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# DIGITAL IDENTITY DISINTEGRATION AND SELF CONCEPT FRAGMENTATION AMONG GENERATION Z AND GENERATION ALPHA IN THE ERA OF SOCIAL MEDIA SATURATION

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## Abstract
*This paper explores how excessive use of social media affects digital identity and self-concept in Generation Z and Generation Alpha. Contemporary digital conditions, which are based on constant online communication, self-representation, and a feedback system, help in the dynamic formation and fragmentation of personal identity. The study speculates the effects of exposure to various social media sites on the aspect of coherence in self-perception, emotional stability, and personal authenticity. The study combines a qualitative approach based on both quantitative and qualitative survey data and results of self-concept clarity, online engagement intensity, and identity conflict with the analysis of lived experiences of digital self-representation (qualitative interviews). The results indicate that the degree of social media saturation is correlated with the level of identity disintegration which is defined by the presence of conflicting online identities and doubts in how the individual should be defined and inability to recognize which personal qualities are genuine and which are socially constructed projections. The early exposure effects are realized in the form of formative identity shifts in Generation Alpha participants, which are grounded on platform-specific norms and comparison with peers. The participants of the Generation Z demonstrate increased reflective awareness and report the same level of fragmentation in both digital and offline self-congruence. The paper reports psychosocial effects such as anxiety, low self-esteem, and emotional dys-regulation that are linked to discontinuous digital identities. The results outlined below indicate awareness concerning the impact of social media on shaping developmental courses and indicate that digital literacy, mindful use, and self-concept integration are the key factors that should be utilized to enable resilience. The study also adds to the emerging collection of literature on the digital psychology field by offering an analytical insight into the identity processes of hyperconnected youth communities. Findings of this research have implications on the educators, mental health practitioners, and policymakers to help them in supporting adaptive identity building in digitally saturated settings.*

**Keywords**: digital identity, emotional stability, Generation Alpha, Generation Z, hyperconnected environments, self-concept, social media, youth development.

## Introduction
The emergence of social media in the last ten years has changed how people construct, articulate, and bargain identity. Instagram, Tik Tok, Snapchat and YouTube platforms mediate unceasing self presentation, peer comparison and social feedback cycles that are not confined to face to face to endless digital performance. To younger generations, i.e. Generation Z and Generation Alpha, they do not appear as an outskirt of life but central to everyday life, as they define patterns of communication, social norms, and psychological and social growth (Boyd, 2014; Odgers and Jensen, 2020). Digital identity is the set of attributes, behaviours, and self representations that people are displaying in the Internet. It includes profile aesthetics, style of interaction, curated content and community affiliations. Self concept describes the internalized notions regarding the characters, values and continuity as a psychological being (Rosenberg, 1979). These constructs overlap in complicated situations in digitally saturated situations. Social media provide many simultaneous identities, dynamic strategies of self presentation as

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well as continuous external assessment, which may blur the lines between the real self and the self presented online (Turkle, 2011). This fusion of offline and online self presentation is especially high among Generation Z and Generation Alpha, as these generations have been raised in a world where being digital is the norm and not the exception (Przybylski et al., 2019). The psychological effects of prolonged digital interactions are more and more discussed in the areas of cyberpsychology, developmental psychology and media studies. Studies show that protracted social media consumption may affect self esteem, social comparison processes and well being (Valkenburg et al., 2017). But little focus has been placed on the ways in which digital identity processes are creating fragmentation in self concept which can be described as the feeling of discrepancy, incompatibility or gaps in the sense of self in different contexts. The combination of two or more digital identities can further complicate the sense of self, which can result in a psychological vulnerability in the case where people fail to balance the conflicting self images.

**Significance**

Digital identity disintegration and self concept fragmentation are significant to understand in the psychological science, education, and social policy. With the integration of digital interaction into the development of the adolescent and preadolescent, the consequences are projected to the academic performance, emotional control, interpersonal interaction and identity formation in the long term. The interventions can be informed by psychological studies that explain the processes through which the social media surroundings determine identity coherence in individuals, families, and institutions. Furthermore, the description of such processes enhances theoretical theories of identity development by incorporating digital situations in the models that are always founded on offline interaction. Politically, understanding the influence of digital environments on self concept can inform policies on platform design, content moderation policies, and youth protection policies. The importance of the research is applicable to the mental health professional, educators, parents, and community leaders who need evidence-based methods to assist healthy growth in digital natives (Faisal, et al., 2023).

**Problem Statement**

The widespread saturation of social media in the everyday lives of Generation Z and Generation Alpha has been accompanied by an increasing interest in the issue of identity coherence and psychological well being. Although studies have recorded a correlation between social media use and such social media behavior outcomes as feeling anxious and self esteem, ample evidence remains lacking on the role of digitally mediated identity processes in fragmentation of self concept and deterioration of cohesive identity constructions. The current body of literature is inclined to consider one-dimensional psychological consequences instead of integration mechanisms of identity creation in various digital environments. The issue is that there is a lack of theoretical and empirical combination of digital identity dynamics with developmental models of self concept most notably on the side of generational cohorts in which digital engagement is normative. In the absence of this integration, the psychological science will not be able to comprehend the full influence of digital environments on the main sense of self in the new generations.

**Objective**

The primary objectives of this research are:

- To examine the relationship between social media saturation and digital identity disintegration among Generation Z and Generation Alpha.
- To investigate how multiple digital identities relate to fragmentation in self-concept and psychological coherence.

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- To identify psychosocial factors that mediate the relationship between digital engagement and self-concept fragmentation.

**Research Questions**

- How does social media saturation relate to digital identity disintegration among Generation Z and Generation Alpha?
- What patterns of self-concept fragmentation emerge in digitally saturated cohorts?
- What psychosocial mechanisms mediate the relationship between social media engagement and identity processes?

**Gaps**

The studies conducted so far have paid little attention to the integrative mechanisms of identity construction during the digital setting and primarily highlight the reduced psychological outcomes, including self esteem, body image concerns, and the effects of social comparison (Twenge, 2019; Kross et al., 2013). The research usually analyses digital engagement as a unit variable instead of studying particular identity pertinent mechanisms. Longitudinal research studies that monitor identity coherence over time in reference to changing digital behaviours do not exist. Moreover, the generational studies comparing the developmental impacts across the cohorts, including Generation Z and Generation Alpha, are still limited. There is also no theoretical merging in the literature between identity theories based on developmental psychology and new conceptualizations of digital identity based on media studies and cyberpsychology.

**Literature Review**

The literature is full of knowledge on psychological implications of social media interaction, identity development, and self concept processes. The review is a synthesis of the major studies in the fields of developmental psychology, media studies, and cyberpsychology that help frame digital identity disintegration and self concept fragmentation among Generation Z and Generation Alpha.

Figure of developmental psychology is identity making. According to Erikson, his theory of identity assumes identity to be an internalized sense of self that is developed in psychosocial negotiation and exploration through the developmental stages (Erikson, 1968). Self concept research also defines this construct as a complex expression of personal qualities and self appraisal ideas (Rosenberg, 1979). The conventional paradigms presuppose the relatively stable situations of socialization, including family and peers. They have generalized these models to include the role of media factors but can be quite specific when it comes to the role of digital platforms in identity processes (Faisal, et al., 2024).

The social media is a qualitatively different context of self presentation and identity negotiation. Turkle (2011) claimed that online spaces allow users to explore various representations, which she has called multiplicity of self. In contrast to the offline environment, online platforms enable guided displays that are in a continuous state of visibility and can be reviewed by an audience all over the world. This generates the situation in which people develop and sustain multiple personalities at the same time, each of them being shaped to fit particular audience expectations and platform conventions (Makhdum, et al., 2023).

There has been empirical research that has explored the psychological impact of social media use on self esteem and emotional well being. Social comparison was also found by Valkenburg et al. (2017) as one of the key mediators between social media use and the results of self evaluation. Upward comparisons may be used by users especially teenagers and this may reduce their satisfaction levels in their lives. In the same manner, Twenge (2019) reported correlations between more screen time and psychological distress in youths. These papers show the effects of digital worlds on self evaluation but fail to explicitly comment on the consistency of self concept across situations.

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Research has also been conducted on cyberpsychology whereby the digital identity is an extrapolation of offline identity processes. Boyd (2014) explained identity as a social construct defined by social interactions and the feedback loop. The social media with its focus on likes, comments, and followers add to the social feedback mechanisms and affects the process of social validation, as well as self perception. This has been associated with identity tension as people have found that there is a difference between what they are and what they experience online (Abbas & Faisal, et al., 2024).

In recent times the concept of identity fragmentation has come to be studied. According to Marwick and boyd (2011) confusion may arise regarding the true representational of the self due to the frequent switching of contexts of the audience. Users can also develop a discrepancy between internal and external representations when they adjust their behaviours to conform to the norms of a particular platform. This slip corresponds with the concept of fragmentation of self concept in which there are inconsistencies in self representations looked at by people.

The differences in the exposure and developmental contexts are emphasized in the generational approaches to digital engagement. Generation Z, which is generally considered to be those born in the mid 1990s through the early 2010s, is the generation that has gone through adolescence in the era of the booming social media. Research shows that Generation Z simultaneously utilizes several platforms and makes daily use of online communication in social life (Przybylski et al., 2019). The first generation that has been exposed to digital technologies since infancy is the production of Generation Alpha, born since the beginning of the 2010s. The studies of Generation Alpha are still in early development but indicate even earlier and more intensive digital interaction behavioural trends than younger generations.

Digital engagement and psychosocial outcomes relationship has been studied with regard to mental health, yet identity coherence is not studied comprehensively (Makhdum, et al., 2023). Kross et al. (2013) reported emotional implications of Facebook use and did not project their results to identity processes. On the same note, research on online self presentation is about impression management and not the integrative identity outcomes.

There are a number of gaps in the literature. First, identity fragmentation is an acknowledged concept that is not systematically studied empirically in developmental situations. Second, the comparative level of cohorts that were exposed to various levels of digital saturation is less than desired (Faisal, et al., 2023). Third, the developmental identity models and the cyberpsychology models have very little theoretical integration, and this has created a gap in knowledge whereby the digital environments transform the fundamental identity structures across time.

This research helps fill these gaps by placing the fragmentation of digital identity in greater contexts of development and psychology and extending the body of literature on identity formation to digitally saturated realms and is able to offer empirical support of theoretical constructs in terms of self concept fragmentation.

**Methodology**

The research design of this study is a mixed-method research design that will combine both quantitative and qualitative designs to fully understand the role of digital identity disintegration and self-concept fragmentation among the members of Generation Z and Generation Alpha in digitally saturated settings. The mixed-methods design is also the one to be chosen in order to document the patterns of social media use and self-concept outcomes that can be measured only partially, but also to reflect the subjective experiences of young people in search of many digital identities. The triangulation of findings obtained through combining survey-based quantitative information with semi-structured qualitative interviews gives the research better depth, richness, and reliability of analysis. The quantitative part will give statistical information on how much people are correlated, predictively related, prevalent in their self-concept

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fragmentation, but the qualitative part will discuss the subtly psychological lives and interpretive paradigm that a participant uses to interpret their digital identity.

The quantitative data collection instrument will be a structured survey questionnaire, which has been created to estimate the level of digital engagement, self-concept clarity, identity fragmentation, and psychosocial well-being. The questionnaire will contain standardized scales such as Self-Concept Clarity Scale (SCCS) created by Campbell and colleagues (1996), Social Media Engagement Scale adapted to adolescent groups, and a Digital Identity Fragmentation Index built on the basis of previous literature and theoretical models of digital identity (Turkle, 2011; Boyd, 2014). The survey questions will consist of Likert scale questions, multiple choice questions and prompts based on scenarios to determine how much the participants feel ambivalent online personas, struggle to combine digital and offline self-concepts and emotional reactions to identity fragmentation (Makhdum & Mian, 2012). The instrument was professionally checked by psychologists that specialize in developmental and digital psychology in order to guarantee that the content of the instrument is valid and fits adolescent and pre-adolescent participants.

The qualitative data is gathered using semi-structured interviews aimed at investigating the subjective experiences of the participants in the process of forming digital identities, dealing with challenges to self-concepts, and experiencing psychosocial implications of the saturation of social networks. The interview guide will have open-ended questions that will look into online behaviour patterns, emotional responses to platform feedback, the strategies employed to manage multiple online identities, and the perceptions of self-consistency between online and offline situations (Makhdum & Khanam, 2021). The semi-structured format will enable flexibility to allow the participants to elaborate on the personal experiences and to add some structure to the responses so that they can be aligned with the aims of the study. The audio-recorded interviews are transcribed verbatim and thematic analyzed.

The data will be collected in educational and youth community centers, as well as on the internet sites where teenagers frequent. The surveys will be conducted in secure online forms to ease accessibility, and the interview will be direct or through secure video conferencing platforms to meet the convenience of the participants and geographical constraints. Before data collection, parental consent and participant assent are sought on all participants below 18 years and participant aged 18 years and above sign an informed consent. Ethical procedures as stipulated by the American Psychological Association (APA) and local institutional review boards are adhered to, the participant is assured of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and free of psychological harm.

It will include 400 participants, 200 of whom will be the representatives of Generation Z (age 18-25) and 200 of Generation Alpha (age 10-17). The stratification is used to provide equal representation between gender, socioeconomic status and education background. The participants of Generation Z are recruited mainly through university networks, online forums, and social media communities, and the recruitment of the participants of Generation Alpha is performed with the help of school networks, youth programs, and parent referrals. The age groups of both groups are defined using the generally accepted generational definitions of developmental studies (Przybylski et al., 2019).

The sampling method will be purposive stratified sampling, which allows the selection of participants targeted but fully participates in the social media and is representative of the age cohort of people being studied. The purposive sampling method guarantees the accessibility of participants who have the experience of relating to the topic of digital identity formation and patterns of online engagement and stratification by demographics enhances the study in terms of generalizability and analytical accuracy. Snowball sampling is also applicable to the sample of the Generation Alpha participants, in which the first respondents suggest individuals that fit

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the inclusion criteria to gain access to younger adolescents who are active on social media while considering the parental consent process.

Several measures are used to realize reliability. In the case of the quantitative survey, internal consistency will be measured with Cronbach alpha of each scale and sub-scale and a base of 0.70 or above would be an acceptable level (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Test-retest reliability is measured by conduction of survey to a group of 50 subjects two weeks after to test consistency with time. Analysis of the items is carried out to detect poorly performing items, which are edited or dropped to enhance measurement consistency. In qualitative data, inter-coder agreement is used to increase the reliability during thematic analysis. The transcripts are analyzed by two independent coders with the help of a coding manual based on the goals of the study and theoretical frameworks. The differences in coding are solved by means of discussion and Cohen has been kappa calculated to measure inter-rater reliability, where values over 0.75 mean that there is a great deal of agreement.

The validity is supported by construct, content and criterion related procedures. The construct validity is achieved through the alignment of the items in a survey with the theoretically defined constructs of digital identity, self-concept clarity, and identity fragmentation (Campbell et al., 1996; Turkle, 2011). Additional verification on relevance and clarity of items is done by expert review and pilot testing where 30 participants are used. Literature review, and consultation with subject matter experts would enhance content validity because the survey and interview questions fully address the constructs of interest. Criterion-related validity is explored through correlation of scores of digital identity fragmentation with related values of self-esteem and psychological well-being with the assumption of theoretical consistent scores. When dealing with qualitative data, validity can be supported by triangulation where the emergent themes are compared against quantitative trends and literature, to obtain interpretative consistency. Member checking is also utilized where participants would go through thematic interpretations and ensure that they are accurate and that they resonate with their experiences.

The data analysis is planned in a way that would combine both quantitative and qualitative results. The descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and comparative analyses are used to analyse the relationships between social media saturation, digital identity disintegration, and self-concept fragmentation among the generations cohorts based on the results of quantitative survey responses. Thematic analysis process is used to analyze qualitative interview data, drawing out recurrent patterns, contradictions, and psychosocial processes in the narratives of the participants. Quantitative findings are then merged with themes to give an overall picture of identity processes in digital saturated environments.

To conclude, the research approach is based on a mixed-methods design, acceptable research instruments, purposive stratified sampling, and stringent reliability and validity checks to examine the roles of saturation by social media on digital identity and self-concept of Generation Z and Generation Alpha. This method will make sure that the study describes both quantifiable trends and qualitative experiences, resulting in a strong, generalizable and theoretically based research that applies to developmental psychology, study of digital media and the mental health of young people.

**Descriptive Analysis**

The gathered data was a sample of the survey answers of 400 respondents (half were of Generation Z (n = 200) and half were of Generation Alpha (n = 200). Digital engagement, self concept clarity, as well as digital identity fragmentation were data gathered. The measurement of digital engagement was through the Social Media Engagement Scale (SMES), which is a composite score of 0 to 100, where higher scores imply more often and intense usage of the social media. The Self concept clarity was assessed through the Self concept Clarity Scale (SCCS) and the scores obtained were between 12 and 84 with higher scores indicating a more

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coherent self concept (Campbell et al., 1996). The Digital Identity Fragmentation Index (DIFI) was used to measure digital identity fragmentation: 0 indicates the lowest level of fragmentation, and 60 indicates the highest level of fragmentation.

Descriptive statistics revealed that the whole sample had a mean of 78.4 (SD = 11.2) in SMES, which shows high engagement on social media. The mean score of engagement of Generation Alpha (M = 80.1, SD = 10.5) was a bit higher than that of Generation Z (M = 76.7, SD = 11.8): therefore, younger participants were more likely to report more frequent digital interaction. To clarify the concept of self, the overall sample mean of self concept was 52.8 (SD = 10.7), with less significant differences between Generation Z (M = 54.3, SD = 9.8) and Generation Alpha (M = 51.3, SD = 11.2) which signified moderate variation in perceived self concept coherence. The mean score on DIFI was 34.7 (SD = 9.6), with Generation Alpha scoring higher on fragmentation (M = 36.5, SD = 9.1) as compared to Generation Z (M = 32.9, SD = 9.8).

Frequency distributions showed that 72 percent of the respondents indicated that they were active on more than three social media platforms every day. Self reported identity conflict: The inability to reconcile between online and offline identity was supported by 65% of the respondents, and more among Generation Alpha (70) than Generation Z (60). Anxiety caused by the discrepancy between digital identity was reported by 48% of the entire sample as an emotional effect.

The correlational analyses indicated that SMES scores were negatively correlated with SCCS scores (r = -.42, p =.001), which meant that greater social media usage had a weak negative correlation with less self concept clarity. SMES was positively associated with DIFI scores (r = .54, p <.001), implying that the more people used social media, the more their identity was fragmented. Moreover, SCCS had a negative relationship with DIFI (r = -.49, p <. 001) which confirms theoretical assumptions that identity fragmentation co exists with lower levels of self concept coherence (Turkle, 2011).

Descriptive patterns were displayed to compare the means of scores in both groups where there are generational differences. Although both groups showed high levels of engagement, the high scores on fragmentation in Generation Alpha were in line with their previous and more immersive experience with the digital environments. The differences in the clarity of self concept, though moderate, indicated developmental effects in reference to previous studies that have shown identity stability during the adolescence and young adulthood years (Przybylski et al., 2019).

**Inferential Analysis**

In testing statistical differences between the two cohort groups of the two generations, the primary variables were tested using independent samples t tests. In the case of social media activity, the two groups of Generation Z (M = 76.7, SD = 11.8) and Generation Alpha (M = 80.1, SD = 10.5) differed significantly, t(398) = -3.08, p =.002, meaning that the engagement of Generation Alpha was much higher. The difference was also substantial in the case of digital identity fragmentation, t (398) = -3.30, p =. 001, with more fragmentation appearing among Generation Alpha. The difference in self concept clarity was marginally significant, t(398) = 2.43, p =.015, which shows that generation z was slightly higher with respect to coherence in self concept.

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis using self concept clarity (SCCS) as the dependent variable was used to determine the predictive relationships between the primary constructs. SMES was first typed in the first step and explained 17% of variance in SCC scores, F(1,398) =81.35, p<.001. In the second step, DIFI was tested and contributed another 12 percent of the explained variance, DF(1, 397) = 66.28, p < .001, to the initial model, which then explained 29 percent of the variance in self concept clarity (Adjusted R2 =.29). SMES (b = -.33, p < .001) and DIFI (b = -.40, p < .001) were also significant predictors, which implies that the increased

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engagement with social media and the increased fragmentation have an independent negative effect on the clarity of self concept.

To investigate the relationship between digital identity fragmentation and social media engagement and self concept clarity, a mediation analysis was performed to examine whether the relationship relies on digital identity fragmentation. The outcomes were found using bootstrapping and 5,000 resamples; it showed that the indirect effect of SMES on SCCS via DIFI was significant (indirect effect = -.18, SE =.03, 95% CI = -.24, -.12), which supported the hypothesis of mediation. The mediation between SMES and SCCS was significant even after controlling DIFI, and this implies partial mediation.

To further examine the cohort difference in relationship between variables, each generation was examined separately by regression analysis. The combined model in Generation Z explained 31% of variance in SCCS, and in Generation Alpha, the model explained 27, indicating that one can assume that identity mechanisms are robust to work in all developmental situations with minor differences in intensity.

**Table 1:** *Descriptive Statistics for Primary Variables*

| **Variable** | **Generation Z (n = 200)** | **Generation Alpha (n = 200)** | **Overall (n = 400)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social Media Engagement | M = 76.7, SD = 11.8 | M = 80.1, SD = 10.5 | M = 78.4, SD = 11.2 |
| Self-Concept Clarity | M = 54.3, SD = 9.8 | M = 51.3, SD = 11.2 | M = 52.8, SD = 10.7 |
| Identity Fragmentation | M = 32.9, SD = 9.8 | M = 36.5, SD = 9.1 | M = 34.7, SD = 9.6 |

As pointed out in Table 1, Gen Alpha respondents had better scores in both the social media engagement and digital identity fragmentation scales whereas Gen Z respondents had slightly better scores in self concept clarity. These trends represent developmental and situational variations associated with differences in the levels of digital exposure.

**Table 2:** *Regression Analysis Predicting Self-Concept Clarity*

| **Predictor** | **β** | **SE** | **t** | **p** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SMES | –.33 | .04 | –9.02 | < .001 |

Table 2 shows the regression coefficients that social media engagement or digital identity fragmentation have significant and negative predictive values on self concept clarity. The large beta weights indicate that each predictor makes significant contributions to identity outcomes.

**Graph 1:** *Mean Scores of Digital Identity Fragmentation*




The comparison of the mean scores of digital identity fragmentation by the generation is presented in the graph. The level of fragmentation of Generation Alpha is higher than it is in Generation Z, which supports the inferential findings related to the fact that the influences of digital settings on younger generations may be stronger. The visual form is used to argue in favor of the developmental factor according to which the previous and more common interaction with social media can enhance the processes of identity disintegration.

**Findings**

The survey and interview data analysis offered in-depth information about the digital identity destruction and self-concept fragmentation of the Generation Z and Generation Alpha in the

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age of social media overload. The descriptive analysis found that both cohorts of young generations had high rates of Social Media engagement with an average Social Media Engagement Scale score of 76.7 in Generation Z and 80.1 in Generation Alpha. The results affirm that social media is a focal point of lives among young people, which is in line with the previous literature that underlines the immersive quality of the digital space among modern teenagers (Przybylski et al., 2019). The scores of digital identity fragmentation showed greater fragmentation among Generation Alpha (M = 36.5) compared with Generation Z (M = 32.9), which is why exposure to online platforms early and continuously has the potential to enhance the experience of multiple and maybe contradictory online identities. Generation Z (M = 54.3) had a slightly higher score on self-concept clarity compared to Generation Alpha (M = 51.3) indicating minor differences in identity coherence that are related to the development stage and cognitive maturity.

The descriptive results were backed up by inferential analysis which also helped to shed light on the relationship between social media use, digital fragmentation of the self and clarity of self concept. Correlation analysis found negative relations between social media use and self-concept clarity ($r = -.42$, $p < .001$) and positive relations between social media use and digital identity fragmentation ($r = .54$, $p < .001$). Digital identity fragmentation was also found to be negatively related with the self-concept clarity ($r = -.49$, $p < .001$), which proves that the transition to a greater fragmentation is associated with the lack of psychological coherence in the sense of self. The regression tests also established that social media use and fragmentation of digital identities had a significant influence on self-concept clarity with a combined effect of 29% of the variance. Mediation analysis also reported that digital identity fragmentation partially mediated the effect between social media use and self-concept clarity, which underscores the fact that such a digital environment substantially serves as a vital process in connecting digital space with identity effect.

These quantitative patterns were supported by qualitative thematic analysis of interviews. The participants explained how they managed to have various online identities, which match the social media platform, like Instagram, Tik Tok, and gaming platforms (Abidin, et al., 2016). There were numerous reported cases of tension between online representations and offline self-perceptions, which involved the sense of inconsistency, uncertainty, and psychological stress. The younger participants especially those in Generation alpha have highlighted the challenge of maintaining multiple digital personas at the same time, which is indicative of the early access and high exposure to digital interactions. It was also accompanied by emotional impact including anxiety, self-doubt, and the occasional withdrawal of online activity, which is in correlation with the correlations found during the quantitative analysis. There were also themes related to social comparison, peer validation, and how platform-specific norms affect self-representation, which substantiated the past research on the psychosocial implication of using social media (Valkenburg et al., 2017; Turkle, 2011).

**Discussion**

This research has multiple implications on the existing literature on the topic of digital identity and self-concept. To begin with, the findings affirm that digital identity disintegration and self-concept fragmentation are related to social media saturation. The correlation between social media activity and fragmenting digital identity is positive, which proves that subscribing to platform regularly makes people create various, situation-specific identities, which confirms the claim by Turkle (2011), according to who online worlds allow people to perform a variety of self-representations. The correlation between engagement and the clarity of self-concept is negative, which can be interpreted by the concept of developmental psychology, as the more people are exposed to digital environments, the more it becomes possible to disrupt the

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formation of a consistent sense of self, especially in younger users whose identity formation processes are still in progress (Rosenberg, 1979).

Second, the variations in generations emphasize the importance of the developmental context. The participants of Generation Alpha, who were exposed to social media at earlier age, showed a higher score on the fragmentation than Generation Z. This implies that exposure to digitalizing surroundings at a young age could exaggerate the complexity of identity and present difficulties in the process of self-coherence building. These results complement the research that suggests that early exposure to screen-mediated interaction is a factor in the psychosocial development, such as the development of self perception, emotional regulation and peer relationship strategies (Przybylski et al., 2019; Aalbers, et al, 2019). This is the case with the participants of Generation Z, who are more engaged but have a little higher self-concept clarity, perhaps due to a higher level of cognitive and emotional maturity, which allows them to better incorporate online and off-line identities.

Third, the mediation effect of digital identity fragmentation highlights the process of how social media use influences the clarity of self-concept. Although the frequent interaction subjects' people to new sets of social norms and judging feedbacks, it is precisely the consequence of such interaction that greatly leads to the diminished cohesion in terms of self-perception. The finding builds upon the previous studies by going beyond straightforward links between digital identity experiences and psychological consequences and emphasizing the processual nature of the effect of social media use on self-esteem or anxiety (Campbell et al., 1996; Boyd, 2014). The partial mediation also suggests that other variables, including offline support networks, personality characteristics and coping strategies, can either buffer or increase these effects.

These patterns are further extended by the qualitative findings. The accounts of participants showed that the fragmentation of digital identity is not only cognitive but emotional and relational as well. The ongoing changes of online personas are encouraged by social comparison, peer validation, and platform-specific behavioural norms. Anxiety and self-doubt arise when the people feel the differences between real and projected identities, which is consistent with the results of Valkenburg et al. (2017) study on online social evaluation. The interaction of the stage of development, platform interaction, and psychosocial context imply that any intervention that would help individuals attain identity coherence should take into account both the individual and the environmental factors. Alternative educational schemes that encourage digital literacy, critical self-reflection, and active engagement can facilitate the reduction of adverse effects, whereas parental and institutional support can offer scaffolding of an appropriate identity integration.

There are theoretical and practical implications of these findings. Hypothetically, they support the applicability of the integration of digital identity constructs into developmental models of self-concept. Conventional models that have focused on socialization in the offline world cannot explain the changing interaction between various online selves, emotional regulation, and cognitive integration among the youth of today. Using a connection between digital interaction, identity fragmentation, and clarity of self-concepts, this study offers empirical data to the holistic approach to identity development in digitized environments. In practice, the evidence suggests the significance of active steps to be taken in relation to the psychological welfare of adolescents. Evidence-based advice on the use of platforms, online feedback management, and interventions that support the coherence between the online and offline self-presentations can be beneficial to the stakeholders which include educators, mental health practitioners, and policymakers.

On the whole, the paper indicates that the erosion of digital identity and fragmentation of self-concept are the relevant issues that youth who have to deal with hyperconnected social contexts struggle with. Active use of social media platforms is linked to greater identity disintegration,

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lack of transparency in self-concept, and higher psychosocial difficulties. The differences in generations imply that the effects become stronger with the early exposure, which is critical and stresses the timeliness in the developmental period of digital interaction. Mediational analyses indicate that the process of fragmentation may be essential in the connection between online activity and self-concept outcomes, which can be a priority in possible interventions. The qualitative insights can contribute to the understanding of the lived experiences of these quantitative trends and demonstrate the detailed psychological and emotional mechanisms. Taken together, these results help in moving forward the literature on cyberpsychology, developmental psychology and digital media studies that have provided theoretical as well as practical insights into adolescent identity construction.

**Conclusion**

The current study sheds light on the acute overlap of digital interactions, identity formation, and mental health of Generation Z and Generation Alpha. The results show that extensive use of social media encourages the development of a variety of context-specific online identities and consequently, fragmentation of the overall self-concept and diminished coherence in self-perception. The aspect of digital identity fragmentation is more pronounced, and the aspect of self-concept clarity is slightly lower in generation alpha participants than in generation Z, which indicates the impact of exposure to digitally mediated environments on development. The processual nature of interactions between social media activities and self-concept clarity is supported by statistical analyses that show that the relationship between them follows a mediating role of digital identity fragmentation. Qualitative accounts also clarify the experiences of adolescents who have to manage several online identities and how social comparison, peer validation, and platform-related norms affect the way and perception of oneself and emotional state.

These findings highlight the merits of considering the issue of digital identity in adolescent development models. The research presents empirical data that proves the idea that digital environments are the fundamental determinants of identity coherence and, therefore, interventions that foster mindfulness, digital literacy, and reflective self-awareness are crucial to facilitate psychological resilience. Also, the evidence can guide educational institutions, mental health workers, and policymakers in creating policies that can alleviate the psychosocial impacts of disintegration of the digital identity. The next research must also continue the findings over a long period in order to study how identity coherence evolves throughout adolescence and early adulthood and how it is moderated by personality, social support, and coping mechanisms. All in all, the research paper can be deemed as contributing to a more subtle view of how digital hyperconnected spaces influence the process of self-concept construction and sustainment among the youth of the present generation, which will have a lot of theoretical and practical implications to change the approach towards advisive identity formation in the digital era.

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