



# Role of Social Media in Adolescent-Parent Relationships Among At-Risk Youths

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## Abstract

This study aimed to understand the role of adolescents' and parents' social media use in relation to adolescents' reported at-risk behaviors, as well as the effect of social media on the relationships between at-risk youths and their parents. Semi-structured interviews, based on interpretive phenomenological analysis, were conducted with six pairs of individuals, 12 total participants. Each pair consisted of an adolescent between the ages of 13 and 17 and their parent. Data analysis resulted in three themes: Negativity they encountered on social media did not stop adolescents from using social media. Parental monitoring was problematized by parents' lack of knowledge regarding social media and technology. Adolescent and parent participants had different perceptions of the quality of time spent together. The study found that even though participant pairs experienced negativity on social media, they all continued to use it, and parents did little to prevent their children from using it. The study also found that parent participants were unaware of the amount of time their adolescents spent on social media. The findings of this research add to the current literature regarding social media and the impact it has on the parent-adolescent relationship among at-risk youth.

**Keywords:** *Social media, at-risk youths, attachment theory, parent-adolescent relationship, mental health*

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## Literature Review

Youths between the ages of 12 and 17 average 17 hours per week online, with some youths averaging more than 40 hours per week. Each year, more youths rely on mobile phones and computers for online communication, which allows them to engage in aggressive behaviors online through instant messaging, social media, and texts (Vazonyi et al., 2016). Although social media has positive aspects, such as communicating with family and friends, it is also shown to have negative impacts on mental health, such as depression and anxiety (Twenge et al., 2018). Hawke (2018) has asserted that social media minimizes verbal

communication and leads to significant problems in social skills for both adults and those under 18. Social media use has also been linked to behavioral problems and heavy alcohol use among adolescents (Brunborg & Andreas, 2019). Researchers have found that social media use can be correlated to cyberbullying, criminal activity on social media, gang violence, and suicide (Ghosh, 2017).

Research has also demonstrated that social media use affects the parent-child relationship. Participating in frequent social media usage takes away from person-to-person interaction, which is significantly important between parents and their children. Anderson (2016) studied how often parents discussed appropriate and inappropriate online behaviors with their teens and found that only 33% of parents occasionally talked to them about what was appropriate on social media as it related to behavior in school, at home, and in their social lives. Mediation on the part of parents is an important factor when monitoring what their children are getting into; in order to mediate, parents must be fluent on the internet and social media. The more the parent understands all aspects of social media and the negative influences it can have, the better the likelihood that they can monitor their child's use of the internet and social media (Lin et al., 2019).

In order to understand parents' perceptions of social media influencers, Lin et al. (2019) surveyed 200 mothers and adolescents between the ages of 11 and 17 to determine how parents interact with social media in general. The researchers concluded that when parents were actively participating in social media, they became more aware of different ways social media could be used. Furthermore, those parents showed higher intrapersonal empowerment, which increased their mediation of social media influencers' impact on their children (Lin et al., 2019). Abar et al. (2018) examined how parent-child social media interaction correlated to youths' risky behaviors. The researchers concluded that youths who did not block their parents from certain posts were less likely to participate in risky behaviors compared to youths who blocked their parents from seeing certain posts. According to Jiang (2018), adolescents who reported that their parents were distracted by their cell phones often felt ignored. Goldstein (2016) also found that adolescents who kept information from their parents were more likely to have parents with intrusive parenting styles, which led to detachment between adolescents and their parents. Stockdale et al. (2018) indicated that parents who were distracted with technology experienced decreased feelings of parental warmth; parental warmth was negatively correlated to behavioral problems, anxiety, depression, and cyberbullying and positively associated with prosocial behaviors. This lack of parental warmth alone could cause difficulty in parenting and interfere with adolescent development of social skills, including the ability to handle peer conflict (Stockdale et al., 2018). These studies highlighted the impact that social media use can have, not only on parent-child relationships but also on risky behavior of adolescents. The results of these studies demonstrated that adolescents may withhold information from their parents due to a sense of detachment and trust.

According to Brunborg and Andreas (2019), adolescents who spent more time on social media were likely to be depressed, have behavioral problems, and consume a heavy amount of alcohol than adolescents who did not spend a lot of time on social media. Barry et al. (2017) assessed adolescents' and their parents' use of social media and how that correlated to mental health issues, including the fear of missing out (FOMO). They concluded that social media activity was positively correlated to FOMO and loneliness, in addition to parent-reported ADHD, anxiety, and depression among adolescents. Adolescents who had several social media accounts with internalization problems reported feelings of loneliness (Barry et al., 2017). These findings demonstrate the potential negative effects that use of social media can have on adolescents' behavior and well-being. Given this, we addressed the gap in the literature by examining the effects of adolescents' and parents' use of social media and how that the use might affect their relationships, as well as parent-reported at-risk behaviors on the part of their adolescent children. Understanding these phenomena can offer insight on monitoring the amount of time spent on social media and how it can negatively impact youths and parent-child relationships. A better understanding of the role of social media in adolescent-parent relationships can benefit providers, educators, parents, and communities.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was to understand the effect of adolescent and parent use of social media on adolescents' self-reported at-risk behaviors, as well as the role of social media among at-risk youths and their parents. Before recruiting participants, the researcher obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) through Walden University (# 07-16-21-0973021) to guarantee the research study ensures protection for the participants and follows the uppermost level of ethics. The research questions for this study included:

## Research Questions

*RQ1:* What is the role of social media use among adolescents and their parents in relation to adolescents' reported at-risk behaviors?

*RQ2:* What is the effect of social media use on the relationship between at-risk youths and their parents?

## Methods

### Participants

Six pairs of individuals participated in the study. Each pair consisted of an adolescent between 13 and 17 and their parent. Four of the adolescents were young women; two were young men. Five parents were women and one parent was a man; their ages were not collected. Recruitment for the study was conducted through mental health outpatient agencies and community web pages, online and locally, in South Carolina. Four pairs lived in South Carolina, one pair in Florida, and one pair in Texas. Both adolescent and parent participants met the criteria of engaging on social media for at least 14 hours per week. Adolescent participants also met the criteria for at-risk behaviors in terms of verbal aggression, physical aggression, and lying.

### Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were performed with six pairs of participants (see Appendix A and B for interview guides). Once it was determined participant pairs met the criteria, interview times were scheduled. Participant pairs who were interviewed via Zoom were emailed consent and assent forms to sign and email back to the researcher before scheduling interviews. For in-person interviews, researchers obtained signatures on assent and consent forms before starting the interview. Interviews ranged from 30 to 45 minutes and took place at the local library closest to participants or over Zoom. For both in-person and virtual interviews, the adolescents were interviewed first, followed immediately by their parents, to eliminate chances of participants discussing interviews. For all the interviews, two audio recordings were collected using a phone and a digital, voice-activated recorder in case one of the devices stopped working. Additionally, Otter, an app used to record and transcribe each interview, kept track of words and phrases that were used often. Copies of the interview guides were printed out ahead of all interviews, which allowed the researchers to take notes during the interviews, an additional resource they used when analyzing the data.

### Data Analysis

Saturation was reached with six pairs of participants, as no new information was obtained after interviewing the last pair. The small sample size was due mostly to IPA methodology recommending a small sample size (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006); also, parent-adolescent content-focused communication resulted in saturation being reached quickly. The researchers followed IPA guidelines when analyzing the data. After the interviews, transcripts were printed and were read several times against both recordings to ensure the transcripts caught

all the participants' responses accurately. The transcribing software kept track of words that were repeated throughout the interview, which allowed for the identification of repetitive patterns and made it easier for researchers to pull out possible themes and subthemes. The answers of the participants in a pair were first compared against one another in an effort to determine the meaning of each sentence. This process was completed multiple times for each pair to ensure all evolving themes were identified. Before moving on to the second stage, the researcher wrote out a narrative analysis of the data set for each pair, a summary of all the answers given, with possible underlying meanings.

During the second stage, the data were analyzed between the pairs and themes determined from the repetitive patterns that were found in the data set for each interview. The answers given by each data pair were compared to determine evolving themes. In the last stage of data analysis, all the transcripts were analyzed once more to determine if there were any discrepancies within each data set pair. Analysis of all of the data set pairs revealed both themes and subthemes, which were supported by quotations from each participant pair.

## Results

The data yielded three themes and five subthemes. The three themes were:

- Negativity they encountered on social media did not stop adolescents from using social media.
- Parental monitoring was problematized by parents' lack of knowledge regarding social media and technology.
- Adolescent and parent participants had different perceptions of the quality of time spent together.

Five subthemes found within this study were:

- Parents were concerned with the risks of connecting with strangers, while adolescents ignored these concerns or thought nothing bad would happen to them.
- Parents continued to allow their adolescent children to use social media despite its negative effects on them, while adolescents were unaware of their parent's concerns.
- Adolescents' perceptions of their negative moods when they were asked to get off technology devices and no longer allowed access to social media differed from their parents' perceptions.
- Adolescents and their parents had different perceptions of their purposes for using social media.
- Social media continued to be an issue in the relationship, regardless of the level of trust between adolescents and parents.

The coding in this study referred to participants as either pairs or individuals within the pair. The letter "A" was used for the adolescent responses and the letter "P" was used for the parent's responses. Numbers 1–6 indicate the pair number. When referring to both the adolescent and parent, "AP" was used. For example, A1 would be the adolescent participant of the first pair and P1 would be their parent. A2 would be the adolescent participant of the second pair and P2 would be their parent, and so on. Table 1 shows how the themes found in this study relate to each research question.

**Table 1.** *Summary of Research Questions and Themes*

Research Questions	Themes
RQ1: What is the role of social media use among adolescents and their parents in relation to adolescents' reported at-risk behaviors?	Negativity they encountered on social media did not stop adolescents from using social media.  Parental monitoring was problematized by parents' lack of knowledge regarding social media and technology.
RQ2: What is the effect of social media use on the relationship between at-risk youths and their parents?	Adolescent and parent participants had different perceptions of the quality of time spent together.

**RQ1:** *What is the role of social media use among adolescents and their parents in relation to adolescents' reported at-risk behaviors?*

Two themes appeared in response to RQ1: (a) Negativity they encountered on social media did not stop adolescents from using social media and (b) Parental monitoring was problematized by parents' lack of knowledge regarding social media and technology (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** *Themes and Subthemes for RQ1*

Themes	Subthemes
Negativity they encountered on social media did not stop adolescents from using social media.	Parents continued to allow their adolescents to use social media despite the negative effects social media had on them.
Parental monitoring was problematized by parents' lack of knowledge regarding social media and technology.	Adolescents' perceptions of their negative moods when they were asked to get off technology devices and no longer allowed access to social media differed from their parents' perceptions.  Adolescents and their parents had different perceptions of their purposes for using social media.

### **Theme 1: Negativity they encountered on social media did not stop adolescents from using social media.**

Throughout the interviews, participant pairs reported they encountered some form of negativity on social media that affected their overall mental health, but all participant pairs continued engaging in social media, despite these concerns. A1 reported: "There is a lot of different stuff on there, especially when it comes to like, I guess, body images and kind of rumors, that kind of stuff basically." However, A1 continues to use social media because, "It is something to do, and a few of my friends have it. So see what they're up to." P1 reported

she noticed the way people negatively talk to one another and do not care how it may impact others but reported that she goes back on social media because she joined a group and to watch how-to videos on subjects such as cooking or doing hair.

**Subtheme 1.1: Parents were concerned with the risks of connecting with strangers, while adolescents ignored these concerns or thought nothing bad would happen to them.**

Five of the six parent participants reported concerns about the risks of their adolescent connecting with strangers, whereas adolescent participants were aware they were talking to strangers but were not concerned themselves. One of the six adolescent participants reported concerns about the risk of connecting with strangers. A2 reported that social media has an impact on teenagers because they do not know who they are talking to behind the screen, saying, “You may not be talking to the person you thought.” P2 expressed concerns about A2 talking to strangers after a previous incident in which their teen did meet a stranger.

One of the six adolescent participants did not report concern about the risk of connecting with strangers; four of the six adolescent participants said they knew they were talking to strangers but were not concerned. Two of the six adolescent participants explained that the strangers they met on social media eventually became their friends. A3 said,

Usually, they don't give away their age, usually, people are just more focused on like a conversation or having a debate. You get to meet people all over the world. I get to communicate and make friends by knowing that.

Although five of the six parent participants expressed concerns about connecting with strangers, five of the six adolescent participants did not, and one of the six adolescent participants did not mention the risk of talking to strangers at all. One reason adolescents reported they continue to communicate with people they do not know on social media is that it is easier to talk to people online as compared to face to face. A5 reported that social media has an impact on teenagers because of the amount of risk social media poses, which includes talking to strangers: “So many things online that a lot of people don't know how to protect themselves.” However, A5 also reported that because it is easier to talk to people on social media, it is easier to develop a connection. A6 did not express concerns about talking to people on social media they do not know, because they use social media to communicate and socialize with people in general.

**Subtheme 1.2: Parents continued to allow their adolescent children to use social media, despite its negative effects on them.**

All six parent participants reported that they noticed negative effects of social media on their adolescents, but they continued to allow them to use social media. None of the six adolescent participants reported being aware of their parents' concerns pertaining to their changes in mood.

Parent participants reported they noticed depressed moods on the part of their adolescent children since they began using social media. For pair AP1, P1 described their child as “social and [having] pictures with bright emotions” before the teen began using social media. Now, P1 reported that their adolescent “barely smiles, became self-absorbed with taking selfies, and her life revolves around social media.” P1 reported noticing their teen using foul language the more they engage on social media. A1 reported that social media, specifically social media influencers, made them feel pressured to look a certain way. Although the adolescent participants were not aware of the concerns their parents had about their moods, they were aware of how social media contributed to their moods and how they viewed themselves. A1 reported that social media tends to fixate on body image and believes that social media influencers almost have the perfect body. The teen said, “Whenever I see like, Kylie Jenner, I overthink about myself. She posted her like exercise routine and I'm like I want to be like that.”

For pair AP3, P3 reported that before their adolescent used social media, they were a completely different person. P3 indicated that since their adolescent has been exposed to social media use, the teen is more withdrawn and anxious, though P3 was not certain whether this was due to specifically to their adolescent's social media use. A3 reported they are easily peer pressured online into doing things they do not want to do, saying, "Basically just people forcing me to do something I'm not comfortable with. You get through with it. Yeah, okay, then I end up like hating it, regretting it."

## **Theme 2: Parental monitoring was problematized by parents' lack of knowledge regarding social media and technology.**

Parent participants had limited understanding of social media and technology, which made it difficult for them to monitor their teen's social media use. Many parents were unaware of the different kinds of social media sites available, because of constant technological change. Two of the six parent participants reported putting parental restrictions on their adolescent (AP2, AP6). Four of the six parent participants reported they relied on their adolescent telling them what they were viewing and did not monitor what social media sites they were on (AP1, AP3, AP4, AP5). Five out of the six adolescent participants reported they were on their technology devices for more time than their parents reported and that they had social media sites of which their parents were unaware. The two most common things mentioned that contributed to parents failing to monitor their teen's activity and to gain a better understanding of social media and technology were teens' negative moods when technology devices were withheld and parents' and adolescents' different perceptions of purpose of using social media.

### **Subtheme 2.1: Adolescents' perceptions of their negative moods when they were asked to get off technology devices and no longer allowed access to social media differed from their parents' perceptions.**

Four of the six participant pairs reported some form of aggression as it pertained to teens getting off their technology device, which limited their access to social media (AP1, AP3, AP4, AP5). Verbal aggression was commonly reported among these four pairs, specifically verbal aggression from the adolescents towards their parents, such as yelling, along with getting overly angry to the point that they slammed their phones down and exhibited negative body language (storming off, tantrums). Parents taking technology devices away from their children limited their ability to connect with others on social media and caused teens fear of missing out on important updates on social media.

In two of the six pairs in which the parent reported increased verbal aggression when they asked their teens to put their technology device away, the adolescent participants in those pairs reported they did not display any verbal aggression under these circumstances. A5 reported there was a point when they would get angry when they were prevented from using their technology device but that their parent stopped taking it away, since there is no point in their parent taking away their means of communicating with others. A5 said, "Oh, I don't necessarily get my phone taken away, because it's just, I'm obviously, it's no point and take me away from the phone because that's where all my friends are. And all it would do is hurt me."

### **Subtheme 2.2: Adolescents and their parents had different perceptions of their purposes for using social media**

All participant pairs reported the main reason adolescents use social media is to talk to their friends. A1 stated, "Something to do and friends." P1 reported the reason their adolescent used social media is that everyone has it:

Because everyone has it. That was all she ever told me ever since she was like 11. She is so self-absorbed in having to take selfies every five seconds. She always talks about, "Well look how much money they're making just from some stupid dance." For the longest time, her career choice was to be a YouTuber.

When it came to parents' use of social media, the parents reported using it for work and to communicate with friends and family. While all adolescent participants acknowledged their parents use social media, none of them were able to identify their parents' purposes in doing so. Four of the six adolescents identified what social media sites their parents are on; the other two did not. A1 knew their parent had TikTok but did not know why their parent is on social media.

**RQ2:** *What is the effect of social media use on the relationships between at-risk youths and their parents?*

As shown in Table 3, one theme that appeared in response to RQ2 was that adolescent and parent participants had different perceptions of the quality of time spent together. One subtheme emerged from this: Social media continued to be an issue in the relationship, regardless of the level of trust between adolescents and parents.

**Table 3.** *Theme and Subtheme for RQ2*

Theme	Subtheme
Adolescent and parent participants had different perceptions of the quality of time spent together.	Social media continued to be an issue in the relationship, regardless of the level of trust between adolescents and parents.

### **Theme 3: Adolescent and parent participants had different perceptions of the quality of time spent together.**

Three of the six adolescent participants reported the negative impact social media has on the quality of the time they spend with their parents when the parent is engaged on social media. A3 reported they get annoyed when their parent is on social media because they feel ignored. A5 reported it upsets them when their parent is on social media because, not only do they feel ignored, but it also takes away time they could be spending together. Two of the six adolescent participants reported feeling ignored, while the parent was unaware of the negative impact their engagement with social media had on their adolescent. There seemed to be a disconnect between being present in the moment and spending quality time. A1 reported feeling left out when their parent was constantly on social media, specifically if they were trying to say something important. A1 stated, "Sometimes I feel left out. She will be paying more attention to that. I give up after talking to her for a bit." P1 did not acknowledge any negative impact her adolescent felt when she is on social media, because she believed they spend quality time together by having conversations with her teen's friends and crushes.

A4 reported there were times when they were trying to tell their parent something, but the parent was not listening:

I try to tell them something and they're typing or whatever. And then they'll be like, tell me in a second, I'm doing something. That's how the world feels normal at this point in our lives, we don't need to ask our parents for much. We can do whatever.

P4 reported they were unsure how the amount of time they were on social media impacted their adolescent but admitted their adolescent would try to talk to them, and they were not paying attention, because they were in the "middle of something" and would ask him to wait.

#### **Subtheme 3.1: Social media continued to be an issue in the relationship, regardless of the level of trust between adolescents and parents.**

When it came to parents and their teens trusting one another, participants' responses revealed gaps in shared understanding, and social media often played a part in those gaps. Two of the six participant pairs reported they trusted one another, but only to an extent. Two of the six adolescent participants reported they trusted

their parents; meanwhile, their parents reported not trusting their teens. Additionally, two of the six adolescent participants reported they did not trust their parents, even though their parents reported they trust their teens.

Even though two of the six participant pairs reported trusting one another, there still seemed to be hesitation in being completely honest with one another when it came to social media. A2 reported trusting their parent; however, A2 used social media without their parent knowing, because they knew they were not allowed to have any form of social media. Interestingly, P2 reported trust in their teen because they believed their teen would come to them about anything, including permission to download specific apps. A2 reported they did feel comfortable going to their parent for most things, but not everything.

Pair AP5 both reported being able to trust one another to an extent. A5 reported they completely trusted their parent but at the same time did not tell their parent everything because they did not want to add stress and have the parent overthink what was said. P5 reported they trusted their teen, although they were aware their teen hid things from them. However, P5 also reported there had been times when their teen lost their trust, specifically when their teen made impulsive decisions and met people from social media they did not know.

In two of the six participant pairs, the adolescent participants reported trusting their parents, while parent participants reported not trusting their adolescents. A1 reported having complete trust in their parent, who was the only person they felt comfortable talking to. P1 reported she believed her teen hid things from her, specifically as it relates to social media, because of her negative reaction. A6 reported having complete trust in their parent and believed they can go to their parent about anything but did not report that they believed their parent trusts them. P6 reported they did not trust their teen because their teen has a history of being sneaky and manipulative when it came to meeting people they did not know in person after talking to them on social media.

Two of six adolescent participants reported they did not trust their parents, while their parents reported trusting them. A3 reported they did not trust their parent and did not feel comfortable talking to her about what is going on, because they felt as if their parent would not understand. A3 reported lying about their responsibilities, because they would rather engage on social media, and that lying helped them get away with things. A3 said, “You can lie about winning something and then getting the reward for it. Or you can lie about doing something and just get away with it.” PP3 reported she had high trust in her teen and could not recall a situation when her teen lost her trust. At the same time, P3 also reported she believed her teen had difficulties trusting her at times because there had been times when she did not follow through with what she promised.

A4 reported they did not trust their parent because it did not seem as if she was listening to what they are saying. Therefore, according to A4, “What is the point of relying on them for anything?” P4 reported she did trust her teen and believed her teen could trust her because they could call or text her about anything.

## Discussion

In this study, the researchers found three main themes and five subthemes in how social media impacts at-risk youths and parent-adolescent relationships, which fills a gap in the literature. Although all six participant pairs reported encountering negativity on social media, this seemed to have no impact on their use of it because all six continued to use social media.

Ghosh (2017) claimed that youths tend to learn from their environment—if they are exposed to any form of delinquency or violence, the chances of participating in similar behaviors increase significantly. According to Vazonyi et al. (2016), constant exposure to negative experiences on social media increases the chances of at-risk behaviors. The findings of this study supported this. P5 reported noticing an increase in verbal aggression

in their adolescent. P6 reported their adolescent lacked motivation and quickly became agitated over “dumb things” and developed an entitled attitude since they began using social media. Social media tended to affect teenagers the most when they felt as if they were not good enough and expressed higher levels of loneliness (Dean & Headrick, 2018).

The study showed that parent participants were unaware of the amount of time their adolescent spent on social media and the sites they were on, which may have been influenced in part by their lack of awareness of the different forms of technology and social media that were available to their teen. This misperception of how teens were spending their time could contribute to the lack of quality time participants spent with one another. Given social media’s significant impact, it is important for parents to be aware of their adolescents’ use of social media and to monitor and limit that use. If parents understand all aspects of social media and the negative influences it can have, the more likely they will be to monitor their child’s internet as well as social media usage (Lin et al., 2019).

Each year, more youths rely on mobile phones and computers for online communication, which allows them to engage in social media through different forms of technology devices (Vazonyi et al., 2016). At the same time, the impact of social media use on the youths’ mental health has suffered. The findings of the present study suggested that verbal aggression increased with higher social media usage and that aggressive behavior was associated with what the person encounters on social media, which supports the findings of Vazonyi et al. (2016). Adolescent participants reported having more verbal aggression towards their parents when asked to get off social media because it took away their ability to communicate with others, which often led to the fear of missing out (FOMO) and loneliness. This corroborates the findings of Barry et al. (2017), who also found that adolescents experience FOMO when away from social media, since social media is where adolescents receive most information from their peers.

Dean and Headrick (2018) found that parents were not fully aware of what their teen was doing on social media, which is borne out by the present study. Most of the adolescent participants did not share everything they saw or engaged in when they were on social media. Most of the parent participants did not know all the social media sites their adolescents were on.

Three of the six parent participants reported they did not believe their adolescents felt they were being ignored, which differed from the reports of their teens. These results suggested a disconnect between adolescent and parent perceptions of the quality of the relationship. Research shows that parents are not aware of how social media affects their relationships with their children (Ante-Contreras, 2016). Additionally, adolescent participants reported frustration because their parents were not attentive when they were trying to communicate with them, which caused them to feel ignored. Ante-Contreras (2016) demonstrated that use of social media is a problem in parent-child relationships in terms of parents’ inability to bond and spend time with their children, which the present study also shows.

All parent participants reported having trust in their adolescents; however, only two of the six adolescent participants reported trusting their parent. Parent participants reported they believed their adolescent knew they could come to them about anything. Yet, four of the six adolescent participants reported they did not, because they did not feel comfortable telling them everything. These results supported the findings from Dean and Headrick (2018), in which teens reported their parents would get upset if they found out teens were talking to someone they do not know or looking at something they should not. Adolescent participants also reported they did not think their parents would understand how they felt and what they were going through.

## **Limitations**

A major limitation of this study was the COVID-19 pandemic. First, students were forced to attend school virtually from home to ensure social isolation protocols. Therefore, students had fewer social interactions in

person, which may have increased the frequency with which they used social media. Second, recruitment was very challenging, specifically because of the inconsistency of in-person school and the parents' employment status. Furthermore, gender, race, and age were not accounted for and may play important roles in understanding the data.

Another limitation was privacy, as it pertains to Zoom interviews. Although participants were asked to be in an area where they could get complete privacy, there was always the chance this did not happen. The researcher had more control over the in-person interviews, which were held in a secluded room, and the researcher could see both participants at all times. Interviews via Zoom can easily be compromised, in that the participant pairs could talk to one another between the two interviews. While our procedures attempted to reduce this from occurring, it is still a possibility given that the researcher was not in the room with the participants.

### **Implications for Theory and Practice**

The first recommendation is a replication study to confirm the results. No other studies have explored the role of social media in adolescent-parent relationships specifically among at-risk youths. A second recommendation for future research is interviewing adolescents formally adjudicated as juvenile delinquents. This population will provide richer data on the magnitude of at-risk behaviors and how it is impacted by social media in the parent-adolescent relationship. A third recommendation is to interview caregivers who are not biological parents. Adolescents identified as juvenile delinquents may be in foster care, living with other family members, or in the custody of the state. Further exploring the connection between juvenile delinquents and non-biological parent caregivers and the function of social media in these relationships will provide important data that will add to the literature on the subject and contribute to social change.

Expanding the age group of the children can also yield richer data. The requirement for this study was for the adolescent to be at least 13, because that is the requirement for most social media sites, but there are likely children younger who access social media. Another possible avenue for future research would be to consider gender difference. Girls may relate differently to both social media and their parents. Finally, exploring the age difference among parents may provide different data, because the experience of parenting differs with age. While an older parent may have greater parenting experience, a younger parent may have more experience with social media.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this research add to the current literature regarding social media and the impact it has on the parent-adolescent relationship among at-risk youths. This study provided evidence of the importance of parents being engaged with their children, instead of being distracted by social media, and it also revealed the differing views that parents and adolescents have of their relationships with one another. The results of this study also highlighted the importance of having quality time to strengthen the bond between parent and child, as well as the importance of parents monitoring the amount of time their children are on social media and the content they are viewing. These findings can provide parents with insight into the importance of monitoring teens' use of social media because of its negative impact on youths and the parent-child relationship.

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## Appendix A

### Adolescent Interview

1. Based on your experience, how many hours a day would you say you are on social media?
  - a. How do you think social media influences how you spend your day?
  - b. What is the main reason you engage in social media?
  - c. Based on your experience, please describe your experiences with social media.
    - i. Based on your experience, what problems do you believe social media impacts teenagers?
  - d. Please describe how social media influences you and are there certain social media sites you prefer more than others? If so, why?
    - i. Based on your experience, would you say you talk to people more on social media or face to face?
2. Based on your experience, does your parent engage in any social media?
  - a. How does it make your feel when you see your (mom/dad) on their phones? Please explain.
    - i. Based on your experience, how does the amount of time your parent is on social media, or their phones impact your relationship with your parent?
    - ii. Based on your experience, describe problems that you believe teens have in their relationships with their parents where social media is so popular and living in a time where social media is so common.
3. Based on your experience, have you been in trouble for misbehavior at school and home?
  - a. What are the main reasons you get into trouble at school and home?
    - i. How has your behavior resulted in negative consequences with your parent(s)? For example, do you and your parent argue often? Does your phone get taken away?
    - ii. What are specific situations that lead to misbehavior both at school and home?
  - b. Have you ever been in trouble or got into an argument with your parents because you were online too much?
4. Based on your experience, please describe your relationship with your (mom/dad)?
  - a. Based on your experience, how would you describe the amount of trust you have with your parent where you can talk to your parent about anything?
  - b. Please describe how the amount of time you spend with your parent influences your relationship with your parent, based on your experience.
    - i. What activities do you and your parent do when you do spend time with your parent?
5. Based on your experience, are there other people in your life you feel comfortable talking to instead of your parent?

## Appendix B

### Parent Interview

1. Based on your experience, how often would you say you are on social media daily?
  - a. Please describe experiences you had on social media that may have impacted you in a negative way.
  - b. What are the top three reasons you engage in social media?
2. Based on your experience, please describe your understanding on social media and why your child engages in social media?
  - a. What social media sites are you aware of (child's name) is on?
    - i. Please describe any concerns you may have on those social media sites.
    - ii. Describe steps you do to monitor your child's social media participation if any?
  - b. Based on your experience, how often do you witness (child's name) on social media per day?
  - c. Have you seen a change in (child's name) moods, attitudes, or behaviors because of social media use?
    - i. Based on your experience, please describe the negative behaviors your child may have when asked to get off social media and the negative impact social media can have?
3. Please describe how social media may influence your child's behavior?
  - a. Based on your experiences, do you think your child's behavior is worse at home or school and why?
  - b. What specific conduct behaviors have you noticed your child engages in both at school and home that could be related to social media?
  - c. What concerns do you have about teens engaging in social media and have you discussed these concerns with your child?
4. Based on your experience, how would you describe your relationship with (child's name)?
  - a. How often would you say that you and your child spend time together and the activities you do together?
  - b. Based on your experience, how do you feel your trust level is between you and your child?
    - i. What are specific examples you believe helps with gaining trust or losing trust?
  - c. Based on your experience, please describe how the amount of time you engage in social media or on your phone affect your child's behavior.



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