The reciprocal relations between facebook relationship maintenance behaviors and adolescents’ closeness to friends

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## Sample

A total of 1235 participants between 12 and 18 years old from fifteen randomly selected high schools filled out the questionnaire at both time points

# Abstract

Introduction: Scholars suggest that social networking sites such as Facebook offer adolescents an
ideal setting for engaging in relationship maintenance behaviors. Despite these suggestions, it
remains an open question whether adolescents' online relationship maintenance behaviors can
improve aspects of positive friendship quality, such as feelings of closeness. Additionally, it is
unclear whether adolescents’ feelings of closeness can motivate them to engage in online re\_x0002\_lationship maintenance behaviors. The aim of this two-wave longitudinal panel study was to
investigate the reciprocal relations between Facebook relationship maintenance behaviors
(FRMB) and adolescents' closeness to friends.
Method: A sample of 12- to 18-year-old Flemish adolescents (NTime1 = 1840) filled out a paper\_x0002\_and-pencil survey twice within a six month-interval. We estimated cross-lagged structural
equation models in AMOS to test the reciprocal relations between FRMB, closeness to friends, and
receiving positive Facebook reactions. To test whether the hypothesized relations were moder\_x0002\_ated by gender and/or age, we conducted multiple group comparison tests.
Results: Findings revealed that FRMB and adolescents' closeness to friends were reciprocally
related over time: FRMB positively predicted adolescents' closeness to friends and closeness to
friends positively predicted FRMB. In addition, receiving positive Facebook reactions mediated
these reciprocal relations.
Conclusion: By revealing that receiving positive Facebook reactions mediates the reciprocal re\_x0002\_lationships between FRMB and adolescents' closeness to friends, we now better understand how
FRMB can increase adolescents' closeness to friends and how increased closeness to friends can
enhance adolescents’ FRMB. The discussion focuses on the understanding of these findings, di\_x0002\_rections for future research, and key limitations.

# Outcome

"Adolescents use Facebook to maintain relationships with friends. Facebook can enhance offline friendship quality but only when focused on specific types of Facebook use (i.e., social or active Facebook use; e.g., FRMB), rather than on ‘general Facebook use’ (e.g., time spent on Facebook). Only if SNSs are used in particular ways (i.e., socially, actively; e.g., for maintaining relationships), they are capable of enhancing adolescents' friendship quality. Additionally, a mediation of receiving positive Facebook reactions on the relationship between FRMB and adolescents' closeness to friends was found. More specifically, the findings suggest that the more adolescents' engage in FRMB, the more positive Facebook reactions they receive, which in turn results in a better friendship quality. However, positive Facebook reactions were crosssectionally, rather than longitudinally namely that adolescents' may feel close to their friends at the moment when they receive positive Facebook feedback, but these feelings of increased closeness may disappear after a certain amount of time. Thus, the relationship between FRMB (i.e., relational maintenance behavior/input) and perceived closeness to friends (i.e., satisfactory relationship outcome) is fully mediated by receiving positive Facebook reactions (i.e., reciprocal relational maintenance/outcome).
Strong ties (compared to weak ties) are attracted to more communication media given that Facebook offers adolescent users an ideal platform for relationship maintenance behaviors. receiving and giving feedback is a defining feature of close friendships in adolescence. During this particular time of exploration and identity development, feedback of close friends is essential for adolescents' self-development and can give guidance to teens' social behavior. Facebook offers adolescents nowadays a perfect platform to give and receive feedback and it is likely to expect that this feedback process, typical for close friendships, has expanded to a Facebook context." (Rousseau et al., 2019, pp. 181-182)