

Adolescence and Friendship in The Digital and Relational Environment: A Qualitative Survey

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Abstract

This qualitative study, conducted over three years in ten secondary schools across Italy, analyzed how adolescents build, interpret, and manage friendships in the digital environment and in face-to-face contexts. Through 71 semi-structured interviews conducted between 2023 and 2025, it has been possible to collect subjective narratives that highlight how online friendships are frequently associated with accessibility, immediacy, and continuity, while offline friendships are experienced as more meaningful relational spaces in terms of affection, communication, and trust. In both dimensions, the central role of relational awareness and emotional competence in modulating the friendship experience within a social context increasingly permeated by technology emerges. The results contribute to the psychopedagogical debate on socio-relational development in adolescence, highlighting the importance of promoting intentional practices in educational contexts that support critical, reflective, and responsible use of digital tools in interpersonal dynamics.

Keywords: adolescents; digital relationships; emotional education; friendship; qualitative research