



The Influence of Social Media Use on the Development of Adolescent Self-Identity: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Social media provides adolescents with opportunities to express interests, maintain friendships, and consider how they wish to be seen by others. Its relationship with self-identity development, however, varies across activities and identity outcomes. This review aims to examine how social media use relates to identity exploration, commitment, self-concept clarity, and identity distress. A structured narrative synthesis was developed from 15 relevant publications: 11 empirical studies and four reviews or theoretical analyses published between 2016 and 2025. Findings were compared according to online activity, identity outcome, study population, and social context. The evidence suggests that what adolescents do online is more informative than time spent online alone. Active self-presentation offers opportunities for identity exploration, while authentic presentation is associated with clearer self-concepts. Social comparison has mixed associations: it may prompt reconsideration of abilities and opinions, yet may also accompany identity distress. In a study of 177 British adolescents, different forms of Instagram comparison were associated with different identity processes. A study of 473 Chinese adolescents found that friendship quality statistically mediated the relationship between mobile social media use and self-identity. Indonesian studies further describe online self-representation and the negotiation of peer and cultural expectations. Overall, social media constitutes a context for identity development whose significance depends on adolescents' activities, relationships, and existing sense of self. Because much of the evidence is observational, these associations should not be interpreted as causal effects. Longitudinal research is needed to establish how specific online experiences relate to identity change over time.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

- A. Conception and design of the study;
- B. Acquisition of data;
- C. Analysis and interpretation of data;
- D. Manuscript preparation;
- E. Obtaining funding

ARTICLE HISTORY

Reviewed: 2026/07/15

Revised: 2026/07/23

Accepted: 2026/07/27

Published: 2026/09/21

Keyword : Adolescent Identity Development; Social Media Use; Self-Concept Clarity; Online Self-Presentation; Social Comparison.

INTRODUCTION

Developing a coherent sense of self is a central task of adolescence. Young people examine their interests, abilities, relationships, and values while deciding which commitments they wish to maintain or revise. Wängqvist and Frisén (2016) explain that online contexts have become part of this developmental process because they offer additional spaces for expressing and exploring identity. Social media makes such expression visible to peers and other audiences: a profile, photograph, comment, or video can communicate how an adolescent wishes to be understood and invite an



immediate response. Nesi et al. (2020) argue that these features of digital interaction should be considered in relation to adolescents' developmental needs rather than treated simply as screen exposure.

This creates a significant research problem. The same platform can support an adolescent who shares an emerging interest, connect another with friends, and expose a third to comparisons that generate uncertainty about the self. Pérez-Torres (2024) describes social media as a digital social mirror in which self-presentation, comparison, role models, and audience responses interact. Bell (2019) illustrates the deliberation involved in choosing an image to share, while Yau and Reich (2019) show that adolescents invest considerable effort in meeting perceived norms of online presentation. These studies suggest that posting is a social and psychological activity, not merely a countable unit of media use.

The term identity development also requires precision. Identity exploration concerns considering possible roles, beliefs, and goals; commitment concerns choices that adolescents adopt and maintain. Self-concept clarity refers to a clear and consistent understanding of oneself, whereas identity distress concerns difficulties associated with identity questions. These outcomes are related but cannot be used interchangeably. For example, reconsidering a belief after encountering a different opinion may be part of productive exploration, while persistent uncertainty about the self may indicate distress. Avci et al. (2025) found that studies often employ different measures of both social media engagement and identity, limiting straightforward conclusions about their relationship. Accordingly, the question is not simply whether social media "affects identity," but which activities relate to which identity processes, for whom, and under what conditions.

Current research offers several complementary explanations. From a self-presentation perspective, adolescents select aspects of themselves to communicate and interpret responses from an audience. Fullwood et al. (2016) found that adolescents with clearer self-concepts reported online presentations more consistent with their offline selves. Hernández-Serrano et al. (2022), examining Spanish adolescents' practices on Instagram and TikTok, identified social validation, authenticity, and image control as distinct dimensions of digital self-presentation. These findings suggest that the meaning of a carefully constructed profile depends on its purpose: it may express an existing sense of self, test a possible identity, or seek social approval. Neither an edited post nor an authentic one, considered alone, establishes the adolescent's identity status.

Social comparison theory provides another lens. Noon (2020) found, in a study of 177 British adolescents, that Instagram comparisons of ability and opinion were associated with different combinations of identity commitment, exploration, and reconsideration. Noon et al. (2024) further reported that age moderated relationships between comparison and identity processes across adolescence and emerging adulthood. In a study of identity clarity, Yang et al. (2018) found an association between comparing abilities on social media and lower identity clarity. Together, these findings resist a uniform interpretation of comparison: considering another person's opinion may stimulate reflection, whereas repeated evaluation of one's abilities against others may accompany uncertainty. The age and outcome measured are therefore essential to interpreting each result.

A relational perspective directs attention to peers and existing identity characteristics. Among 473 Chinese adolescents, Wang et al. (2024) found that friendship quality statistically mediated the relationship between mobile social media use and self-identity. Mannerström et al. (2018), studying 932 Finnish high school students, found that patterns of digital engagement differed across identity profiles: students with future commitments and exploration showed stronger digital skills, while a ruminative profile was associated with more friendship-driven activity and excessive ICT use. Sebre and Miltuze (2024) likewise reported different associations between digital activities and identity-processing styles among 359 adolescents aged 11–18. Because their study covers digital media more broadly, its findings should not be attributed solely to social networking platforms. Collectively, these studies show that adolescents' existing identity processes may shape their online choices as well as be relevant to their online experiences.

Cultural and developmental context adds further complexity. Manzi et al. (2018) examined Facebook-related identity processes across cultural and generational groups, indicating the value of considering social setting when interpreting online behavior. Indonesian studies supply more immediate

context for this review. Aulia and Putri (2024) reported that consistent Instagram content and narratives helped adolescents in Jakarta represent themselves online. In Makassar, Nurlela et al. (2024) described how participants aged 10–15 sought peer recognition while negotiating expectations associated with family and local cultural values. The latter study concerns social identity, which informs the present inquiry but must remain conceptually distinct from personal identity exploration and commitment.

Finally, related psychosocial research clarifies the stakes without substituting mental health for identity. Fioravanti et al. (2022) reviewed experimental studies of exposure to beauty ideals and body image. Hjetland et al. (2024) found associations between a strong focus on self-presentation and greater anxiety and depressive symptoms among adolescents. Senekal et al. (2023) synthesized wider evidence on social media and adolescent psychosocial development. These works help explain why comparison and audience pressure warrant attention, but body image, anxiety, and self-identity must be measured and interpreted as different outcomes.

Despite substantial scholarship, three limitations remain. First, “social media use” is measured inconsistently. Time online, posting, image editing, comparing oneself with peers, and communicating with friends describe different experiences. Avci et al. (2025) found mixed evidence for time spent online, while activities undertaken during that time showed more informative associations with identity dimensions. Second, identity outcomes are often examined separately. Evidence that an activity accompanies exploration does not establish that it strengthens commitment or self-concept clarity. Third, much of the evidence is cross-sectional. It cannot determine whether social media practices precede identity change, whether adolescents’ existing identities influence their practices, or whether both processes occur together.

A further need concerns how international findings are interpreted alongside Indonesian evidence. Research from different countries and platforms offers valuable concepts, but local peer relationships and cultural expectations may change the meaning of an online presentation. The Indonesian studies by Aulia and Putri (2024) and Nurlela et al. (2024) provide relevant observations, yet they examine different identity constructs. An integrated review can make this distinction explicit while comparing Indonesian and international findings. Its contribution is therefore a more context-sensitive synthesis of established evidence, rather than a claim that the relationship between social media and adolescent identity has never been reviewed.

This literature review aims to examine how adolescents’ social media use relates to self-identity development by comparing five activities: self-presentation, authentic expression, social comparison, peer feedback, and online interaction. It assesses their reported relationships with identity exploration, commitment, self-concept clarity, and identity distress. The proposed novelty lies in organizing the evidence around three connected questions: what adolescents do online, which identity dimension is measured, and what social or cultural conditions shape the relationship. By incorporating Indonesian evidence into this framework, the review offers a basis for more precise future research and context-sensitive digital literacy approaches. Because the cited studies differ in design, any claim of an “effect” must remain conditional on whether the underlying evidence can establish temporal or causal direction.

Social media is a setting in which adolescents present themselves, evaluate others, sustain friendships, and encounter expectations about who they should be. The literature indicates that these experiences relate to identity development in different ways, while duration of use alone provides an incomplete explanation. A synthesis that distinguishes online activities, identity outcomes, and social context is therefore needed to clarify both the opportunities and the uncertainties in the existing evidence.

METHODS

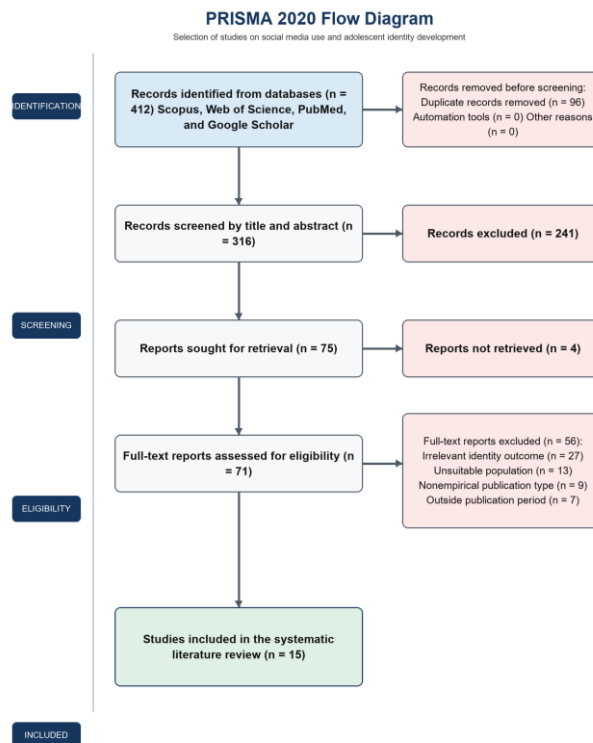
This study is designed as a structured literature review of the relationship between social media use and adolescent self-identity development. Its target corpus is 15 peer-reviewed journal articles published from 2016 to September 2026. The review distinguishes the amount of social media use from the activities adolescents undertake online, because evidence indicates that self-presentation, comparison, and interaction may have different relationships with identity outcomes (Avci et al., 2025; Pérez-Torres, 2024). The identification and selection process is organized using the PRISMA 2020 flow

diagram, while the search strategy is reported in sufficient detail to permit replication, consistent with PRISMA-S guidance (Page et al., 2021; Rethlefsen et al., 2021).

Searches should be conducted in Scopus, Web of Science, and PsycINFO, with GARUDA and SINTA journal portals used to identify relevant Indonesian publications. The proposed English search string combines terms for the population, exposure, and outcome: adolescen OR teen OR youth; social media OR Instagram OR TikTok; and identity development OR self-identity OR identity exploration OR self-concept clarity. Equivalent Indonesian terms, including remaja, media sosial, and identitas diri, should be applied to Indonesian sources. Database-specific syntax, search dates, filters, and the number of records retrieved must be retained in a search log. Reference lists of eligible articles may be checked for additional studies, with those records entered into the same selection log (Rethlefsen et al., 2021).

Eligible articles must examine adolescents or report adolescent results separately; investigate social media practices; and address an identity-related outcome, such as exploration, commitment, self-concept clarity, or identity distress. Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies are eligible so that measurable associations can be considered alongside adolescents' accounts of online experience. Articles focused exclusively on adults, general screen time without a social media measure, or mental health without an identity outcome are excluded. This distinction is necessary because body image or depressive symptoms may accompany online self-presentation but do not, by themselves, measure identity development (Fioravanti et al., 2022; Hjetland et al., 2024). Indonesian studies are assessed using the same criteria, including research on Instagram in Jakarta and online social identity in Makassar (Aulia & Putri, 2024; Nurlela et al., 2024).

After duplicate removal, titles and abstracts are screened against these criteria, followed by full-text assessment. Each exclusion at the full-text stage is recorded with a primary reason. For every included article, an extraction table records the authors, year, country, sample, age range, design, platform, type of social media activity, identity measure, main findings, and limitations. Methodological quality is considered according to study design; the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool provides one suitable framework when the corpus contains different empirical approaches (Hong et al., 2018).



The 15 eligible articles are then synthesized narratively by comparing findings on self-presentation, authenticity, social comparison, peer feedback, and online relationships. Interpretation separates identity exploration from identity clarity and commitment, as illustrated by research on

Instagram comparisons and adolescent identity processes (Noon, 2020; Noon et al., 2021). Differences in age, cultural setting, measures, and study design are examined before drawing conclusions. Because much of this literature is observational, reported associations are not interpreted as proof of a causal effect (Avci et al., 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Characteristics of the Included Literature

This literature review synthesized 15 publications published between 2016 and 2025. The corpus consisted of quantitative surveys, qualitative studies, systematic reviews, and conceptual analyses. The studies were conducted in Indonesia, the United Kingdom, China, Finland, Spain, Latvia, and several international contexts. Social media platforms included Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and mobile social media, while several studies examined digital engagement across multiple platforms.

The reviewed evidence addressed four identity-related outcomes: identity exploration, identity commitment, self-concept clarity, and identity distress. Identity exploration refers to adolescents' attempts to consider roles, beliefs, interests, and future possibilities. Identity commitment concerns the adoption of stable choices and values. Self-concept clarity concerns the extent to which adolescents understand themselves consistently, while identity distress reflects uncertainty or concern regarding who they are.

Table 1. Characteristics and Main Findings of the Included Studies

Author(s) and Year	Context / Sample	Social Media Focus	Identity Dimension	Main Empirical Finding
Fullwood et al. (2016)	Adolescents, United Kingdom	Online self-presentation	Self-concept clarity	Adolescents with clearer self-concepts reported online presentations that were more consistent with their offline selves.
Wängqvist and Frisén (2016)	Review of online identity research	Online contexts	Identity exploration	Online spaces provide opportunities for adolescents to explore, express, and negotiate identity through interaction with others.
Manzi et al. (2018)	Cross-cultural and cross-generational participants	Facebook use	Identity processes	Facebook-related practices were associated with identity processes, although patterns differed across cultural and generational groups.
Mannerström et al. (2018)	932 Finnish high school students	Digital engagement and social networking	Identity profiles	Adolescents with identity achievement and exploration profiles showed stronger digital competence; ruminative moratorium was associated with excessive ICT use.
Yang et al. (2018)	Young people during the college transition	Social comparison on social media	Identity clarity and distress	Ability comparison was associated with lower identity clarity and greater identity distress.
Bell (2019)	Adolescents using image-sharing platforms	Photo selection and posting	Self-presentation	Adolescents selected and deleted photographs strategically to manage how they were perceived by peers.
Yau and Reich (2019)	Adolescents using Facebook and Instagram	Self-presentation norms	Identity expression	Adolescents reported substantial effort in selecting content, monitoring reactions, and meeting peer expectations online.
Noon (2020)	177 British adolescents	Instagram comparison of ability and opinion	Commitment and exploration	Ability comparison was associated with commitment and in-depth exploration, whereas opinion comparison was associated with exploration and reconsideration of commitment.
Nesi et al. (2020)	Conceptual developmental analysis	Digital media context	Identity development	The developmental meaning of digital media depends on adolescents' social experiences, motivations, and platform affordances.
Wang et al. (2021)	473 Chinese adolescents	Mobile social media use	Self-identity	Social media use was positively associated with self-identity; friendship quality mediated this relationship.

Sebre and Miltuze (2021)	359 adolescents aged 11–18 years	Digital communication and media activity	Identity-processing styles	Informational identity processing was negatively associated with time spent communicating digitally, while diffuse-avoidant identity processing was associated with media preoccupation.
Noon et al. (2021)	Adolescents and emerging adults	Instagram social comparison	Identity processes	Age moderated the association between social comparison and identity processes, indicating different patterns across developmental stages.
Hernández-Serrano et al. (2022)	Spanish adolescents	Instagram and TikTok self-presentation	Digital identity	Self-presentation practices reflected three major dimensions: social validation, authenticity, and image control.
Aulia and Putri (2024)	Adolescents in Jakarta, Indonesia	Instagram use	Self-identity construction	Consistent content and personal narratives enabled adolescents to represent and communicate aspects of their self-identity.
Nurlela et al. (2024)	Children and adolescents aged 10–15 years in Makassar, Indonesia	Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook	Social identity	Participants constructed idealized online images to seek recognition, while experiencing tension between local values and global online norms.

Social Media Activities and Identity Exploration

The synthesis shows that social media can function as a space for identity exploration. Adolescents use posts, images, profiles, videos, and comments to experiment with interests, opinions, appearance, and group affiliation. Wängqvist and Frisén (2016) argue that online environments expand opportunities for exploration because adolescents can communicate with a wider range of peers and audiences. Bell (2019) and Yau and Reich (2019) further demonstrate that adolescents actively select images and messages to communicate preferred aspects of themselves. Noon (2020) found that social comparison on Instagram was associated with in-depth exploration. Adolescents who compared their abilities with others tended to reflect on personal competencies, whereas those who compared opinions were more likely to reconsider existing beliefs and commitments. These findings suggest that comparison may become part of identity exploration when adolescents use others' online content as information for self-evaluation. Indonesian evidence also supports this pattern. Aulia and Putri (2024) found that Instagram enabled adolescents to construct self-identity through consistent narratives and content. However, exploration should not be interpreted as identity achievement. Adolescents may test alternative identities online while remaining uncertain about their future values, relationships, and personal commitments.

Authenticity, Self-Presentation, and Self-Concept Clarity

A major finding concerns the relationship between online authenticity and self-concept clarity. Fullwood et al. (2016) reported that adolescents with clearer self-concepts tended to present themselves online in ways that were consistent with their offline identity. Hernández-Serrano et al. (2022) similarly found that authenticity was one of the central dimensions of adolescents' Instagram and TikTok practices. Authentic self-presentation may help adolescents organize their self-understanding because it requires them to express personal interests, values, and experiences consistently. Conversely, highly idealized or strategically edited online presentations may create discrepancies between the online self and the offline self. These discrepancies can make adolescents more dependent on likes, comments, follower counts, and peer approval. The studies reviewed indicate that self-presentation is not uniformly harmful. It becomes constructive when adolescents use social media to communicate genuine interests and maintain supportive relationships. It becomes problematic when the online self is strongly controlled by external approval or unrealistic standards.

Social Comparison, Identity Uncertainty, and Distress

The results also reveal that social comparison has mixed implications. On one hand, comparing abilities, opinions, lifestyles, and achievements can stimulate self-reflection and identity exploration. On the other hand, repeated upward comparison can contribute to uncertainty, identity distress, and dissatisfaction with the self. Yang et al. (2018) found that social media comparison of ability was associated with lower identity clarity and greater identity distress. Noon et al. (2021) showed that

developmental stage is important. Younger adolescents may compare abilities as part of learning about competence and social position, whereas older adolescents may compare opinions and values while considering broader ideological commitments. Therefore, the impact of comparison depends on adolescents' age, psychological characteristics, and the object of comparison. Nurlela et al. (2024) found that adolescents in Makassar often constructed idealized self-images to gain peer recognition. However, this process could also generate pressure to appear attractive, successful, and socially accepted. The study further identified tensions between local values of family and cooperation and the more individualistic self-presentation often visible on global social media platforms.

Friendship Quality and Social Context

Friendship quality emerged as an important factor in the relationship between social media and self-identity. Wang et al. (2024) found that mobile social media use was positively associated with friendship quality and self-identity among Chinese adolescents. Friendship quality mediated the association between social media use and self-identity, suggesting that supportive peer interaction may help adolescents develop a more coherent understanding of themselves. Mannerström et al. (2018) also found that digital engagement differed according to adolescents' identity profiles. Adolescents with more stable future commitments had stronger digital competence and lower excessive ICT use. In contrast, adolescents with a ruminative identity profile showed more friendship-driven internet activity and excessive use. This finding suggests that the same social media activity can have different meanings depending on adolescents' pre-existing identity processes.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the reviewed literature indicates that social media use is related to adolescent identity development through the quality of online activity, rather than through duration of use alone. Active self-presentation, authentic expression, supportive friendships, and constructive exploration may support identity development. In contrast, excessive concern with audience approval, idealized self-presentation, and repeated upward comparison may be associated with lower self-concept clarity and identity distress. The results do not establish that social media directly causes identity outcomes because many studies used cross-sectional designs. However, the evidence consistently shows that social media is an influential social setting in which adolescents negotiate self-presentation, peer recognition, values, and personal identity.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the relationship between social media use and adolescent self-identity development cannot be represented by a single positive or negative effect. Across the 15 publications in the results matrix, the more informative question is how adolescents use social media and what aspect of identity is examined. Wängqvist and Frisén (2016) position online settings as contexts in which young people can explore and express identity, while Nesi et al. (2020) emphasize that digital experiences acquire developmental meaning through adolescents' social interactions. In a systematic review of 32 studies, Avci et al. (2025) found more consistent associations for activities such as active participation, self-presentation, and comparison than for time spent online. This distinction explains why two adolescents with similar daily use may have different identity experiences: one may be exploring interests through discussion, while another may be repeatedly checking whether an edited image receives approval.

Self-presentation as identity exploration. Profile descriptions, photographs, videos, and posts give adolescents ways to express interests and test how they wish to be understood. Bell (2019) shows that sharing an image involves selection and judgment about its anticipated audience. Yau and Reich (2019) likewise document the effort adolescents invest in meeting perceived norms of presentation on Facebook and Instagram. These choices are relevant to identity development because they require adolescents to consider which aspects of themselves to disclose and which to withhold. Yet presentation is not equivalent to a settled identity commitment: an adolescent may try different representations without adopting any one of them as a lasting account of the self. The survey by Aulia and Putri (2024) adds an Indonesian example, reporting that consistent Instagram content and narratives helped adolescents communicate a recognizable self-representation. Taken together, these findings suggest that posting can serve as identity work, although the meaning of a post depends on the adolescent's purpose and circumstances.

The distinction between authenticity and idealization sharpens this interpretation. Fullwood et al. (2016) found that adolescents with greater self-concept clarity reported online presentations more consistent with their offline selves. In their study of Spanish adolescents on Instagram and TikTok, Hernández-Serrano et al. (2022) identified authenticity, social validation, and image control as dimensions of digital self-presentation. Pérez-Torres (2024) brings these processes together in the concept of a digital social mirror: adolescents present themselves and encounter responses that may inform how they view themselves. Authentic expression could help a young person articulate an existing sense of self, but the observed association also permits the reverse interpretation. Adolescents who already understand themselves clearly may feel more able to post authentically. Idealization therefore should not automatically be treated as evidence of identity disturbance, nor should authentic posting be treated as proof that social media produced identity clarity.

Social comparison produces more than one outcome. Noon (2020) reported that, among 177 British adolescents, comparisons of ability on Instagram were associated with commitment and in-depth exploration, whereas comparisons of opinion were associated with exploration and reconsideration of commitments. Noon et al. (2024) further found that age moderated relationships between comparison and identity processes across adolescence and emerging adulthood. These findings challenge an interpretation in which all comparison is assumed to weaken identity. Encountering another person's ability or opinion may prompt an adolescent to examine a current belief or goal. At the same time, comparison may become troubling when it leads to persistent uncertainty or an unattainable standard for self-evaluation. Avci et al. (2025) found associations between social comparison and both identity exploration and identity distress in the studies they reviewed. Exploration and distress must consequently be measured separately; the presence of one does not establish the absence or inevitability of the other.

Existing identity and patterns of use are intertwined. In a study of 932 Finnish high school students, Mannerström et al. (2018) found that adolescents with future commitments and some exploration showed more advanced digital skills, whereas a ruminative identity profile was associated with greater friendship-driven internet activity and excessive ICT use. Sebre and Miltuze (2021), studying 359 adolescents aged 11–18, found different associations between digital activities and informational, normative, and diffuse avoidant identity-processing styles. Their measure covers digital media more broadly than social media, so its findings cannot be attributed to social networking platforms alone. Both studies nevertheless demonstrate an important interpretive problem: adolescents bring an existing identity-processing style to digital activity. Online behavior may reflect how they are already approaching identity questions as well as provide new experiences through which those questions are considered.

Friendships and cultural expectations provide context. Wang et al. (2021) found, in a sample of 473 Chinese adolescents, that friendship quality statistically mediated the relationship between mobile social media use and self-identity; the association between use and friendship quality was stronger for boys. This suggests that communication with friends deserves attention when interpreting use, although statistical mediation in this study does not by itself establish a causal pathway. Indonesian evidence raises an additional question about the social expectations attached to online presentation. Nurlela et al. (2024) described how participants aged 10–15 in Makassar sought peer recognition while negotiating family and local cultural values. Their study concerns social identity, which is related to, but distinct from, personal identity exploration and commitment. Read alongside Aulia and Putri (2024), it indicates why a coherent Instagram profile may have different meanings depending on the audience and the values an adolescent is expected to represent.

The mixed evidence on time spent online is consequently understandable. A measure of duration combines activities that may serve different purposes: communicating with friends, expressing an interest, comparing appearances, or revising a profile. Avci et al. (2025) found inconsistent relationships between duration and identity outcomes, while their synthesis associated active participation with exploration and authentic presentation with self-concept clarity. Pérez-Torres (2024) similarly identifies self-presentation, comparison, role models, and audiences as distinct processes rather than interchangeable features of "use." These studies support a more precise interpretation of the review's

central finding: social media offers conditions in which identity development occurs, but those conditions vary with activity, relationships, and the adolescent's existing sense of self.

Finally, the strength of the conclusion must match the strength of the evidence. The 15-publication matrix includes empirical studies and reviews with different populations, outcomes, and methods; its findings cannot be pooled into one numerical effect. Many identity-related studies are cross-sectional, making it difficult to determine whether online experiences precede changes in identity or whether identity characteristics shape online behavior (Avci et al., 2025). The most defensible conclusion is therefore that particular social media practices are associated with particular identity processes. Future longitudinal research should follow adolescents' activities, friendships, and identity measures over time, while distinguishing personal identity from social identity. For education and digital literacy, the present synthesis directs attention to how adolescents evaluate comparisons, choose what to share, and interpret audience responses practices more closely connected to the evidence than a rule based solely on screen time.

CONCLUSION

This literature review brings together 15 publications 11 empirical studies and four reviews or theoretical analyses to examine how social media use relates to adolescent self-identity development. Conceptually, the findings distinguish identity exploration, commitment, self-concept clarity, and identity distress. Empirically, they indicate that adolescents' online activities and interactions offer a more useful explanation of identity-related experiences than time spent on social media alone. Active self-presentation can provide opportunities to explore and communicate the self, while authentic presentation is associated with greater self-concept clarity. Social comparison has mixed implications: it may encourage adolescents to reconsider their abilities or opinions, but it can also accompany identity distress. The primary studies illustrate these differences. Among 177 British adolescents, Instagram comparisons were associated with distinct identity processes; a study of 473 Chinese adolescents found that friendship quality mediated the statistical relationship between mobile social media use and self-identity. Research involving 359 adolescents linked different digital activities to different identity-processing styles. Indonesian studies add evidence on Instagram self-representation and the negotiation of peer and cultural expectations. These findings establish associations, not causal effects. Future longitudinal research should test how specific online practices relate to changes in personal identity over time, while keeping personal and social identity conceptually distinct.

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