

Original Article



Lived Experiences of Adolescents with High Media Literacy in Facing Mental Health Challenges in the Virtual Space: A Phenomenological Study

Tahereh Hosseinabadi¹, Abbas Naseri Taheri^{2*}, Ali Jafari¹

¹Department of Communication Sciences, Ard.c., Islamic Azad University, Ardabil, Iran

²Faculty of Communication, IRIB University, Tehran, Iran

Article info

Article History:

Received: February 14, 2026

Accepted: May 19, 2026

Published: September 2, 2026

Keywords:

Adolescent mental health, Social media literacy, Lived experience, Interpretative phenomenology, Virtual space, Digital agency

Abstract

Introduction: Concerns about the impact of social media on adolescent mental health are increasing. Although social media literacy is considered a protective factor, little is known about how adolescents with high literacy experience and manage these challenges.

Methods: Using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), 12 adolescents aged 15–18 years from Tehran with high social media literacy participated in semi-structured interviews and digital diary activities. Data were analyzed thematically using MAXQDA, and trustworthiness was ensured through Lincoln and Guba's criteria.

Results: Five interconnected themes emerged: infrastructural awareness, coping arsenal, liberating agency, paradoxical existence, and identity transformation. Participants demonstrated critical understanding of platform mechanisms, employed self-regulation strategies, engaged in active resistance and peer education, experienced tensions between awareness and emotional engagement, and developed a digital identity centered on critical and responsible use.

Conclusion: High social media literacy extends beyond technical competence, fostering agency and resilience while simultaneously generating new psychological tensions that should be addressed in educational and mental health interventions.

Introduction

The rapid expansion of virtual spaces and social media has transformed the everyday experiences of adolescents and young adults, making these platforms central to identity formation, social interaction, and self-expression.¹ While social media provides unprecedented opportunities for access to information, communication, and support networks, growing evidence links certain patterns of use to mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, body image concerns, and sleep disturbances.² These outcomes are influenced not only by content but also by platform mechanisms, including algorithmic curation, attention economies, and social comparison processes.³

In this context, social media literacy has emerged as a potential protective factor. Beyond technical skills, it encompasses critical, emotional, and behavioral competencies that enable individuals to engage with social media in a safe, reflective, and responsible manner.⁴ These competencies include critical evaluation of content and sources, privacy management, self-regulation, and ethical participation online.⁵ Previous quantitative studies suggest that higher levels of social media literacy can reduce the negative psychological effects associated with online experiences.⁶ However, existing research has largely

focused on statistical relationships, providing limited insight into how adolescents with high levels of literacy actually experience, interpret, and respond to mental health challenges in their everyday digital lives.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), with its emphasis on exploring the meaning and structure of lived experience,⁷ offers an appropriate framework for addressing this gap. By examining adolescents' perspectives, this study seeks to understand how media literacy shapes their encounters with mental health challenges in virtual spaces. The findings may contribute to the development of more context-sensitive media literacy programs and mental health interventions while highlighting adolescents' agency in navigating digital environments.⁸

Accordingly, the main research question is: What is the structure of the lived experience of adolescents with high media literacy in facing mental health challenges in the virtual space?

Theoretical Foundations and Research Background

Theoretical Foundations

This study is informed by an integrated theoretical framework that combines perspectives from media studies, digital literacy, psychology, and digital agency.

*Corresponding author: Abbas Naseri Taheri, Email: naseri_a@iribu.ac.ir

© 2026 The Author(s). This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, as long as the original authors and source are cited. No permission is required from the authors or the publishers.

Media Ecology Theory conceptualizes social media as a technological environment that actively shapes cognition, social interaction, and perceptions of reality, thereby influencing mental health outcomes.⁹ Complementing this perspective, social media literacy frameworks emphasize the knowledge, critical thinking, technical competencies, self-regulation, and participatory skills required for navigating digital environments effectively and safely. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) further explains how social media can simultaneously support and undermine psychological well-being through its effects on the fundamental needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy.¹⁰ Finally, the Digital Agency approach highlights adolescents' capacity for critical interpretation, resistance, and active engagement with platform structures rather than viewing them as passive recipients of technological influences.¹¹ Together, these perspectives provide a comprehensive framework for understanding both the challenges and coping strategies associated with adolescents' social media use and mental health.

Research Background

A significant portion of the existing literature has examined this relationship using survey and quantitative methods. Overall, the findings support the protective role of literacy. O'Reilly et al. demonstrated that higher media literacy is associated with lower levels of social anxiety and depression in adolescents.¹² The study by Van den Abel et al. also showed that social media literacy moderates the relationship between "problematic social media use" and "decreased psychological well-being".¹³ The research by Keum et al. emphasized the mediating role of critical thinking skills in the relationship between social media use and life satisfaction.¹⁴ These findings align with the study by Godon et al, which showed that media literacy education leads to increased self-esteem and reduced anxiety symptoms in adolescents.¹⁵ Kim et al.¹⁶ also reported a positive but moderate impact of media literacy education programs on critical attitudes and safer online behaviors in a meta-analysis. Although these studies are valuable initial steps, they share a common limitation: they observe the phenomenon from a statistical distance and are unable to uncover the complex, contextual, and qualitative processes underlying these statistical correlations.

The phenomenological study by Soltan et al on teenage girls using Instagram revealed that they are aware of the pressure to present an ideal self and employ strategies to manage this pressure.¹⁷ Boyd's ethnographic digital research in the well-known book "It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens" demonstrated that adolescents seek spaces for autonomy in environments where adults are present.¹⁸ Qualitative research by Pangrazio and Selwyn¹⁹ showed that while adolescents are concerned about the collection of their personal data, they often feel powerless against larger structures. The study by DeWolf using qualitative methods revealed that adolescents actively use privacy settings to create safe and controlled social spaces, which in itself constitutes a form of agency.²⁰

Additionally, Davis emphasized the dynamic interaction between technology and users in his "Technogenic Impact Model" and how users actively adapt.²¹ These studies share important common ground with the present research; however, their specialized focus does not center on "media literacy" as a key distinguishing variable for the group under study.

By combining and analyzing the two aforementioned research trends, the main gap that this study seeks to fill becomes clear. On one hand, quantitative studies show a general relationship between literacy and mental health but lack details on how, in what context, and the processes of this relationship. On the other hand, qualitative studies, while delving into the depth of adolescents' experiences, have not positioned media literacy as the central constructing factor in that experience. In other words, we know that "literacy likely helps" and that "adolescents have strategies," but we do not know how "adolescents with high literacy specifically use this literacy as a resource to interpret, resist, and manage psychological challenges in the real moments of their digital lives." Few studies have specifically addressed the voices of these adolescents. This research aims to fill this gap by purposefully selecting this group and employing interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Methods

This study was conducted using an interpretive paradigm and employing interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The aim was to understand and describe the inherent structures of adolescents' lived experiences, rather than to achieve statistical generalization. The study population consisted of active users aged 15 to 18 from Tehran who used at least two main social media platforms. Participants were selected through purposive sampling with maximum diversity in terms of gender, educational level, and dominant platform. The main criterion for inclusion was achieving a high score on the social media literacy screening questionnaire (based on the SMILE model and with content validity confirmed by five experts). The final sample size was 12 individuals, and theoretical saturation was achieved after interviewing the twelfth participant; this means that new interviews did not add any new themes or insights to the analysis.

The primary data collection tool was in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted using a flexible interview guide. This guide included open-ended questions centered around topics such as the participants' firsthand experiences of facing challenging situations, their cognitive and emotional processes during these encounters, management strategies, and their overall understanding of their relationship with the virtual space. To enrich the data, participants were asked to maintain a digital diary for one week. These notes were later used as conversation prompts during the main interview. Each interview lasted between 50 and 75 minutes in a calm and private environment, was recorded with the participant's permission, and was subsequently transcribed in full. Before the interviews,

necessary ethical approvals were obtained, and informed written consent was secured from each participant and their parents.

Data analysis was conducted according to the standard steps of IPA, aided by MAXQDA software version 2022. The process began with repeated reading and re-reading of the interview transcripts to familiarize oneself with the overall data. Then, in the initial note-taking stage, each transcript was examined line by line, and analytical reactions, descriptions, and notable points were recorded in the margins. In the next step, these notes were organized, and initial themes were extracted. These themes were categorized within each interview and then transformed into sub-themes and overarching themes. This analysis was conducted on a case-by-case basis, and then common patterns and significant differences in experiences were identified by comparing themes across all cases. Finally, the findings were presented in the form of a coherent analytical report, supported by direct and vivid quotations from the interviews.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, the four criteria for qualitative research quality were adhered to. Credibility was enhanced through the review of findings by four participants and their confirmation, as well as consultation with two experienced colleagues in qualitative methodology. Transferability was provided through a rich and detailed description of the participants' characteristics and the analytical process. Dependability was achieved by meticulously documenting all decisions and analytical processes step-by-step in a researcher's reflexivity notebook. Confirmability was ensured by striving to reduce bias through a focus on direct quotations from participants as primary evidence and recording the researcher's reflections throughout the analysis process. All raw data were stored with confidential codes, and the audio files were securely deleted after the final analysis was completed.

Results

Participant Characteristics

The analysis was conducted on data collected from 12

adolescents who met the entry criteria. The demographic and general characteristics of these participants are presented in Table 1.

Extracted Themes

This phenomenological study, based on the lived experiences of adolescents aged 15 to 18 with high media literacy (Media Literacy Scores between 81 and 90 out of 100), investigates the psychological tensions arising from engagement with the digital ecosystem. The findings indicate that high media literacy, contrary to expectations, is not a complete shield against mental health harms; rather, it often becomes a new source of paradoxical tension. This paradox stems from the gap between deep critical awareness and practical inability to change behaviors or the macro structures of platforms—a “Knowing-Doing Gap” that permeates the entire lived experience of these adolescents. Recent research confirms this duality, where awareness of addictive mechanisms and narrative manipulation is accompanied by feelings of helplessness, cynicism, and psychological costs such as existential anxiety.

Through in-depth analysis of interviews and digital diaries, five interconnected themes emerged (Table 2), that collectively portray the complex psychological landscape of these digitally literate adolescents. The narrative begins with their foundational understanding of the digital environment, moves through their strategic responses, and ultimately reveals the profound tensions and transformative possibilities inherent in their experience.

The foundational layer of their experience is Infrastructural Awareness, reflecting a deep understanding of the designed architecture of platforms—the attention economy, variable-ratio reinforcement schedules, imposed social norms, and narrative manipulation through algorithmic bias. This critical awareness transforms the personal feed from a seemingly “real” space into an engineered environment aimed at maximizing emotional engagement, particularly through negative emotions such as jealousy and anger. As one participant articulated, “I know Instagram intentionally has infinite scrolling so you

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Participant code	Age	Gender	Grades	Main platform(s) used	Mean daily usage time (hours)	Media Literacy Score (out of 100)
P1	17	Female	11	Instagram, Telegram	3-4	87
P2	16	Male	10	YouTube, Rubika, Instagram	2-3	82
P3	15	Female	9	Instagram, TikTok	4-5	85
P4	18	Male	12	Telegram, Twitter, YouTube	3-4	90
P5	16	Female	10	Instagram, Pinterest	2-3	84
P6	17	Male	11	Rubika, YouTube, Instagram	4-5	81
P7	15	Female	19	Instagram, TikTok	5-6	83
P8	16	Male	10	Telegram, Discord, YouTube	3-4	88
P9	17	Female	11	Instagram, Telegram	3-4	86
P10	18	Male	12	Twitter, YouTube, Rubika	2-3	89
P11	16	Female	10	Instagram, Pinterest	4-5	82
P12	17	Male	11	Telegram, Instagram, YouTube	3-4	85

Table 2. General structure of themes extracted from data analysis.

Overarching Theme	Organizing Theme	Number of related core themes
1. Infrastructural Awareness: Decoding the Hidden Architecture of Threat	1.1. Understanding the Attention Economy and Addictive Design	6
	1.2. Algorithm Analysis as an Agent of Experience	5
	1.3. Recognizing Imposed Social Norms in Cyberspace	4
	1.4. Identifying Bias and Manipulation in Narratives	5
2. The Counter-Arsenal: Strategies for Self-Regulation and Proactive Protection	2.1. Cognitive-Metacognitive Strategies	7
	2.2. Behavioral-Operational Strategies	6
	2.3. Emotional-Regulatory Strategies	5
	2.4. Social-Communicative Strategies	4
3. Emancipatory Agency: Critical Activism and Resistance in the Digital Ecosystem	3.1. Non-Associative Resistance and Active Non-Participation	4
	3.2. Counter-Production and Redefinition of Narratives	5
	3.3. Peer Education and Advocacy	4
4. Paradoxical Biopathy: The Struggle Between Critical Knowledge and Emotional Engagement	4.1. The Gap Between Knowing and Being able	5
	4.2. The Psychological Costs of Awareness	4
	4.3. Feelings of Powerlessness in the Face of Macrostructures	5
5. Identity Transformation: Forming the Digital Self as an Intelligent and Responsible User	5.1. Distinguishing “Self” and “User”	4
	5.2. Prioritizing Authenticity Over Display	3
	5.3. Accepting the Social Role of the Literate User	4

can’t stop; it works like a slot machine, but I still go on it every day” (P3, 15-year-old girl). Another described the algorithmic distortion: “The algorithm only shows me things that make me angry or jealous because it knows I’ll spend more time on them. My feed isn’t real anymore; it’s just a distorted version” (P4, 18-year-old boy). This awareness creates a sense of cognitive control but simultaneously intensifies feelings of deception and cynicism toward consumed content, with participants recognizing the social pressures embedded in platform design: “Everyone is editing their bodies and showing a luxurious life; if you don’t do that, it feels like you’re out of style” (P7, 15-year-old girl).

In response to this awareness, adolescents develop a Counter Arsenal of self-regulatory and preemptive protective strategies. These include cognitive-metacognitive techniques, behavioral-operational controls, emotional-regulatory practices, and social-communicative approaches. Cognitive reappraisal was common: “Whenever I feel like I’m comparing myself to others, I tell myself that this is just their best moments, not their whole life” (P1, 17-year-old girl). Behavioral strategies included deliberate time management: “I set a timer; after 45 minutes, the app locks. I also turned off all notifications so I wouldn’t be tempted” (P8, 16-year-old boy). Emotional regulation through physical activity and social support was also evident: “When I feel bad after seeing stories, I go for a walk or talk to my friend to feel better” (P5, 16-year-old girl). Despite their relative effectiveness, these strategies are often temporary, energy-consuming, and insufficient against the structural pressures of platforms, aligning with self-regulation models in the face of behavioral addictions.

Beyond defensive strategies, some adolescents transition to what can be termed Emancipatory Agency, demonstrating critical agency and resistance in the digital

ecosystem. This includes non-engagement resistance, counter-narrative production, and peer-to-peer education. Participants described deliberate disengagement: “I no longer like posts that are just for numbers and attention. I even skip fake stories” (P10, 18-year-old boy). Others engaged in counter-narrative production: “I post about my real life without filters or edits so that others can see that everything isn’t always perfect” (P9, 17-year-old girl). Peer education emerged as a collective strategy: “I tell my friends to be careful about what they consume; sometimes we talk about toxic posts together” (P11, 16-year-old girl). This level of agency creates a sense of significance and impact, but it remains limited to individual or small group scales and is often accompanied by fatigue or frustration due to the inability to influence macro structures—a pattern consistent with digital resistance theories.

The most profound finding, however, lies in the Paradoxical Habitus, where the core tension of the lived experience becomes manifest. Here, deep awareness of mechanisms such as addictive design and algorithmic bias leads not to empowerment but to the knowing-doing gap and psychological costs of awareness—anxiety, loneliness, and feelings of powerlessness against macro structures. One participant captured this tension poignantly: “I know the algorithm is playing with me, but I still can’t stop myself from checking” (P2, 16-year-old boy). Another reflected on the emotional toll: “The more I understand how manipulated the space is, the lonelier and more hopeless I feel” (P11, 16-year-old girl). A sense of futility pervaded these accounts: “I’m just one person; I can’t change the algorithms of big companies; I just end up hurting myself with all this knowledge” (P6, 17-year-old boy). This paradox resonates with recent studies on the psychological costs of critical awareness and the paradox of connection in adolescents, where increased awareness leads to cynicism

and feelings of helplessness rather than empowerment.

At the positive endpoint of this trajectory, some adolescents reach what can be described as Identity Transformation, re-formulating their digital self as an intelligent and responsible user. This involves a conscious distinction between the “real self” and the “user,” prioritizing authenticity over performance, and embracing the social role of a literate user as responsible digital citizenship. As one participant explained, “I’m a person in the real world, but just a user in the virtual space. I try not to mix the two” (P12, 17-year-old boy). Another emphasized authenticity: “I don’t want to show my life for likes anymore. My real self is much more important” (P4, 18-year-old boy). A third articulated a mature self-perception: “Now I see myself as a literate user; I have a responsibility to consume intelligently and help others” (P10, 18-year-old boy). This transformation represents a form of post-critical growth that shifts the individual from passive consumer or victim to aware and resilient user; however, this new identity is fragile and requires continuous practice, similar to identity formation processes in the digital age.

Overall, the lived experience of these adolescents with high media literacy indicates that media literacy alone is not sufficient and can paradoxically become a “prison of awareness.” Critical awareness without adequate tools for emotional management, psychological support, and structural change often leads to paradoxical tensions. This finding emphasizes the need to shift from mere media literacy education to more comprehensive interventions: combining critical education with emotional-psychological support, safe peer dialogue spaces, promoting collective resistance, and platform-centric policies to mitigate structural harms. Such an approach can equip adolescents not only to “know” but also to “be able” to live healthier, more authentic, and meaningful lives in the digital ecosystem.

Discussion

The findings of this research offer three novel contributions to the understanding of media literacy and adolescent mental health, moving beyond the prevailing optimism in the literature.

First, this study reveals that high media literacy, rather than functioning as a straightforward protective factor, generates a distinctive paradoxical burden—a “prison of awareness” wherein critical knowledge of platform architectures coexists with persistent emotional entanglement and behavioral compulsion. This finding challenges the simplistic linear models that posit a direct positive correlation between literacy and psychological well-being. The knowing-doing gap identified here suggests that literacy education, without concomitant attention to emotional regulation and structural change, may inadvertently produce cynicism, helplessness, and existential anxiety. The experience of these adolescents indicates that awareness without agency becomes its own source of distress, a dimension largely invisible in quantitative studies that measure literacy as a unitary

construct with uniformly positive outcomes.

Second, the research demonstrates that literacy functions not merely as a skill set but as a transformative identity project during adolescence. Participants moved through a developmental trajectory from infrastructural awareness and self-regulatory strategies toward, in some cases, the active construction of a “responsible digital self.” This identity work involves a conscious differentiation between the authentic self and the performed digital persona, alongside an embrace of digital citizenship as a social role. This finding extends existing models by showing that literacy becomes integrated into the fundamental adolescent task of identity formation, transforming users from passive consumers into agents who actively negotiate their position within the digital ecosystem. However, this identity remains fragile and demands continuous practice, suggesting that literacy is not a stable achievement but an ongoing process of self-redefinition.

Third, the research provides empirical grounding for the concept of emancipatory agency at the experiential level, demonstrating that adolescents engage in tangible forms of resistance—non-engagement, counter-narrative production, and peer education—that extend beyond self-protection to active influence on their digital social environments. This agency, however, operates within significant constraints. While participants demonstrated sophisticated critical capacities and strategic responses, their agency remained largely confined to individual or small-group scales, generating frustration when confronted with the immutability of platform architectures. This tension between individual resistance and structural determinism reveals the limits of literacy-based interventions in the absence of broader regulatory and platform-level changes.

Taken together, these findings suggest that media literacy is a double-edged sword: it empowers critical awareness and strategic coping while simultaneously imposing psychological costs and revealing the boundaries of individual agency. The lived experience of these adolescents indicates that effective intervention must move beyond literacy education alone toward integrated approaches that combine critical analysis, emotional-psychological support, collective resistance strategies, and structural reforms to platform design.

Conclusion

Using interpretative phenomenological methods, this research explored the structure of lived experiences among adolescents with high media literacy. The findings reveal that this experience is a dynamic and dialectical journey in which critical awareness of digital architecture generates active coping strategies and, in some cases, emancipatory agency against dominant norms. However, this path is non-linear and accompanied by a constant internal struggle—between critical knowledge and emotional allure, and between individual agency and powerlessness against macro structures. The outcome is not an absolutely safe position but the formation of a more integrated, critical, and responsible digital identity that defines its boundaries

with platforms and engages in conscious activism rather than passivity.

In theoretical terms, high social media literacy creates a distinct “ontological position” in the digital lifeworld. This position transforms the individual from a “swimmer drowning in the current” to a “conscious sailor on the deck of a ship”—who, although not controlling the storm, possesses a map, understands the navigation tools, and knows how to protect themselves, even if they sometimes fear the waves of the sea.

Acknowledgments

This article is derived from the first author’s doctoral dissertation. The authors thank all adolescents who participated in this study. This research received no specific funding from public, commercial, or not-for-profit agencies.

Authors’ Contribution

Conceptualization: Tahereh Hosseinabadi, Abbas Naseri Taheri, Ali Jafari

Data Curation: Tahereh Hosseinabadi

Formal Analysis: Tahereh Hosseinabadi, Abbas Naseri Taheri

Investigation: Tahereh Hosseinabadi

Methodology: Abbas Naseri Taheri, Ali Jafari

Project Administration: Abbas Naseri Taheri

Resources: Tahereh Hosseinabadi, Ali Jafari

Software: Tahereh Hosseinabadi

Supervision: Abbas Naseri Taheri

Validation: Abbas Naseri Taheri, Ali Jafari

Writing – Original Draft: Tahereh Hosseinabadi

Writing – Review & Editing: Abbas Naseri Taheri, Ali Jafari

Competing Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval

This study is derived from the doctoral dissertation of the first author at the Islamic Azad University, Ardabil Branch. The research was conducted in accordance with ethical principles and received an ethics code from the Research Ethics Committee of the respective university. All participants (adolescents) were provided with informed consent (written and verbal) with full knowledge of the research objectives and the confidentiality of their information. Informed consent was also obtained from their parents or legal guardians for participation in the study. Participants had the right to withdraw at any stage of the research. The researchers were committed to maintaining the confidentiality of participants’ information and identities, and all data were analyzed and reported in coded and anonymized form. The ethical principles outlined in the Declaration.

Funding

None.

References

- Schønning V, Hjetland GJ, Aarø LE, Skogen JC. Social media use and mental health and well-being among adolescents - a scoping review. *Front Psychol* 2020;11:1949. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01949
- Odgers CL, Jensen MR. Annual research review: adolescent mental health in the digital age: facts, fears, and future directions. *J Child Psychol Psychiatry* 2020;61(3):336-48. doi:10.1111/jcpp.13190
- Haidt J, Twenge JM. This is Our Chance to Pull Teenagers Out of the Smartphone Trap. *New York Times*; 2021.
- Vanwynsberghe H, Verdegem P. Integrating social media in education. *CLCWeb Comp Lit Cult* 2013;15(3):10. doi:10.7771/1481-4374.2247
- Pangrazio L, Selwyn N. ‘My data, my bad ...’: young people’s personal data understandings and (counter)practices. In: *Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Social Media & Society*. Toronto, ON: Association for Computing Machinery; 2017. p. 1-5. doi:10.1145/3097286.3097338
- Schreurs L, Vandenbosch L. Introducing the social media literacy (SMILE) model with the case of the positivity bias on social media. *J Child Media* 2021;15(3):320-37. doi:10.1080/17482798.2020.1809481
- Smith JA, Larkin M, Flowers P. *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. 2nd ed. SAGE Publications; 2022.
- Pangrazio L, Sefton-Green J. Digital rights, digital citizenship and digital literacy: what’s the difference? *J New Approaches Educ Res* 2021;10(1):15-27. doi:10.7821/naer.2021.1.616
- Postman N. The humanism of media ecology. *Proc Media Ecol Assoc* 2000;1(1):10-6.
- Meyrowitz J. *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior*. Oxford University Press; 1985.
- Zuboff S. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. PublicAffairs; 2019.
- O’Reilly M, Dogra N, Whiteman N, Hughes J, Eruiy S, Reilly P. Is social media bad for mental health and well-being? Exploring the perspectives of adolescents. *Clin Child Psychol Psychiatry* 2018;23(4):601-13. doi:10.1177/1359104518775154
- Vanden Abeele MM, Nguyen MH. Digital well-being in an age of mobile connectivity: an introduction to the Special Issue. *Mob Media Commun* 2022;10(2):174-89. doi:10.1177/20501579221080899
- Keum BT. The importance of critical social media literacy in the digital era: Benefits for social support and flourishing. *Emerging Adulthood* 2025;13(2):243-253. doi:10.1177/21676968241226492
- Gordon CS, Jarman HK, Rodgers RF, McLean SA, Slater A, Fuller-Tyszkiewicz M, Paxton SJ. Outcomes of a cluster randomized controlled trial of the SoMe social media literacy program for improving body image-related outcomes in adolescent boys and girls. *Nutrients* 2021;13(11):3825. doi:10.3390/nu13113825
- Kim K, Shin S, Kim S, Lee E. The Relation Between eHealth Literacy and Health-Related Behaviors: Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *J Med Internet Res* 2023;25:e40778. doi:10.2196/40778
- Soltan A, Pour ZS, Aghaei S. Phenomenological Pathology of Adolescent Girls’ Gender Identity in Cyberspace. *Journal of Culture of Counseling and Psychotherapy*. 2023;14(54):61-84.. doi:10.22054/QCCPC.2023.71537.3058
- Boyd D. *It’s Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. Yale University Press; 2014.
- Pangrazio L, Selwyn N. ‘My Data, My Bad ...’: Young People’s Personal Data Understandings and (Counter)Practices. *Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Social Media & Society*; Toronto, ON, Canada: Association for Computing Machinery; 2017:Article 52. doi:10.1145/3097286.3097338
- Varze L, Livingstone S, Stoilova M. Adolescents’ privacy literacy and practices: a qualitative study. *New Media & Society*; 2022. doi:10.1177/14614448221109771
- Davis K. Tensions of identity in a networked era: young people’s perspectives on the risks and rewards of online self-expression. *New Media Soc* 2012;14(4):634-51. doi:10.1177/1461444811422430