

Interview Guide

Note from the authors: This guide is structured to explore the various phases of the media effects process, as outlined in the differential susceptibility to media effects model (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013). As such, the discussions will encompass antecedents (motives and moods) guiding adolescents' social media use, their social media use, differential susceptibility, and immediate and longer-term outcomes of social media use. This interview guide is designed to facilitate a flexible and dynamic discussion, blending open-ended questions with follow-up probes to encourage participants to freely share their personal experiences with social media, in line with the guidelines provided by Mack et al. (2009). The moderator is free to change the order of the questions if this enhances the natural flow of the discussion. Additionally, the moderator has the freedom to delve into relevant topics that naturally arise during the conversation by asking follow-up questions.

Mack, R., Giarelli, E., & Bernhardt, B. A. (2009). The adolescent research participant: Strategies for productive and ethical interviewing. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing, 24*(6), 448–457. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pedn.2008.07.009>

Valkenburg, P. M., & Peter, J. (2013). The differential susceptibility to media effects model. *Journal of Communication, 63*(2), 221–243. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12024>

Introduction by Moderator

Good evening, everyone. My name is [anonymized], and I'm representing The Choice research agency, working on behalf of the University of Amsterdam for tonight's discussion. This project is commissioned by researchers from the University of Amsterdam, who are super interested in understanding what young people across various ages and educational levels do on social media. We want to know what you enjoy, what you don't, how much time you spend on social media, and on which platforms.

As part of an official research project, confidentiality is paramount. Everything discussed here will be treated with the utmost privacy and deleted according to standard procedures, so you can trust that your identity and comments will remain anonymous. It's all about gathering your opinions and experiences. As is typical in formal research, our discussion will be recorded. The camera is visible here [moderator points to camera]. My colleague and the researchers from the University are observing from the other side of that wall [moderator points to mirror wall behind her]. They might have additional questions; sometimes I might check with them or they might signal if I've missed something. A notetaker is also present to ensure we capture all your valuable insights.

Regarding some ground rules, please turn off your mobile phones, unless you're expecting an urgent message. I'll try to give everyone an equal chance to speak. Some of you might be more vocal, while others might be more reserved, so let's make sure everyone gets a chance to share their thoughts. Feel free to respond spontaneously to topics that resonate with you, but please also allow others to finish speaking before you begin. You're welcome to react to each other's comments. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers here; it's all about your personal opinions and experiences. It's okay to disagree – just be respectful of differing viewpoints.

Regarding logistics, this session will last 90 minutes, you'll receive a €40 compensation in an envelope for your participation, paid for by the University of Amsterdam. You'll just need to sign or write your name to receive it. That's all from me. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Participant Introductions

Moderator: To start our discussion, it would be great to get to know each other a little better. Let's go around the room and have each participant introduce themselves. Please share the following information:

- Age and Education: Could you please tell us your age, the school you attend, and which grade or class you are currently in?
- Family: Do you have any brothers or sisters? Feel free to share a bit about them.
- Hobbies and Interests: What are some of your hobbies or things you enjoy doing in your free time?

Part 1: Exploring Social Media Use

Moderator: In this part of our discussion, we are interested in learning about your social media habits - which platforms you use, how you use them, and who you interact with. This will give us insight into the role of social media in your lives.

Individual Task: Listing Social Media Platforms

Instructions: You will find yellow post-it notes with you. On each post-it, write down one social media platform you use. This could range from TikTok and YouTube to gaming-related social media channels – essentially any platform where you communicate with others like friends, family, etc. You have about 5-10 minutes for this task. Once you're done, we will collectively organize these post-its to see which social media platforms are most commonly used among you. We will separate them into two groups: the platforms you use on the left, and the ones you don't use on the right.

Group Discussion: Delving into Social Media Activities

*Questions are asked to each participant individually by the moderator in varying order.

- Overall Usage:
 - Which social media channel do you spend the most time on?
 - What is your favorite social media channel and why?
- Activities on Each Platform:
 - We will go through each social media platform and discuss what activities you engage in. This could include chatting, video calling, posting updates, following hobbies, checking locations, sharing pictures, or if you or someone close to you is an influencer.
- Content Consumption:
 - What kind of content do you typically watch or follow on these platforms? This could range from funny memes, influencers, celebrities, gamers, educational content, etc.
- Sharing Preferences:
 - What kind of personal or intimate details do you share or choose not to share on these platforms?
- Interaction Circle:
 - Who do you interact with on these platforms? This could include parents, individual friends, groups of friends, strangers, classmates, acquaintances, or teammates.
- Screen Time:

- Now, let's talk about the amount of time you spend on social media. What does your screen time look like for these platforms? Can you estimate how long you typically spend on them?

Part 2: Discussing Experiences with Social Media

Moderator: In this part of our conversation, we will talk about why you use social media, when you use it, and how it makes you feel. *Questions are asked to each participant individually by the moderator in varying order.

1. Reasons for Social Media Use

- Why do you go on social media? What motivates you to use social media?
- Does your mood influence your social media use? For example:
 - Do you turn to social media when feeling sad, angry, or down?
 - Do you post differently when in such moods?
 - What or who do you seek out on social media when feeling low? Can you recall a recent instance?
 - How does your social media activity change when you are happy?
 - Can you provide a recent example of social media use during a happy moment?
 - Do you post differently when in a good mood?

2. Emotions Elicited by Social Media

- Have you ever felt jealousy or inspiration because of someone on social media?
- What typically triggers feelings of jealousy? How long do these feelings last, and how frequently do they occur?
- What inspires you on social media?

3. Impactful Social Media Experiences

- Have you had any experiences on social media that had a positive or negative influence on you? Moderator instructs participants to write these positive and/or negative experiences on a post-it. Moderator asks each participant to tell the group what they wrote on the post-its.

4. Encountering Undesirable Content

- Have you come across content on social media that you would rather not see?
- How often does this happen, and what is the content usually about (e.g., sexual content, violence, arguments, inappropriate jokes)?
- How do you react to such content, and does it impact you negatively?

5. Reflection on Social Media Use

- Do you feel that you spend a lot of time on social media?
- Could you estimate how much time you spend on social media?
- Do you think your social media usage is excessive, and why?
- How do you perceive your social media usage compared to others?

Part 3: Additional Topics (If time permits)

The following topics will be explored if time allows. These are supplementary questions that we are interested in, but our primary focus remains on the main topics we've discussed so far.

1. Parents and Social Media Rules

Let's discuss your parents' perspective on social media.

- Do they set any rules about how long, what, or when you can use social media?
- How do your parents feel about what you can and cannot watch or post? Can you give some examples?
- Do your parents express concerns about aspects of your social media use, like bullying or privacy issues?
- Do you discuss these concerns together?
- Do your parents use social media themselves?
- Do they monitor your social media activities, like using an app to check what you're doing or having access to your profiles?
- How do you feel about sharing your social media activities with your parents?
- Are there things on your profile you'd prefer they didn't see or know about?

2. Self-Regulation in Social Media Use

Let's talk about how you handle your social media use.

- Do you ever find yourself distracted by it?
- What strategies do you use to avoid distractions?
- Do you set any personal rules for your social media use, like limiting your time on it or restricting certain content?

3. Experiences of Stress Related to Social Media

- Do you ever feel stressed about needing to be constantly online or respond immediately to messages?
- Do you worry about how others will react to your posts?
- Have you ever felt overwhelmed by receiving too many messages at once?
- Do you feel compelled to always have your phone with you, to keep up with what's happening or not to miss anything?

4. Self-Expression on Social Media

- Do you use filters when posting on social media?
- How much attention do you pay to the way you format your messages? Do you spend a lot of time on it?
- Do you think about who will read your messages and how much does this influence what you post?
- Do you always present your true self, or do you experiment with different identities or personas online?

Part 4: Conclusion and Wrap-Up

- Are there any questions or anything else you would like to discuss that we haven't covered?
- Thank you all very much for your participation and valuable insights.

[Moderator will handle administrative tasks, such as getting signature forms signed and distributing incentives.]