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Negotiating 'Marwah' and Algorithms: Regarding Digital Sexual Intimacy Among Adolescents in Minangkabau Families

Yunarti[1], Siti Hanisa Khaira[2], Sri Meiyenti[3], Yulkardi[4], Jonson Handrian Ginting, Arif Furqhan[5] and Ifadatul Sahra[6]

[1]*FISIP, Universitas Andalas, Indonesia, Email: yunartiandalas2017@gmail.com*
[2]*Public Health, The University of Melbourne, Australia, Email: sitihanisa.khaira@student.unimelb.edu.au*
[3]*FISIP, Universitas Andalas, Indonesia, Email: srimeiyenti@soc.unand.ac.id*
[4]*FISIP, Universitas Andalas, Indonesia, Email: yulkardi@soc.unand.ac.id*
[5]*FISIP, Universitas Andalas, Indonesia, Email: jonso@soc.unand.ac.id*

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CORRESPONDENCE

E-mail: yunartiandalas2017@gmail.com

A B S T R A C T

This study examines how adolescents and families in Padang City negotiate boundaries of intimacy, sexual expression, and control within the context of an increasingly digital world. Social media is not only a space for adolescent self-expression, but also a field of social interaction often marked by tensions between traditional family values and the dynamics of global digital culture. Using digital anthropology, a gender perspective, and participatory ethnography, this study explores the daily lives of adolescents and their families, both online and offline. This research was conducted through observations of digital activities and in-depth interviews with adolescents aged 15–19 and their parents in urban and semi-urban areas of Padang City. The focus was on how social media practices, such as photo sharing, use of privacy features, and responses to sexual content, are understood, negotiated, and debated within households. The realities of adolescent digital intimacy are studied by exploring power relations, gender norms, control mechanisms, and the potential for conflict and discord within families. This study is expected to enrich anthropological understanding of changing social relations within families and communities in the information technology era. Overall, the findings suggest that digital intimacy among adolescents in Padang is best understood as a negotiated process shaped by cultural values, moral codes, peer dynamics, and technological affordances. Adolescents are not passive recipients of digital influences, and the family remains a relevant moral institution. Both operate within a changing moral landscape where intimacy is mediated and fragmented across different contexts.

A. INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, social media has become an integral part of adolescents' lives, shaping how they communicate, construct their identities, and express their sexuality. International literature also demonstrates a close link between social media, identity, and adolescent relationships. This finding aligns with the general picture of the relationship between adolescents, social media, and technology (Lenhart, 2015). Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp are not only communication tools but also digital socialization arenas that influence how people express feelings, form relationships, and present themselves as part of everyday social life (Horst & Miller, 2012). As Boyd (2014) points out, adolescents' lives on social media involve ongoing negotiations among self-expression, control, and self-worth within a social constellation. Compared with European studies, studies in other regions also show that access to networks expands both networking opportunities and digital risks for children and adolescents (Mascheroni & Ólafsson, 2016).

According to DataReportal, in early 2024, Indonesia had 185.3 million internet users and 139.0 million active social media user identities; these figures demonstrate the high level of national digital connectivity, though they do not directly reflect unique individuals or specific usage patterns among Padang youth (DataReportal, 2024). As a temporal overview, DataReportal reported 143 million active social media user identities in Indonesia in early 2025, with a note of methodological caution (DataReportal, 2025). According to this user data, more than 80% of adolescents use social media daily, and most admit using these platforms to express feelings, share personal moments, or establish romantic relationships. A study by UNICEF (2023) also showed that 1 in 3 Indonesian adolescents have experienced or been involved in forms of digital sexual communication (such as sexting), either consciously or unconsciously. A national survey of adolescents and technology also confirmed the centrality of technology in adolescents' everyday lives (Wartella et al., 2016).

Padang, known as an urban area with strong Minangkabau cultural values, social media has become a tug-of-war between traditional Islamic values and global digital culture. Values of family honor (*marwah*) and the matrilineal kinship system exert unique social pressures on the management of adolescent sexuality, particularly for girls. In this context, the family often becomes a complex negotiation ground between freedom and control, between the offline world with its established social norms and the online world with its more fluid social norms.

Simultaneously, intergenerational tensions arise between parents who don't fully understand the digital ecosystem and children who are digital natives. In many cases, parental concerns about sexual content and the negative influence of social media lead to various forms of surveillance, ranging from blocking to monitoring accounts, which sometimes create hidden conflicts within families.

Conceptually, this research combines digital anthropology, sexuality studies, and family studies. It explores everyday practices and how local values interact with global digital culture to shape understandings, control, and expressions of sexuality in the digital family space. This research highlights the often-hidden negotiation processes that significantly influence how families interpret intimacy, morality, and adolescent development in the technological era. This research focuses on everyday practices and how local values interact with global digital culture to shape understandings, control, and expressions of sexuality within families by highlighting the hidden negotiation processes that determine how families interpret intimacy, morality, and adolescent development. This approach follows the view that the internet should be understood as a practice embedded in everyday life (Hine, 2015).

Teenagers in Padang City express and interpret their sexuality on digital platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp through a combination of the desire to exist and the need to maintain social reputation. This phenomenon often manifests itself in various digital practices, ranging from subtle interactions like online flirting and the use of emojis with specific connotations to the expression of affection online. Behind the veil of privacy, some teens are also able to condition protection through privacy settings to avoid adult supervision and control.

In carrying out these activities, Padang adolescents' perspectives are strongly influenced by the tension between Minangkabau cultural values, which uphold the philosophy of Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah , and strict religious norms. This creates a double standard where adolescents must constantly balance the need for expression with the risk of social sanctions or family "shame." As a result, privacy is not just technical data protection, but rather a security strategy from moral control to maintain their digital identities in accordance with the expectations of a conservative social environment. Therefore, in this context, adolescent privacy in digital spaces needs to be understood as a negotiation process rather than simply a technical feature (Livingstone, Stoilova, & Nandagiri, 2019).

Parents' responses in Padang to these changes are generally protective, tending to employ direct supervision and control through repeated reinforcement of moral narratives. Symbolically, parents often emphasize narratives of moral decline in the digital age, which then translates into prohibitions on device use at certain times or monitoring social media follower lists. This triggers internal conflict within families, with adolescents often feeling their privacy is being violated, while parents feel a religious and cultural obligation to protect their children's honor. These findings resonate with studies on digital intimacy and parental control among Indonesian adolescents (Setyowati & Faiz, 2021).

This tension ultimately gives rise to various forms of compromise and unique negotiations within family relationships. Teenagers tend to develop technical strategies, such as using fake accounts (finstas; second accounts) or hiding their status from family, to avoid control. Thus, privacy settings also reflect adolescents' understanding of personal data and the boundaries they set for online visibility. These practices align with how children and adolescents understand personal data and online privacy (Stoilova et al., 2021). On the other hand, some families are beginning to navigate this situation through more open communication while remaining within the framework of prevailing norms. This dynamic suggests that adolescents' digital sexual expression in Padang is not merely casual openness but rather a complex space for identity negotiation amid the pressures of modern social media and strong local traditions. In this sense, intimacy is no longer purely private but is negotiated through changing social relations and institutions (Giddens, 1992).

B. METHOD

This study employed digital ethnography to connect online and offline practices in participants' everyday lives (Pink et al., 2016). The initial research phase aimed to establish the conceptual and methodological foundations of the study through a review of current literature based on current conditions and the local context.

By design, this study was qualitative, emphasizing the exploration of social meanings and practices (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Pink et al., 2016; Boellstorff et al., 2012). Interview and observation guides were developed at this stage, in conjunction with obtaining ethical and administrative clearances from relevant institutions and individual informants. Institutional coordination was also conducted with relevant schools and community leaders. In-depth interviews and observations were chosen to capture both individual narratives and collective discourse (Guest et al., 2013). Given the topic of adolescent sexuality, ethical considerations were central to the research design (Liamputtong, 2020).

Data collection then began to explore the narratives, practices, and dynamics of adolescent sexuality in the digital world. Participatory observation in school settings and online interactions (open accounts, public content) was conducted alongside in-depth interviews and focus groups with adolescents and parents to capture collective discourse. Observations of open accounts and public content followed the logic of an ethnography of virtual space (Boellstorff et al., 2012).

The next phase is data processing and analysis, aimed at developing ethnographic patterns and narratives from the fieldwork. Analysis is conducted through thematic coding to identify meaningful patterns from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data transcription and initial thematic coding will be conducted by categorizing issues related to adolescents' various sexual expressions, control, value conflicts, and negotiation of rules within the family, while developing interpretive and narrative analysis of the data.

The next phase, validation and reflection, aims to strengthen the findings through triangulation and reflective dialogue. This is to strengthen trustworthiness through inter-method triangulation and analytical reflection (Nowell et al., 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). Given the topic of adolescent sexuality, ethical considerations were central to the research design (Liamputtong, 2020).

The planned triangulation method is inter-method triangulation of in-depth interviews and observations, followed by reflection on the interpretations and results of the initial reflections with community partners and guidance and counseling teachers. This phase will conclude with the development of results aimed at disseminating the initial findings in academic and practical formats. This will include the preparation of articles for leading international journals or presentation materials and papers for international proceedings. Policy summaries will also be developed for schools and communities as part of the research progress report preparation.

First-year research achievement indicators include developing an initial narrative for a digital ethnography of adolescents, submitting a draft article for an international journal or international proceedings, and mapping patterns and key issues in the negotiation of values and responses to adolescent digital sexuality within the family.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Forms of Digital Practices Involving Sexual Activity Among Adolescents society.

a. Early Digital Exposure and the Normalization of Online Intimacy

The research on youth or teenagers is never-ending; new issues emerge in almost every generation. The following is field data related to sexual digital practices and behavior among adolescents.

Table 1. Characteristics and Digital Practices of Teenagers

1	Age Distribution of Teenage Respondents n: 73	Women 53% Male 47%
2	School age teenagers when they first use gadgets.	Not yet attending school 7% Elementary school 40% Junior High School 47% High School 7%
3	Most popular platforms	TikTok 56% Instagram 32% Others (X, WA, Telegram, Facebook, YouTube, Discord, Pinterest) 1% each

Findings suggest that exposure to digital environments among young people is now occurring at an increasingly early age . Previous literature suggests that children's internet engagement often begins at an increasingly young age (Holloway et al., 2013). Survey data indicate that most respondents began using personal digital devices during elementary and middle school, with a smaller but significant group reporting exposure even before formal education. This early introduction to digital environments sets adolescents up for online interaction long before sexuality is explicitly discussed within the family.

From the perspective of sexual script theory (Gagnon & Simon, 1973), this timing is crucial. Sexual knowledge, curiosity, and behavioral expectations are not acquired solely through formal education or family instruction, but through culturally available scripts embedded in everyday interactions. In this regard, digital platforms serve as early script providers, offering adolescents visual, emotional, and relational cues about intimacy, attraction, and desire long before these topics are socially approved for discussion within the family.

Thus, early digital exposure extends the period during which adolescents engage with sexual content—both intentionally and unintentionally—contributing to the gradual normalization of digitally mediated intimacy through a sexual lens.

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b. Platform Ecology and the Emergence of Visual-Performative Intimacy

Table 1 above shows that among the platforms teenagers use, TikTok has emerged as the most dominant, surpassing Instagram and other messaging and content-sharing apps. This dominance is no coincidence. TikTok's algorithm prioritizes visibility, trend engagement, and short-form visual performances, allowing users to gain attention without an established network of followers. The digital platform creates a space of intimacy that is both personal and public (Dobson, Robards, & Carah, 2018).

From the perspective of mediated intimacy (van Dijck, 2013), TikTok enables a form of intimacy that is not primarily dialogic, but rather performative and affective. Intimacy here emerges as a relationship mediated by the platform and digital aesthetics (Lüders, 2020). Teenagers engage in bodily expressions, facial gestures, fashion displays, and symbolic seduction through trends, filters, and music. Sexuality here is rarely explicit; instead, it is communicated through tone of voice, movement, aesthetics, and suggestion.

This platform ecology creates a context in which teens can engage in sexual visibility without perceiving their actions as "sexual behavior" per se. As several patterns in the data demonstrate, many teens view their participation as simply "following a trend" or "having fun," even as their digital presence becomes open to interpretation through sexualized means.

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c. Self-Disclosure, Visibility, and Sexual Perspective

The data shows that more than half of respondents actively share content on social media, primarily photos or videos. The primary self-reported motivation for this exposure was minimal: "just because I want to." This suggests that self-exposure has become normalized to the point where it no longer requires explicit justification.

However, from a sociological and anthropological perspective, this normalization requires further attention. Visual self-disclosure on algorithm-driven platforms is never neutral. As feminist media studies have long argued, visibility often invites interpretation, judgment, and objectification. In the context of adolescents, this visibility opens up the possibility of becoming the subject—or object—of the sexual gaze, regardless of the original intent.

Table 2 below shows aspects of adolescent performativity on social media.

Table 2. Adolescents' Performative Perspectives on Social Media

On a scale of disagree to strongly agree (1-5) with the statement that social media is for self-expression	Both boys and girls agree that social media is a space for self-expression (78%), with only 22% disagreeing or somewhat disagreeing.
On a scale of never to often (1-5) regarding self-exposure on social media	Teenage girls and boys were equally likely to post photos of themselves on social media (3-5), with 63% stating they did so and 37% stating they never or rarely did so (1-2).
The three most popular reasons for expressing yourself on social media are:	Just for fun 83% Self-image 7% Tell someone 10%

Importantly, the data did not reveal significant gender differences in exposure patterns. Both boys and girls were positioned as potential targets of sexual attention. This finding challenges the dominant parental assumption that primarily associates digital sexual risks with girls and underscores the need to rethink gender-based frameworks for digital vulnerability.

d. Sexting: Between Passive Exposure and Active Participation

The literature also positions sexting as a health and educational issue for adolescents requiring an adequate response (Patchin & Hinduja, 2019). The following data demonstrates adolescents' passive and active exposure to sexting and self-presentation behaviors on social media.

One of the most striking findings concerns the prevalence of experiences related to sexting. Although the majority of teens reported being passive recipients of sexual messages or images, nearly half admitted to actively participating in the practice.

This distinction is analytically important. Passive exposure suggests that sexualized digital content often reaches teens through social networks, group chats, or platform algorithms—without deliberate search. Sexual content, in this case, is ambient rather than intentional. However, active participation represents a shift from exposure to engagement, where teens begin to experiment with intimacy as an interaction.

Table 3. Passive Exposure and Active Participation

1	On a scale of disagree to strongly agree (1-5), with the influence of comments on self-expression uploads on social media	77% admitted to having a strong influence. 23% admitted to ignoring it
2	Whether you agree or disagree with posting romantic moments on social media, both teenage girls and boys agree.	with 48% agreeing and 52% disagreeing
3	Has received but not sent, and has received and sent sexually suggestive sexting messages.	62% admitted to having received but never sent. 48% admitted to having received and sent.
4	Ever had a crush on someone online?	0.49% admitted to having experienced it, and more than half of them were teenage girls. 51% admitted they had never done it, and most of them were teenage boys.

Referring back to sexual script theory, sexting can be understood as an interpersonal script that bridges curiosity, peer validation, and emotional experimentation, and recommendations that emphasize the emotional dimension. This suggests viewing intimacy as an emotional and relational experience shaped by modern social conditions (Illouz, 2012). This digital practice is also linked to adolescents' affective and relational needs, not simply a search for transgression. These scripts are learned collectively, circulated informally, and rarely mediated by adult guidance. The literature also emphasizes the ethical challenges and practical implications when sexting is discussed in the context of adolescents . This is also consistent with Kenny et al.'s (2021) discussion of the ethical challenges of sexting in adolescents. Digital intimacy develops through an associational culture that operates parallel to, and often transcends, the moral framework of the family.

e. Digital Practices as a Result of Conflict and Negotiation

Interestingly, the data do not support the narrative that adolescents' intimate social media use constitutes a moral deviance. Instead, adolescents' digital sexual practices appear to be a situational response to a broader ecosystem shaped by easy initial access, followed by adolescent-guided algorithms, the development of visual platform capabilities, normalizing social norms, and a lack of open sexual communication within families. Digital intimacy, in this context, is not simply a product of technology but a socially negotiated practice. Adolescents navigate curiosity, desire, and self-presentation within boundaries that are simultaneously cultural, moral, and algorithmically determined. These practices reflect adaptation rather than rebellion, more like experimentation than transgression. This is possible because adolescents' contact with digital algorithms is deeply personal and private, a space separate from the adult reality around them.

Table 4. Conflict, Negotiation, and Compromise between Parents and Teenagers on Social Media

1	Parents are not digitally literate	36% of parents of teenagers
2	Parents teach good behavior on social media.	72% of all teenage respondents have experienced this.
3	The conflict ended with a compromise	74% of all teenage respondents have experienced this.
4	New social media settings from parents	63% of all teenage respondents have experienced this.
5	Teenagers' digital behavior after conflict and compromise	78% of all teenage respondents admitted to being active on social media again.

These findings raise further questions: if adolescents are already exposed to digitally mediated sexual scripts, how do families respond to these emerging forms of intimacy? Recent research has also explored this question by examining parental responses, moral regulation, and forms of symbolic control within the family.

2. Family Response as a Moral Institution

The Field data and data analysis reveal that family responses to adolescent sexuality cannot be understood solely through explicit rules or parental supervision. It is assumed that these responses are embedded in the values of the Minangkabau moral system, where family honor and collective reputation serve as primary principles. Honor operates not only as a personal value but also as a social symbol maintained through public perception and societal judgment. In this sense, adolescent intimacy exists in the space between private decisions and public judgment. This situation can be interpreted through the concept of intimate citizenship, namely the link between private decisions and public dialogue (Plummer, 2003).

Within this framework, adolescent sexuality is not viewed as an individual issue, but as a potential reflection of family morality. As a result, parental attention is often less focused on adolescents' subjective experiences and even ignored, and more focused on the risk of public exposure or gossip, which could lead to social sanctions. The digital space, especially social media, complicates this moral landscape because the scope and reach of digital visibility far exceed the reality experienced by society. Consequently, family settings tend to prioritize appearance over process—that is, what others see, know, or gossip about—over adolescents' subjective emotional, relational, or sexual development.

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a. Symbolic Control over Explicit Communication

The findings suggest that parental responses to adolescents' digital practices are largely characterized by symbolic control rather than direct intervention. Symbolic control operates through implicit messages: reminders of common courtesy, warnings about shared shame, and moral advice framed within religious or cultural norms, while simultaneously choosing to "silence" discourse surrounding topics related to sexuality. None of the adolescents ever discussed these topics openly.

This form of regulation aligns with what the anthropological literature describes as moral regulation through indirect governance, where norms are enforced not through constant monitoring or open discussion, but through internalized expectations and instilled through concerns about social consequences. The data show that parents do set rules about when to use devices or limits on "appropriate behavior," but avoid concrete conversations about the risks of digital intimacy, sexual boundaries, or online risks and how to anticipate them.

Keeping this topic secret doesn't necessarily indicate parental indifference. Rather, it reflects discomfort, a generational gap in digital literacy, and a belief that explicit discussions themselves can threaten moral boundaries. Consequently, there's an unintended regulatory gap: teens are expected to uphold moral expectations but lack practical guidance on how to address their engagement in intimate digital behavior.

b. Gender Bias in Parental Supervision and Control

It's interesting to look at the field data in Table 5. A striking pattern emerges from the data: a gender asymmetry in parental supervision. Girls are subject to stricter supervision, receive more frequent warnings about modesty issues, and report greater parental concern regarding their online activities. Conversely, boys experience relatively looser supervision and fewer warnings about their screen time.

This bias reflects deeply rooted cultural assumptions that link family honor primarily to female sexuality. Girls are perceived as bearers of dignity, while boys are implicitly granted greater moral autonomy. However, the empirical findings of this study challenge this assumption: exposure to sexual content, participation in sexting, and engagement in self-expression occur in both genders with relatively equal intensity, but with varying levels of scrutiny.

The risks arising from digital intimate activities may apply to both genders, but there are differences in moral assumptions based on gender. As a result, protection strategies disproportionately target girls while ignoring the vulnerabilities of boys, resulting in both groups receiving inadequate support and being treated differently.

c. Regulation and Negotiation in the Family

Family responses come in the form of direct reprimands and supervision, but also operate symbolically through the internalization of religious, cultural, and politeness values that shape how adolescents express themselves.

> *" My parents once told me not to post revealing photos or dance on TikTok, because it would be considered bad." (Hus; 16 years old)*

> *"My Instagram account is private, so it's safe from people at home, so I can still post things." (Mut; 17 years old)*

Despite the existence of rules, advice, and moral boundaries within family regulations regarding adolescent digital sexuality, their implementation often proves ineffective. This failure stems not from parental negligence, but from structural and relational inconsistencies.

Table 5. Parental Control and Gender Bias

1	Parents' warnings about teenagers' activities on social media	74% of adolescent girls received a warning 36% of youth received a warning
2	Parents monitor teenagers' social media accounts.	63% of adolescent girls experience this 36% of young men experience
3	foreclosure cell phone teenagers by parents	13% of young women have experienced their cell phones being confiscated by their parents. 7% of young men have experienced it
4	Prohibiting access to social media platforms	63% of young women experience this 36% of young men experience
5	Arguments and fights	63% of young women experience 32% of young men experience

First, regulation is often based on others' judgments rather than on practice. Parents focus on what is visible, such as clothing and observable behavior, while most digital intimacy occurs in private channels or peer-mediated spaces beyond parental supervision. Second, moral regulation relies heavily on external constraints stemming from community pressure and control, while adolescents' digital practices are driven by internal motivations: curiosity, the desire for recognition, emotional connection, and peer validation. Without addressing these motivations, family regulation remains superficial. Third, symbolic control assumes a shared understanding of risk and morality. However, adolescents' interpretations of digital practices differ significantly from those of their parents. What parents perceive as moral threats, adolescents may experience as normal social interactions or emotional expressions.

Taken together, these conditions create a situation in which formal family control exists but lacks practical force. Teenagers outwardly comply while secretly adapt, relegating intimate practices to spaces unseen and beyond parental control.

It appears that adolescents' attitudes toward surveillance and control cannot be described as resistance or rebellion. Rather, the relationship is characterized by negotiation. Adolescents learn to manage their visibility in the digital world by selectively censoring themselves, while symbolically complying with family expectations and maintaining personal autonomy. From this perspective, parental control is merely symbolic and does not eliminate adolescents' digital intimacy activities. Adolescents do experience enculturation, internalizing moral boundaries but reinterpreting them through everyday practices. Adolescents appear to balance adherence to family values with peer-driven digital cultural activities.

This negotiated order reflects an ongoing relational process, not a breakdown of authority. Family norms remain important, but their influence is distorted and fragmented in the digital environment.

3. Conflict, Negotiation, and Compromise in Parent-Adolescent Relationships

Conflict arises from clashes between parental norms and adolescents' digital practices, but is usually resolved through negotiation and compromise—adolescents remain active on social media using adaptive strategies (private accounts, content selection, self-censorship), while parents feel moral rules are still being enforced.

> *" I'm still active, but I'm more careful now… I'm selective about what I post, so I don't get yelled at." (16 years old)*

> *"If I get a pornographic video from a friend, I usually delete it straight away, I don't dare keep it." (Na. 17 years old)*

The above data shows that conflicts between parents and teens over social media use and sexualized digital practices are relatively common but rarely escalate into open confrontation. Rather than open arguments, tensions often arise through other sources, such as verbal warnings from parents, regrets and expressions of disappointment, and even sudden restrictions on device use intended as indirect moral reminders.

This conflict is not understood as a breakdown in family authority, but rather as a relational moment where different parent-adolescent moral frameworks converge. Parents tend to interpret adolescents' digital behavior through the lens of dignity, public judgment (public reputation), and the risk of moral violation. Meanwhile, adolescents interpret the same behavior as ordinary social participation in peer culture. Thus, the conflict arises not from intentional disobedience but from asymmetric interpretations of meaning. This finding aligns with an anthropological perspective that views family conflict as an arena for value negotiation, rather than a failure of enculturation.

a. Negotiation as an Everyday Strategy

In such latent conflicts, adolescents do not directly challenge parental authority. These findings can be interpreted as adolescents' strategies for negotiating their ongoing digital activities. These strategies include limiting visible posts, adjusting privacy settings, maintaining secondary or "hidden" accounts, and selectively withholding information from parents.

These practices illustrate a negotiated moral order in which adherence to authoritative control and personal autonomy coexist. Adolescents outwardly respect family norms while, internally, redefine how and where intimacy is expressed. Digital platforms facilitate this negotiation by offering a layered space, interwoven with public, semi-private, and private spaces, allowing adolescents to manage their visibility.

From a theoretical perspective, this reflects a shift from direct compliance with rules to careful moral management sensitive to sociocultural norms, in which adolescents actively assess risks and consequences rather than simply comply with imposed rules.

b. Compromise and Symbolic Compliance

Compromise in parent-teen relationships is often symbolic. Parents may accept teens' social media use as long as it appears controlled, modest, and socially acceptable. Teens, in turn, learn to comply by deleting content deemed contrary to family norms, avoiding certain expressions on social media, or aligning outward behavior with family expectations.

This mutual accommodation maintains family harmony even though it doesn't actually resolve the underlying tensions. Symbolic compliance allows parents to regain a sense of moral responsibility, while adolescents retain access to peer-oriented digital spaces. In this case, compromise serves not as a solution but rather as a way to ensure the relationship with parents remains intact. It appears that compromise does not eliminate the power structure between parents and children. Parents retain normative authority, but this authority is exercised through moral persuasion rather than law enforcement. Adolescents navigate this authority with pragmatism and avoid open defiance and conflict.

c. Internal Motivation and Peer Culture

One key insight from the data is that adolescents' digital practices are primarily driven by internal motivations and peer cultural dynamics, and are more successful at avoiding parental influence. The desire to express oneself, gain recognition, feel emotionally connected, or simply participate in trends often outweighs concerns about parental rejection and anger. Peer groups provide validation, norms, and interpretive frameworks that are more relevant to adolescents' daily lives. Digital intimacy develops within a peer-centered moral system that operates alongside family regulation.

This doesn't mean that family values are irrelevant. Rather, family norms can shape adolescents' sense of boundaries, guilt, and self-control, although peer expectations and platform logic ultimately produce a hybrid moral orientation in adolescents.

d. Negotiated Digital Intimacy as a Final Analysis

Overall, the conflicts, negotiations, and compromises demonstrate that digital intimacy among adolescents in Padang is neither uncontrollable nor entirely

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manageable. It is a negotiated intimacy, a dynamic process shaped by cultural values, moral codes, technological capabilities, and the relational pragmatism of the actors.

This study challenges the binary narrative that frames adolescent digital sexuality as either moral decline or individual liberation. It also highlights adolescents as active actors managing intimacy within specific cultural boundaries. The family remains relevant and remains a primary reference point, despite reconfigurations in its regulatory and control capacities.

D. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that adolescent digital sexuality is not a simple matter of moral decline or parental failure, but rather a complex, relational reality where adolescent agency, cultural values, and platform algorithms are deeply intertwined. Driven by early digital exposure and a lack of open family communication, these digital intimacy practices serve as adaptive responses for exploration rather than outright rebellion. In Minangkabau families in Padang, the central concept of honor prioritizes social reputation and symbolic control, yet it introduces a gender bias by placing stricter surveillance on girls despite empirical evidence showing that digital risks, such as sexual exposure and sexting, threaten all genders equally, thereby leaving boys' vulnerabilities unaddressed and undermining the family's protective function. Instead of triggering explicit conflict, this disconnect leads to subtle, ongoing everyday negotiations where adolescents deploy adaptive strategies to manage their digital lives without directly challenging family boundaries, demonstrating that parental authority is continually negotiated rather than fully accepted or rejected. Ultimately, adolescent digital intimacy in Padang is a negotiated process within a shifting, mediated moral landscape, highlighting the urgent need for digital literacy, safety, and citizenship that respects youth agency. To address this, future research must shift from control-based frameworks to longitudinal and comparative studies exploring adolescents' subjective experiences and algorithmic influences, while policy and practice must move away from mere prohibition toward a dialogic media education approach that transforms digital intimacy into a shared space for open dialogue, presence, and ethical guidance between adolescents and adults.

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