

## Social Media Impact on Youth Cultural Identity: A Systematic Literature Review

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### ABSTRACT

In the digital age, social media plays a pivotal role in shaping cultural identity, particularly among youth who navigate complex intersections of globalization, cultural expression, and personal identity in online spaces. However, while social media provides a platform for identity formation, it also presents challenges, including negative behaviours and cultural misrepresentation. This systematic review investigates the impact of social media on youth cultural identity, the associated factors, and the surrounding issues. Articles from two high-quality academic databases, Scopus and Web of Science, were systematically analysed following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis, to identify recurring themes and trends. Criteria for exclusion and inclusion were set to ensure only primary research articles written in English were included in the review. Of all 27 studies that were screened, only 11 of them were eligible for qualitative synthesis. Findings reveal that social media affects youth cultural identity in various ways, from strengthening self-concept and cultural resilience to introducing challenges related to identity confusion and social comparison. Factors such as social media usage, social media environment, demographic characteristics, and subcultural exploration emerged as influential in identity formation, with social media usage as the most frequently discussed factor. Additionally, the review identified key issues surrounding youth cultural identity on social media, namely negative social behaviour, hybridization, lifestyle and gender. This review suggests the need for digital literacy programs targeting youth, aiming to build resilience against negative social media influences while promoting healthy identity development

**Keywords:** *Social media, youth, cultural identity, social media impact, systematic literature review.*

### INTRODUCTION

Social media has transformed communication, changing the landscape of how humans interact, and facilitating better connections and information sharing worldwide. It has reduced geographical distances and enabled individuals to move beyond local, national, and global boundaries and is no longer limited to elite groups, countries, or certain governments, but is available equally to all individuals. In 2023, social media coverage reached 4.89 billion users, with an average daily usage of 2 hours and 26 minutes (Newberry, 2024). The growing number of social media users is undoubtedly influenced by the occurrence of many new social networking sites. However, this rapid digital transformation has led to several societal challenges.

Previous studies have suggested that social media has contributed to shifts in individual behaviour (Mert et al., 2023), online identity (Li, 2022), political participation (Akobiarek & Puyok, 2024; Zebib, 2022), political polarization (Kubin & von Sikorski, 2021),

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mental health (Coyne et al., 2020), and cyber pornography (Rojas-Estrada et al., 2024), with these issues particularly placing young generation at the epicenter of challenges. Since Prensky (2001) identified youth as digital natives, this term has become a popular discourse in defining the young generation in a technologically deterministic way. Yet, the paradox emerged that even though adolescents are skilled in the digital era, they also remain highly vulnerable (De Leyn et al., 2021). For instance, social media has largely impacted youth cultural identity by facilitating cultural interaction (Blaikie, 2021).

Researchers across various disciplines have extensively explored the concept of identity development (Buckingham, 2007; Erikson, 1968; Heaven & Tubridy, 2003; Kilpatrick, 1974). Cultural identity specifically addresses the question 'Who am I as a member of my cultural group and how does this relate to other groups' (Schwartz et al., 2008). However, the definition of cultural identity has always varied, depending on the researcher's theoretical assumptions and approach to the nature of cultural identity. Different frameworks, including the social psychological approach, the cultural interpretive approach, the interpretive approach, and the critical approach, offer varied interpretations of cultural identity. Despite these differences, cultural identity can generally be understood as sense of personal belonging to a particular culture or group, influenced by the language, traditions, beliefs, and customs based on experiences, often facilitated through communication in a particular context, thus influencing how a person sees the world and interaction with others (Kerubo, 2024).

According to Taylor and de La Sablonnière (2014), groups without the benefit of a clear cultural identity will find themselves struggling with issues of personal identity, self-esteem, and what they labelled as "collective self-control" challenges. Youth, as a vulnerable age group susceptible to negative influences (Untari et al., 2020), are constantly exposed to diverse cultural expressions and global trends, making their sense of identity significantly influenced by local and foreign cultures (Pangesti et al., 2024). Furthermore, digital interaction enables them to assimilate new cultural norms, values, and practices, often leading to the formation of hybrid identities (Echesony, 2024). Hybrid identity is characterized by the complex integration of various cultural influences into one's identity. If not managed properly, this hybridity may result in confusion and conflicts between individuals and their communities.

Considering the complexities of social media experience among youth and how it shapes their cultural identity, it is essential to identify the impact, and the key factors associated with this issue. While previous researchers reported negative effects of social media on youth well-being (Kolouch et al., 2023; Krogh, 2022; Sarmiento et al., 2020), few studies also highlighted the benefits of social media in enhancing cultural awareness and promoting local values. For example, Joo et al. (2020) discuss how social media can increase the number of cultural destinations and foster local cultural values. Additionally, Wu et al. (2023) explores how museums utilize social media to foster positive learning experiences that enhance cultural identity through participation and knowledge dissemination. We assume that strengthening youth cultural identity could be a potential solution to address various challenges faced by youth nowadays.

Although numerous studies have explored the influence of social media on the development of cultural identity, few systematic literature reviews have specifically addressed the impact of social media on youth cultural identity. Thus, this systematic review aims to summarize the existing research on the impact of social media on youth cultural identity. By adopting a qualitative synthesis approach, this study categorizes findings based

on thematic analysis. The primary research questions guiding this review are as follows: 1) What are the impacts of social media on youth cultural identity? 2) What are the issues surrounding the use of social media on youth cultural identity? 3) What are the factors associated with the impact of social media on youth cultural identity? These questions are significant within the broader field of youth studies, as they address the intersection of technology, culture, and identity during a critical developmental period. This review attempts to provide valuable insight and reference for future research by synthesizing current knowledge on this topic. The key findings and research gaps summarized are expected to guide educators and practitioners in fostering the positive development of youth cultural identity.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a systematic literature review method to assist in synthesizing, mapping, and summarizing the findings from previous studies. Cillo et al. (2019) states that this method enhances the capability to identify, evaluate, and interpret all available evidence. This method is replicable structurally, with a comprehensive and critical evaluation of a particular question, which could potentially identify the roadmap and evolution of the research field (Verčič et al., 2024). In essence, a systematic literature review is a valuable approach to knowledge enhancement, providing groundwork for future studies by uncovering unexplored areas by discovering new themes and new research directions.

### *Formulating Research Question*

Various Mnemonics are available as an initial step to help formulate questions in systematic reviews. One of the most popular mnemonics for qualitative systematic reviews is PICo (with lowercase o), it includes Population, the phenomena of Interest, and the Context (The Joanna Briggs Institute, 2011). In this systematic review, criteria of the young generation (population), impact (phenomena of Interest), and cultural identity (context), we formulated three research questions:

Q1- What are the impacts of social media on youth cultural identity?

Q2- What are the issues surrounding the use of social media on youth cultural identity?

Q3- What are the factors associated with the impact of social media on youth cultural identity?

### *Systematic Search Strategy*

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis protocol (PRISMA) was referred as a guideline to gather literature for analysis (Moher et al., 2009). Over time, the PRISMA protocol underwent several revisions in 2020, involving clarifications, elaborations, flow diagrams, and checklist guidelines, as an upgrade from the PRISMA 2009 guidelines (Page et al., 2021; Urrútia et al., 2021).

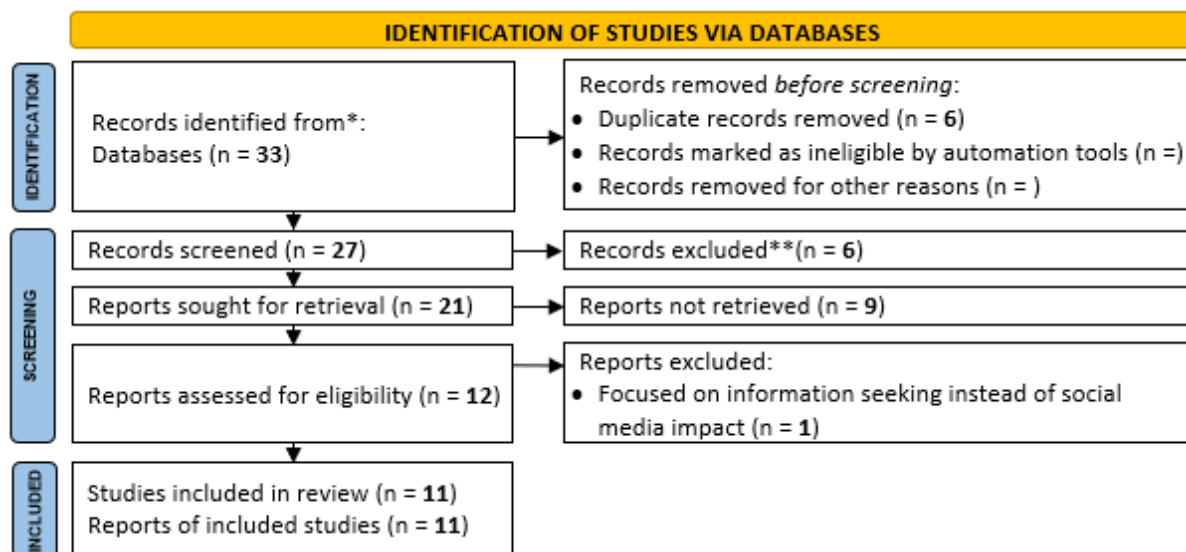


Figure 1: The PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for systematic literature review (Page et al., 2021)

'Records' includes all sources in the form of titles and abstracts obtained from database search engines. 'Reports' refers to full-text documents that have filtered from duplicate sources if the record were retrieved from 2 or more databases. Meanwhile 'studies' refers to articles that met the inclusion criteria for the analysis stage (Page et al., 2021). The included studies were retrieved from two prominent journal databases, namely Scopus and Web of Science. The reason for selecting both is that these two bibliographic databases generally have a high reputation and are acknowledged as the most comprehensive data sources for various academic purposes (Zhu & Liu, 2020). A preliminary search on this topic was run on 15 September 2023 on both databases using a Boolean search strategy. The purpose of the Boolean search strategy is to convert the research questions that has been constructed from PICO into specific keywords along with their synonyms resulting in search strings (Mathisen, 2022). These search strings can be used to retrieve relevant articles from the selected databases accurately. The search string developed in this review were as follows:

Table 1: Database search string keywords

DATABASE (S)	KEYWORDS
Scopus	TS=(("Social Media" OR "Social Media Platform" OR "Social Networking Site" OR "Social Media Service" OR "Social Media Website") AND ("Impact" OR "Impacts" OR "Effect" OR "Effects" OR "Affect" OR "Influence") AND ("Youth" OR "Adolescence" OR "Early Years" OR "Early Life" OR "Young Days" OR "Teens" OR "Teenage Years" OR "Preadolescent" OR "Young Adulthood" OR "Boyhood" OR "Girlhood" OR "Childhood" OR "Immaturity" OR "Juvenility" OR "Juvenescence" OR "Youthfulness" OR "Youngness" OR "Boy" OR "Lad" OR "Youngster" OR "Teenager" OR "Young People" OR "Young" OR "Younger Generation" OR "Rising Generation")) AND ("Cultural Identity"))
Web of Science	TITLE-ABS-KEY(("Social Media" OR "Social Media Platform" OR "Social Networking Site" OR "Social Media Service" OR "Social Media Website") AND ("Impact" OR "Impacts" OR "Effect" OR "Effects" OR "Affect" OR "Influence") AND ("Youth" OR "Adolescence" OR "Early Years" OR "Early Life" OR "Young Days" OR "Teens" OR "Teenage Years" OR "Preadolescent" OR "Young Adulthood" OR "Boyhood" OR "Girlhood" OR "Childhood" OR "Immaturity" OR "Juvenility" OR "Juvenescence" OR "Youthfulness" OR "Youngness" OR "Boy" OR "Lad" OR "Youngster" OR "Teenager" OR "Young People" OR "Young" OR "Younger Generation" OR "Rising Generation")) AND ("Cultural Identity"))

*Eligibility Criteria and Study Selection*

The full-text literature from the last 10 years was reviewed collaboratively with peers. All the selected articles were in English. Studies that were not peer-reviewed or duplicates were identified and excluded before the analysis. Table 2 below presents the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the search through the databases. The quality assessment was run with a peer-review approach involving two authors, where the two reviewers extensively read the title and abstract of each article to determine which one to include in the full-text screening.

Table 2: Inclusion/exclusion criteria for systematic review

INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Published between 2013-2024	Literature Reviews, Meta-analysis, Book chapter
Empirical studies	Dissertations and another unpublished document
Available in English	Non-English

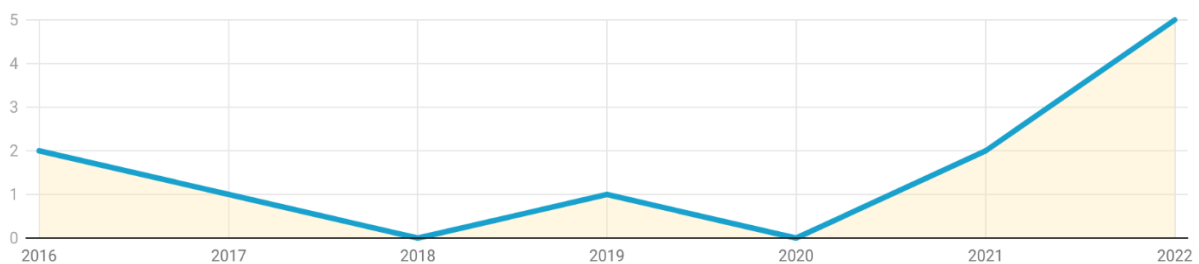
RESULTS

*a. Characteristics of the Included Studies*

The small number of studies included in this review indicates that research on the impact of social media on youth cultural identity is still lacking. Among the 27 articles screened via the Boolean technique followed by the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied in the two databases, only 11 were eligible for inclusion in the qualitative synthesis (see Table 3).

These 11 articles were published between 2016 and 2022 (see Figure 2), where 6 studies employed quantitative methodology, 4 studies used qualitative methodology, and 1 study used a mixed method. In terms of the country of origin, 6 studies were conducted in the USA, 2 in Qatar, 1 in China, 1 in Egypt, and 1 in Russia (see Figure 3). Most studies focused on students, both school and university, with 3 articles involving university students and 2 articles involving high school students. Additionally, 5 articles considered the young population in general, and 1 article was based on discourse and conceptual analysis without any specific sample group.

Number of Articles Published per Year



Created with Datawrapper

Figure 2: Number of articles published per year

Map of Countries of Included Studies in This Systematic Review

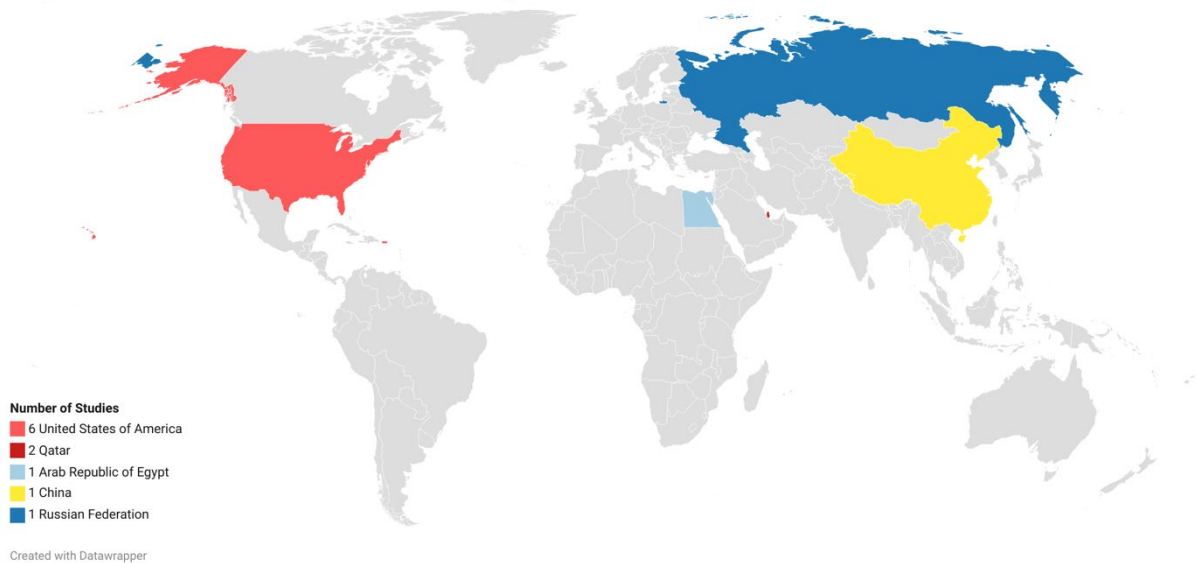


Figure 3: Map of countries of included studies in this systematic review

Table 3: Literature review overview matrix

Authors	Samples	Theoretical Foundation/ Framework	Methodology	Methods
Peng et al. (2016)	350 Chinese university students	Uses and gratifications theory	Quantitative	Survey
Tynes et al. (2014)	627 Adolescents in US Schools	Not defined	Quantitative	Survey: inferential statistical analysis
Oluwoye et al. (2017)	29 African and African American male college students	PEN-3 model	Qualitative	In-depth interview: Thematic analysis
Islam (2019)	Not listed	Not listed	Qualitative	Discourse analysis
Rogers et al. (2021)	63 black adolescent schoolgirls	PVEST (ecological systems theory)	Quantitative and Qualitative	Online survey & In-depth interview
Rushing et al. (2021)	833 American Indian and Alaska Native teenagers	Not listed	Quantitative	Survey: inferential statistical analysis
Ahmed et al. (2022)	532 Qatari Youth	Uses and gratification theory	Quantitative	Survey: Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis
McKenzie (2022)	17 Hmong American emerging adults	Steele and Brown's (1995) media practice model	Qualitative	In-depth interview: thematic analysis
Miladi et al. (2022)	27 Qatari youths	Uses and gratification theory	Qualitative	In-depth interview: thematic analysis
Petrova & Pervukhina (2022)	101 undergraduate and graduate students	Not listed	Quantitative	Survey: Descriptive statistical analysis

Radwan (2022)	360 respondents from rural people in Bamha village	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Symbolic interactivity theory</li> <li>2. Structural formation theory</li> <li>3. Technological determinism theory</li> <li>4. Social determinism theory</li> </ol>	Quantitative	Survey: Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis
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*b. Social Media Impact on Youth Cultural Identity*

The qualitative synthesis of 11 studies on social media’s impact on youth cultural identity has revealed nine prominent themes, with cultural identity development being the most cited impact; nine studies underscore that young people actively use social media to negotiate and construct their cultural identities within the digital sphere (Ahmed et al., 2022; Islam, 2019; McKenzie, 2022; Oluwoye et al., 2017; Peng et al., 2016; Petrova & Pervukhina, 2022; Rogers et al., 2021; Rushing et al., 2021), see (Table 4). This process of developing cultural identity on social media often overlaps with self-concept, as five studies illustrate how social media significantly influences youths’ self-perception, self-esteem, and personal values (Oluwoye et al., 2017; Petrova & Pervukhina, 2022; Rogers et al., 2021; Rushing et al., 2021).

Table 4: Key themes of the social media impact on youth cultural identity

Objective	Key Findings	Themes
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Identity development</b> (Ahmed et al., 2022; Islam, 2019; McKenzie, 2022; Oluwoye et al., 2017; Peng et al., 2016; Petrova &amp; Pervukhina, 2022; Rogers et al., 2021; Rushing et al., 2021)</li> <li>● <b>Reshape and Reconciling Identity</b> (McKenzie, 2022)</li> </ul>	Cultural identity development
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Perceived negative self-image</b> (Oluwoye et al., 2017)</li> <li>● <b>Perceived positive self-image</b> (Rushing et al., 2021)</li> <li>● <b>Perceived negative self-esteem</b> (Oluwoye et al., 2017; Rogers et al., 2021)</li> <li>● <b>Social comparison</b> (Oluwoye et al., 2017)</li> <li>● <b>Individualism</b> (Petrova &amp; Pervukhina, 2022)</li> </ul>	Self-concept
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Social activism</b> (Islam, 2019)</li> <li>● <b>Strengthening connections with community</b> (Rushing et al., 2021)</li> <li>● <b>Cultural resilience</b> (Rushing et al., 2021)</li> </ul>	Cultural resilience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Mental health</b> (Tynes et al., 2014)</li> <li>● <b>Depression</b> (Rogers et al., 2021)</li> </ul>	Mental Health Issue
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Racial discrimination and stereotype</b> (Tynes et al., 2014)</li> <li>● <b>Racism and hostility</b> (Rogers et al., 2021)</li> </ul>	Racism
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Subculture identity</b> (Peng et al., 2016)</li> <li>● <b>Development of new community</b> (Petrova &amp; Pervukhina, 2022)</li> </ul>	Subcultures and community building
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Change in cultural identity</b> (Radwan, 2022)</li> </ul>	Change in cultural identity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Lifestyle</b> (Ahmed et al., 2022; Islam, 2019; Miladi et al., 2022)</li> </ul>	Lifestyle

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Exposure to negative cultural influences</b> (Oluwoye et al., 2017)</li> </ul>	Negative cultural influence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Sense of national belonging</b> (Ahmed et al., 2022; Miladi et al., 2022)</li> </ul>	National Belonging

Further themes include cultural resilience, where social media support cultural preservation and help youth maintain cultural ties despite external pressures (Rushing et al., 2021). Conversely, negative effects are also reported, with social media linked to heightened experiences of racism and mental health challenges, especially where youth encounter racial discrimination and hostile interactions (Rogers et al., 2021; Tynes et al., 2014). Social media also fosters the formation of digital communities and subcultures (Peng et al., 2016; Petrova & Pervukhina, 2022) and promotes nationalism by reinforcing national identity (Ahmed et al., 2022; Miladi et al., 2022). One study also documented a pronounced shift in cultural identity among young social media users, suggesting that prolonged engagement can alter aspects of cultural identity (Radwan, 2022).

Social media is also highlighted as a medium through which youth engage in discussions that challenge established norms, promoting identity formation and a redefinition of self in light of societal influences (Islam, 2019). McKenzie (2022) and Rogers et al. (2021) expand on these ideas by adding that social media can reinforce racial and ethnic identities by engaging through selective content that influences both self-esteem and personal identity. In general, these findings illustrate the nuance and complexity of social media in the evolution of cultural identity among youth, how it guides individual perceptions, strengthens affiliation within the community, and ultimately affects identity frameworks over time.

*c. Factors Associated with the Impact of Social Media on Youth Cultural Identity*

This review has identified several factors associated with social media's impact on youth cultural identity, including social media usage patterns, social media environment, demographic aspects, cultural representation, and subcultural exploration. Tynes et al. (2014), Islam (2019), McKenzie (2022), Petrova and Pervukhina (2022), and also Radwan (2022) examined social media usage as a fundamental element of cultural identity formation as it provides a sphere for cultural exploration and self-expression. Youth are often going deeper into the social media environment which influences interaction within a dynamic community and exposes them to support networks that strengthen cultural connections (Ahmed et al., 2022; Miladi et al., 2022; Rogers et al., 2021).

Demographic factors, such as age and ethnicity, examined by Radwan (2022), further affect engagement with cultural identity online, adding nuanced layers to how youth experience and express their identities. Finally, Peng et al. (2016) explored how representation and subculture exploration offer youth avenues to connect with specific cultural symbols and communities, which further develops distinctive identities within digital spaces. The overall key themes of the factors associated with the impact of social media on youth cultural identity are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Key themes of factors associated with the social media impact on youth cultural identity

Objective	Key Findings	Themes
<b>Factor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Duration of social media use</b> (Radwan, 2022; Tynes et al., 2014)</li> <li>● <b>Social media usage</b> (Islam, 2019; McKenzie, 2022; Petrova &amp; Pervukhina, 2022)</li> </ul>	Social media usage

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Perceived coolness</b> (Peng et al., 2016)</li> <li>● <b>Ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) message</b> (Rogers et al., 2021)</li> <li>● <b>Interpretation to social media message</b> (Rogers et al., 2021)</li> <li>● <b>Social media role model</b> (Ahmed et al., 2022)</li> <li>● <b>Social media content</b> Miladi et al. (2022)</li> <li>● <b>Opinion leaders, role model and influencers</b> (Miladi et al., 2022)</li> </ul>	Social media environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Age</b> (Radwan, 2022)</li> <li>● <b>Gender</b> (Radwan, 2022)</li> <li>● <b>Educational status</b> (Radwan, 2022)</li> <li>● <b>Marital status</b> (Radwan, 2022)</li> <li>● <b>Profession</b> (Radwan, 2022)</li> </ul>	Demographic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Subculture exploration</b> (Peng et al., 2016)</li> </ul>	Subculture exploration

Social media usage notably influences cultural identity through platform engagement, frequency, and duration. For instance, Islam (2019) discussed how Muslim women utilize platforms such as YouTube and Instagram to challenge cultural narratives and reinforce their own cultural representation. Studies by Tynes et al. (2014), McKenzie (2022), and Radwan (2022) have shown that time spent on social media can impact identity both positively and negatively: while it may reinforce identity, extended usage can also increase exposure to problematic behaviours such as online discrimination. McKenzie (2022) added that Hmong American youth, for example, use social media to explore and negotiate cultural differences, where they leverage digital platforms to both express and solidify their cultural values.

The social media environment exerts considerable influence on youth cultural identity by creating dynamic interactions involving role models, influencers, content, and youth responses. Miladi et al. (2022) underscored the role of social media influencers in shaping young people's lifestyle, fashion, and sense of national identity, with youth drawing not only to the ideas these platforms generate but also to social pressures to maintain an online presence reflective of their cultural values. Likewise, Ahmed et al. (2022) revealed that social media role models as one of the influential factors for youth personal choices related to language and behaviour. This finding demonstrates how influencers shape cultural aspects, including ethics, national pride, and cultural pride. Rogers et al. (2021) drew an example from the #BlackGirlMagic movement, which was used as ethnic-racial messages to help black adolescent girls foster their cultural pride and identity. In another study, Peng et al. (2016) described the effect of perceived "coolness" as a social trend on Danmaku video-sharing websites, where modern portrayals resonate with the occurrence of subcultural identities.

Subcultural exploration and demographics emerged as other crucial factors in shaping youth online cultural identity. A case study by Peng et al. (2016) posits subcultural exploration as a pathway for youth to connect with communities with similar values and interests. Radwan (2022) found that demographic factors such as age, gender, marital status, and education level have led youth to experience identity shifts through social media.

#### *d. Issues of Social Media's Impact on Youth Cultural Identity*

This review identified social behaviour as the most discussed issue surrounding youth cultural identity on social media (Oluwoye et al., 2017; Petrova & Pervukhina, 2022; Radwan, 2022; Rushing et al., 2021; Tynes et al., 2014) followed by cultural hybridization (McKenzie, 2022;

Miladi et al., 2022), lifestyle (Ahmed et al., 2022; Peng et al., 2016), and gender (Islam, 2019; Rogers et al., 2021) with two studies each.

Table 6: Key themes of issues related to social media's impact on youth cultural identity

Objective	Key Findings	Themes
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Racial discrimination</b> (Rogers et al., 2021; Tynes et al., 2016)</li> <li>● <b>Substance use</b> (Oluwoye et al., 2017)</li> <li>● <b>Youth risky behaviour</b> (Rushing et al., 2021)</li> <li>● <b>Social media user behaviour</b> (Petrova &amp; Pervukhina, 2022)</li> <li>● <b>Social dynamics</b> (Radwan, 2022)</li> </ul>	Social behaviour
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Current trend (anime, comic, and games)</b> (Peng et al., 2016)</li> <li>● <b>Language, fashion and personal choices</b> (Ahmed et al., 2022)</li> </ul>	Lifestyle
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Cultural reconciliation</b> (McKenzie, 2022)</li> <li>● <b>Cultural negotiation</b> (Miladi et al., 2022)</li> </ul>	Hybridization
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Muslim women representation</b> (Islam, 2019)</li> <li>● <b>Black adolescent girl identity</b> (Rogers et al., 2021)</li> </ul>	Gender

The theme of social behaviour covers significant issues related to youth interactions on social media. Tynes et al. (2014) and Rogers et al. (2021) discussed the pervasive issue of racial discrimination in online environments, which impacts victims' mental health and perpetuates a cycle of inequality that can hinder personal and academic development. Rushing et al. (2021) addressed risky behaviours among youth, such as substance use and dating violence, and elaborated on how these actions can undermine mental health and coping mechanisms. Similarly, Oluwoye et al. (2017) explored substance use as a behaviour influenced by cultural pressures and social acceptance, which in turn affects broader lifestyle choices.

Miladi et al. (2022) and McKenzie (2022) both explored hybridization but from different perspectives. Miladi et al. (2022) focused on how social media can facilitate cultural negotiation by enabling young people to blend local and global cultural influences. This negotiation develops not only individual identity, but also national identity expressions collectively as seen in the case of Qatari youth, who adopt foreign cultural elements yet still uphold a sense of heritage. Meanwhile, McKenzie (2022) examines hybridization as a process of cultural reconciliation among Hmong American youth, in which they use digital platforms to address cultural tensions. This approach emphasizes how young Hmong Americans utilize social media to engage with the influence of both traditional and American values, creating an alternative space for identity exploration, redefinition, and internal conflict resolution.

Another key issue surrounding youth cultural identity on social media is 'lifestyle'. Peng et al. (2016) highlighted that lifestyle and youth engagement with subcultures such as anime, comics, and gaming (ACG subculture) allows them to shape identities based on niche interests which are often perceived as a form of "coolness" within their cultural context. This is an example of how youth use their specific hobbies and activities to express themselves, build their identities, and gain social recognition within groups with similar interests. Ahmed et al. (2022) discussed lifestyle in the Qatari youth landscape which balances modernity with traditional values, particularly in fashion, language, and other cultural elements. For them, engaging in a lifestyle that blends cultural heritage and contemporary self-expression is a way to present their identities as youth. Lastly, the issue of gender has also been the centre of discussion in several reviewed studies. For instance, Islam (2019) and Rogers et al. (2021)

revealed how young women navigate social media to challenge the fallacies surrounding cultural narratives. Islam (2019) studied the daily life of Muslim women on social media to explain how this community use digital platforms to counter people's perspective regarding orientalist portrayals. Meanwhile, Rogers et al. (2021) specifically discussed the black adolescent girls' community who engaged with the #BlackGirlMagic hashtag to speak out about their resilience and assert intersectional identities. In both cases, social media serves as a tool for women to challenge stereotypes and empower themselves in multidimensional identities.

## DISCUSSION

This systematic review has summarized the impacts, associated factors, and issues surrounding social media and youth cultural identity. The findings highlight the three most prominent impacts revealed from the thematic analysis, which are cultural identity development, cultural resilience, and self-concept. While (Pérez-Torres, 2024; Soh et al., 2024) emphasize the positive role of digital environments in self-presentation and identity construction, this review captures several negative implications. Beyond self-presentation, youth engage in a more in-depth process of negotiating cultural identities leading to 'identity confusion' during resilience building, as highlighted by Marfori (2020) who underscored this phenomenon when studying how Southeast Asian American youth (Filipino American) use social media to engage with hip-hop culture and subsequently use it to negotiate their identities. Exploration provides them with opportunities to strengthen their self-concept and cultural resilience. However, identity confusion also occurs with the pressures of idealized cultural representations. The fragmented nature of these new media has the potential not only to lead to shifting cultural norms but also to erosion of traditional values and societal disintegration (Kossowska et al., 2023). Michikyan (2020) and Bogaerts et al. (2021) then highlighted this as the leading cause of anxiety and depression among youth.

Social media usage, the social media environment, demographic variables, and subcultural exploration are factors associated with the impact of social media on youth cultural identity, with social media usage being the most discussed factor across the included studies. As explained by Jeyanthi (2022), social media platforms are needed to establish a meaningful sense of self for youth, leading to the formation of an "online identity". In the context of social media, identity is no longer determined solely by physical or spatial relationships, but by online intercultural interactions (Ayish & Alnajjar, 2019). Findings from Rosana and Fauzi (2024) support the notion that social media has provided space for youth to present idealized versions of themselves. In another study, Latif et al. (2021) noted social identity development as one of the benefits derived from relationships formed on social media. Those relationships formed from their similarity on social networking sites include the same interests, values, and goals among users (Wang & Liao, 2024).

The social media environment, which is related to the interplay of communication components such as communicators, messages/contents, receivers, and feedback, was also a notable factor identified in this review. Behm-Morawitz (2020) explained that media can strengthen or weaken one's racial and ethnic identity through representation, social comparison, and perceptual bias, as confirmed by one of our included studies reporting that social media is used to deliver messages of social activism for black women's rights in the United States. In recent years, social media has indeed become a vital platform for facilitating mobilization, given its potential to organize social movements across local and national

boundaries, as its use may lower participation costs, making it easier to recruit and retain participants in various social actions. This social media movement supports the strategies of disclosure, examination, and remembrance, it helps social movement activists strengthen their narratives, reflect on their actions, and spread change more widely. Thus, social media is not only a communication tool but also a means to empower technology that helps community activists drive social change, build critical reflection, and challenge structural barriers, particularly through collective movements (Steyn & Kleinhans, 2024).

Many of the reviewed studies linked the issue of negative social behaviour to a specific demographic characteristic. For example, Tynes et al. (2014) and Rogers et al. (2021) discussed how marginalized groups use social media platforms to express their cultural identity, despite encountering negative experiences such as racial discrimination and cyberbullying. This aligns with Sun's (2023) study, which posits that while social media usage can contribute to anxiety and loneliness, it can also facilitate coping mechanisms, if users continue to seek technology-based social support through these platforms. This suggests that when users experience emotional challenges in social media, coping mechanisms may foster cultural connections and potentially form subcultures that help mitigate issues related to racial discrimination and cyberbullying. Zhao et al. (2023) reported that increased cultural adjustment is associated with greater life satisfaction.

We present some implications from this systematic review. Practically, this study recommends that educators and policymakers integrate digital literacy programs into youth education. As social media serves as a hub for entertainment, content sharing, and personalized services (Lv, 2022), digital literacy initiatives are necessary to equip youth with the skills to understand and critically appraise social media content. This can help mitigate critical issues such as racism, cyberbullying, substance use and cultural misrepresentation while simultaneously promoting healthy identity development. Theoretically, this review offers a framework that explains how youth navigate their cultural identity on social media by identifying patterns of social media usage. The first pattern explains those who actively advocate for their cultural identity, as evidenced by significant findings related to "Cultural Resilience." The second group includes individuals who use social media to reconcile and negotiate their cultural identities, highlighted by findings on "cultural identity development", "subcultures and community building", and "cultural hybridization". A similar statement from Johansson (2024) in his study is that today's youth are more open-minded to tolerance and multiculturalism. It can be gained through youths' ability to observe and analyse their own behaviours vis-à-vis direct interactions with others, enhancing their knowledge about the identity of others (Dalib et al., 2017). They were more able to support multiple cultural identification and hybridization, those who are marginalized are more vocal about the stereotypes, marginalization, and other negative practices. The third category comprises those who distance themselves from their culture after being exposed to idealized representation, which is reflected in our findings on "negative social comparison". This third category connects to Maksud's (2023) work on "identity denial," which is regarded as a social threat for individuals who feel unaccepted in their environments.

Identity denial is prevalent among multi-ethnic individuals living in Western culture. For centuries, American critics have claimed that multiculturalism leads to multinationalism, causing disintegration and fragmentation instead of assimilation (Schlesinger, 1994). Multiculturalism continues to be an issue in Western civilizations, as confirmed by the reviewed studies, most of which originated in the United States (see Figure 3). Future research should focus on how multiculturalism can be navigated to promote inclusive identities while

preserving cultural heritage and demonstrating awareness of complex cultural identities in a multicultural society. It is important to consider the research base on geographic and cultural diversity in shaping youth identity. Most of our past studies reviewed focus on Western contexts, particularly the United States, leaving other regions underrepresented. We suggest that future research should include diverse cultural and geographic settings, where cultural identity may be shaped by unique historical, social, and technological factors. Such as Asian or African countries. This might provide a more holistic understanding of how social media influences cultural identity on a global scale and highlight the role of local cultural change in the identity formation process.

Given that only one study employed a longitudinal approach, this review suggests that future research should utilize more longitudinal approaches to enrich the understanding of dynamics and effects over an extended period. This may yield insights, trends, and causalities that may not be covered through cross-sectional studies. Furthermore, our review also proposes more advanced methods for future research, such as big data analysis through machine learning, to obtain more comprehensive data that can improve our understanding of cultural interaction patterns in digital spaces, where cultures intersect and can give rise to cultural hybridity through processes of cultural negotiation, intercultural exchange, and cultural proximity among social media users. Although the use of machine learning methods is a specific field in computer science studies, we believe that the unpredictable and highly dynamic developments of the world require an interdisciplinary approach in social research to solve the problems within it.

Despite the contributions outlined above, this review has several limitations. First, only two databases (Scopus and Web of Science) were utilized to ensure that only high-quality papers were included. Therefore, relevant studies from other academic databases may have been overlooked. Expanding the search to other databases could increase the number of studies included in this review. Of the 27 articles screened, only 11 were eligible for qualitative synthesis, potentially affecting the generalizability and comprehensiveness of the findings. This scarcity of research highlights a significant gap in the literature concerning the impact of social media on youth cultural identity, suggesting that further investigation is warranted.

## CONCLUSION

This systematic review highlights the complex role of social media in shaping youth cultural identity. First, social media significantly impacts youth cultural identity, fostering positive aspects such as cultural resilience, self-concept, and identity exploration, as well as negative implications such as social comparison, identity confusion, and cultural dissonance. Second, various factors, namely, social media usage, the social media environment, demographic variables, and subcultural exploration, are associated with youth cultural identity development on social media. Social media usage has emerged as the most influential factor as it provides space to navigate and negotiate cultural identities in an interconnected digital landscape. Lastly, most of the issues surrounding social media and cultural identity discussed in the reviewed studies are related to negative behaviour such as racial discrimination, cyberbullying, and the negotiation of negative identity.

As social media has become more integrated into daily life, initiatives on digital literacy are needed to equip our youth with skills to understand and appraise the content scattered on social media. The initiatives are also meant to foster digital resilience among youth by equipping them with the necessary knowledge to critically evaluate online content and

recognize the influence of cultural narratives. Mentorship programs as a support system can guide youth to be more accountable for their digital identities. Furthermore, initiating open dialogue about cultural representation and diversity is also needed for a more inclusive environment that facilitates our youth to express their authentic selves without fear of being judged or marginalized by others.

Lastly, this review pointed out three main challenges of cultural interaction: cultural assimilation, cultural integration, and cultural disintegration, suggesting cultural affirmation as an ideal approach to address these challenges. Cultural affirmation emphasizes the importance of being aware of social media's impact, proud of local cultural values, as well as being respectful and embracing cultural differences. Thus, social media can be a platform that supports the appreciation and recognition of diverse cultural identities, rather than acting as a space for global cultural dominance.

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