatch between their meticulously crafted online personas and the complexities of real-life situations sparked concerns about their digital personas' legitimacy and emotional well-being.

#### *Digital Persona Management Techniques*

Adolescents' tactics for managing digital personas displayed perseverance and resourcefulness. Many participants talked about 'segmentation,' or keeping separate personas or pseudonyms for different portions of their lives. Others stressed the necessity of being judicious about what they shared and with whom they shared it. *"I have different profiles for my close friends, family, and acquaintances," said Alex, a 16-year-old participant. It gives me more control over who sees what.*

These qualitative story findings reveal the complex and emotionally charged world of adolescents grappling with digital persona management. Creating an online persona is intentional and purposeful, often characterized by the balancing act between conformity pressures and authenticity. Worries about privacy and the emotional effects of online interactions compound the complexities of this issue. Despite this, adolescents demonstrate resilience in dealing with these issues, utilizing various techniques to control their digital personas in an ever-changing digital ecosystem. These findings provide significant insights

into the vital importance of teenage social networking profile maintenance and lay the groundwork for comprehending the more enormous ramifications of their digital journeys.

## **4. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **4.1. Conclusion**

The study has yielded a profound insight into the intricate terrain concerning adolescents' management of digital identities within social networking platforms. Employing a rigorous analysis incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the study has revealed the multifaceted and nuanced essence of this phenomenon, highlighting its crucial importance in the lives of young people. Teens actively participate in creating their online personas, which are shaped by various intricately intertwined elements such as the development of social identities, overcoming cognitive dissonance, and the desire for peer approval. An essential insight from the study is recognizing digital persona management as a fundamental process beyond surface-level online activities. It profoundly affects adolescents' self-esteem, emotional health, and interactions offline. Purposefully constructing digital personas acts as a tool for adolescents to navigate social challenges, express their identities, and seek validation among peers. The complex process of developing a digital persona is highlighted by the fact that various internal and external elements, including social expectations, individual values, and online interactions, influence it.

Furthermore, the study underscores the vital importance of digital literacy and social-emotional skills in effectively managing digital personas. Adolescents with advanced digital literacy skills are more adept at navigating the complexities of online interactions, critically assessing digital content, and safeguarding their privacy and security. Similarly, individuals with robust social-emotional competencies demonstrate enhanced proficiency in handling online relationships, resolving conflicts, and managing digital stressors like cyberbullying. These findings highlight digital skills and emotional intelligence's significant role in empowering adolescents to navigate the digital landscape responsibly and constructively.

The study also reveals that navigating the digital realm requires adolescents to consider digital persona management's challenges and possibilities carefully. On one side, adolescents face risks such as privacy breaches, online harassment, and exposure to unsuitable content. Contrariwise, digital platforms provide avenues for self-expression, creativity, and social interaction. A harmonious balance between these aspects demands a comprehensive approach integrating education, technology, and policy interventions. It is essential to equip individuals with the knowledge and skills to navigate digital spaces safely while fostering a positive and inclusive online environment that promotes responsible digital citizenship. In addition, the study findings revealed that educational initiatives are essential for teaching young people how to be responsible for digital platforms like social networks and giving them the skills to use digital tools safely and ethically. This means updating school programs to cover topics like understanding digital tools, staying safe online, thinking critically, and making ethical decisions. It's also important to create spaces where students can openly talk about their online experiences, privacy concerns, and ways to prevent cyberbullying. Technology can also provide strong privacy settings, tools for managing content, and features that promote digital well-being. Working together, educators, parents, policymakers, and technology experts can develop effective strategies to make the online world safer and more favorable for adolescents.

## 4.2. Recommendations

Implementing digital literacy programs within educational institutions is crucial, as it equips adolescents with essential skills for navigating the digital landscape responsibly. These programs should go beyond teaching basic social media usage and focus on cultivating critical thinking and digital persona management skills. By doing so, children can develop the knowledge and abilities to safely and responsibly engage with digital platforms. **Parental Guidance:** Parental guidance is pivotal in shaping children's online behavior. It is essential for parents to actively involve themselves in their teens' digital lives by initiating open and supportive discussions about the various risks and benefits associated with social media usage. Through these conversations, parents can educate their children about the potential dangers such as cyberbullying, privacy issues, and online scams while highlighting the positive aspects of networking opportunities and educational resources. Furthermore, consistent engagement and monitoring of their teens' online activities enable parents to identify any concerning behaviors or situations early on and provide necessary guidance and support. This proactive approach empowers teens to make informed and responsible decisions about their digital identities and online interactions, fostering a safer and more positive online experience for adolescents.

**Mental Health Support:** Teenagers should have readily accessible services that cater to their mental well-being. Schools and healthcare providers play a crucial role in offering counseling and resources to address various concerns stemming from online interactions, including cyberbullying, self-esteem challenges, and identity conflicts. By prioritizing mental health support in educational and healthcare settings, adolescents can receive the guidance and tools necessary to navigate the complexities of digital life with resilience and confidence. This proactive strategy encourages young people to develop good digital habits and long-term well-being and meet their acute mental health needs.

**Platform Regulations and Policies:** Social media platforms must take a proactive stance to protect adolescent users from harmful content and cyberbullying. This includes implementing age-appropriate privacy settings that give users greater control over their online presence and interactions. Additionally, stricter enforcement of cyberbullying and online harassment regulations is crucial in deterring and addressing instances of digital abuse. By prioritizing user safety and well-being, social media platforms can contribute significantly to fostering a safer and more positive online environment for adolescents, promoting responsible digital citizenship, and mitigating the risks associated with online interaction.

## Further Studies

This study's insights are substantial, yet the dynamic digital ecosystem requires ongoing investigation to grasp fully teenagers' management of digital personas. Tailoring strategies and interventions hinges on this deeper understanding, crucial for promoting healthy online conduct and bolstering youth well-being amidst rapid digital evolution. The guidelines herein strive to empower teenagers ethically in the digital realm, offering comprehensive resources for online and offline success. Recognizing adolescents' digital persona management as pivotal in today's fast-paced digital landscape underscores the need for proactive measures to ensure positive online behavior and support for the younger generation's holistic development. Collaborative efforts across stakeholders are essential to implement these guidelines effectively, fostering a supportive digital environment that nurtures responsible digital citizenship and empowers teenagers to thrive in the digital age and beyond.

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