

# From Café to Content: Hanging Out as a Symbolic Practice of Digital Identity Construction among Urban Youth

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**Abstract.** This study aims to examine how urban youth construct the meaning of hanging out as part of contemporary lifestyles. Using a qualitative approach and a case study strategy, the research was conducted at a café in South Tangerang, involving six purposively selected informants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, and analyzed using a symbolic interactionist perspective. The findings reveal that hanging out is not merely a recreational activity, but a multidimensional social practice encompassing social interaction, emotional regulation, symbolic consumption, and digital identity production. Hanging out serves as a space where adolescents build relationships, express themselves, and negotiate their identities, both through face-to-face interaction and social media engagement. These findings highlight that seemingly mundane everyday practices embody complex social meanings in the lives of urban youth. This study contributes to the sociology of youth and lifestyle studies by providing a deeper understanding of the relationship between social space, interaction, and meaning making in the digital era.

**Keywords:** Urban Youth, Lifestyle, Café, Hanging out

**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana remaja perkotaan memaknai aktivitas nongkrong sebagai bagian dari gaya hidup kontemporer. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan metode studi kasus, penelitian ini dilakukan di sebuah café di Tangerang Selatan dengan melibatkan enam informan yang dipilih secara purposive. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan perspektif interaksionisme simbolik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa aktivitas nongkrong tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai kegiatan rekreatif, tetapi juga sebagai praktik sosial multidimensional yang mencakup interaksi sosial, regulasi emosi, konsumsi simbolik, serta produksi identitas digital. Nongkrong menjadi ruang di mana remaja membangun relasi, mengekspresikan diri, dan menegosiasikan identitasnya, baik dalam interaksi langsung maupun melalui media sosial. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa praktik keseharian yang tampak sederhana justru menyimpan kompleksitas makna sosial dalam kehidupan remaja perkotaan. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan kajian sosiologi kepemudaan dan gaya hidup, khususnya dalam memahami keterkaitan antara ruang sosial, interaksi, dan konstruksi makna di era digital.

**Kata Kunci:** Remaja Perkotaan, Gaya Hidup, Café, Nongkrong

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the acceleration of urbanization and cultural transformation in the digital era, urban lifestyles have become increasingly complex and dynamic. These changes are not limited to technological developments, but also extend to individuals' everyday practices, including how they spend their leisure time, build social relationships, and express their identities (Hendri & Ahmad, 2023). In this context, lifestyle can no longer be understood merely as a pattern of individual activities; rather, it should be seen as a social practice that reflects values, preferences, and one's social position within society (Ferreira et al., 2021; Ritzer, 2014; Haryanto, 2019; Adang & Anwar, 2017).

Adolescents represent a key social group within this dynamic, as they are in a transitional phase characterized by identity exploration and a tendency to experiment with various forms of lifestyle. Recent studies indicate that urban youth are more likely to adopt lifestyles grounded in symbolic consumption, particularly through activities associated with public spaces such as cafés and coffee shops (Zhou et al., 2023; Pratiwi & Awang, 2022; Sandra et al., 2022). These spaces function not only as sites of consumption but also as "third places" that facilitate social interaction, meaning-making processes, and the formation of collective identities among young people (Kandari & Chaudry, 2023).

In recent years, the phenomenon of *nongkrong* (hanging out) in cafés has become increasingly prominent as part of urban youth culture in Indonesia. This activity is no longer merely understood as a way of spending leisure time; rather, its meaning has shifted toward a medium for self-expression, social image construction, and the pursuit of recognition within digital spaces. Recent research suggests that hanging out practices are closely linked to the logic of symbolic consumption, where individuals consume not only products but also experiences, atmospheres, and the social representations embedded within these spaces (Musfiandy & Lusviriga, 2021; Soto et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the rise of social media has intensified this transformation in meaning. Cafés have become not only spaces of social interaction but also visual backdrops for digital

content production, contributing to the construction of self-identity in virtual public spaces. In this regard, hanging out emerges as a practice situated at the intersection of face-to-face interaction and digital self-representation, resulting in meanings that are increasingly layered and multifaceted (Ferreira et al., 2021).

In urban contexts such as South Tangerang, a satellite city for Jakarta, the rapid proliferation of cafés with diverse thematic concepts has expanded the range of social spaces available to young people. This condition has intensified the practice of hanging out as part of everyday routines that are not merely recreational but also rich in symbolic and social dimensions. Therefore, hanging out should not be understood simply as a casual activity; rather, it constitutes a social practice that reflects broader dynamics of lifestyle, social relations, and meaning construction in the lives of urban youth.

The increasing prevalence of hanging out among urban adolescents is therefore important to examine, as this practice reflects not only changing patterns of leisure use but also broader transformations in how individuals build social relationships and construct meaning within public spaces. In many cases, what appears to be a simple activity embodies complex social dynamics, particularly when linked to processes of identity formation, the need for social recognition, and the growing influence of digital culture in everyday life (Soto et al., 2023).

On the other hand, the emergence of cafés as alternative social spaces reflects a transformation in the nature of public space within urban society. Whereas social interactions previously took place largely in traditional communal settings, cafés and coffee shops have increasingly assumed the role of meeting spaces that are simultaneously flexible, semi-private, and open. This shift carries significant implications, as space is no longer merely a container for activity but also plays an active role in shaping patterns of interaction, styles of communication, and even the structure of social relationships among youth (Kandari & Chaudry, 2023). In this sense, understanding the practice of *nongkrong* (hanging out) also entails understanding how new social spaces

operate in shaping the social experiences of young people.

Furthermore, the relevance of this study is also grounded in the growing interconnection between offline social practices and self-representation in digital spaces. The activity of hanging out does not end with face-to-face interaction; rather, it extends into the production and circulation of content on social media, which in turn shapes individuals' self-image and social positioning before a wider audience. In this context, hanging out becomes part of a symbolic strategy through which youth negotiate their identity and existence within an increasingly visual and performative culture (Ferreira et al., 2021).

From an academic perspective, examining hanging out practices is important for enriching perspectives within the sociology of youth and lifestyle studies, particularly in understanding how seemingly mundane everyday practices function as arenas for the production of social meaning (Hasibuan, 2023). In addition, this research holds practical relevance by offering a more comprehensive understanding for parents, educators, and policymakers regarding the dynamics of youth life in rapidly changing urban environments. Thus, this study contributes not only to the advancement of scholarly discourse but also to interpreting broader patterns of social change among younger generations.

In recent years, studies on cafés and hanging out practices have grown significantly within urban studies and the sociology of lifestyle. A number of scholars have positioned cafés as part of the transformation of social space in urban contexts, where coffee shops are no longer merely sites of consumption but also function as spaces for interaction, social networking, and even the formation of informal communities. Ferreira et al. (2021) demonstrate that coffee shops serve as spaces that connect consumption practices with social relations, thereby producing new forms of connectivity within increasingly fragmented urban life.

In addition, research on the concept of the 'third place's further highlights the strategic role of cafés in contemporary social life. Kandari and Chaudry (2023) show that coffee shops can

function as intermediary spaces that facilitate the formation of social capital, particularly through casual interactions that are not bound by formal structures. In this context, hanging out is not merely associated with recreation but also serves as an important medium for building social relationships and fostering a sense of belonging.

On the other hand, studies focusing on consumer culture indicate that visiting cafés is closely linked to the construction of modern lifestyles. Musfialdy and Lusrivirga (2021) argue that hanging out among young people is no longer simply a social activity, but has become part of a symbolic strategy for expressing identity, particularly in relation to social media and the need for recognition. This finding is consistent with studies showing that the consumption of spaces such as cafés is often associated with the creation of experiences and self-images that can be displayed in public spaces, both physically and digitally.

However, upon closer examination, most existing studies such as tend to position hanging out within a macro-level framework, whether as part of urban spatial transformation, consumption practices, or community formation. While this perspective is important for understanding structural contexts, it often falls short in explaining how individuals actively interpret and assign meaning to such activities in their everyday experiences. In other words, the subjective dimension, namely how young people interpret, experience, and make sense of hanging out, remains relatively underexplored.

Moreover, several studies focusing on lifestyle and consumption tend to portray youth as passive actors who merely follow prevailing trends or consumption logics. From a sociological perspective, however, individuals possess reflexive capacities to interpret their actions and construct meaning through social interaction. The limited attention to these processes of interaction and meaning making has led to the tendency to reduce hanging out to a purely consumptive or hedonistic lifestyle, thereby overlooking the complexity of the social experiences that underpin it (Kandary & Chaudry, 2023).

Another notable limitation lies in the scarcity of studies that specifically examine this

phenomenon within the Indonesian context using theoretical approaches that emphasize meaning-making processes, such as symbolic interactionism. Yet, local socio-cultural contexts play a crucial role in shaping how individuals understand and engage in everyday practices. Therefore, there is a need for research that not only views hanging out as an observable social practice but also explores how its meanings are constructed through interaction, experience, and individual interpretation in daily life.

Cafés function as new social spaces and that hanging out is closely associated with lifestyle and symbolic consumption, a significant gap remains in understanding this phenomenon more deeply. Most studies tend to focus on the functions of space, patterns of consumption, or the role of cafés as ‘third places’ without examining how meaning is concretely formed in individuals’ everyday experiences, particularly among youth. In fact, meaning does not emerge automatically from social structures but is continuously constructed through dynamic processes of interaction and interpretation (Musfiandy & Lusrivirga, 2021).

In addition, studies that link hanging out with social media generally emphasize self-representation and digital performativity, yet few have examined how offline and online practices intersect in shaping a more integrated meaning-making process. In this regard, hanging out is not merely a form of face-to-face interaction but also part of a broader process of meaning production that involves self-reflection, social relationships, and the expectations of digital audiences (Soto et al., 2023). This disconnects between analyses of physical and digital spaces suggests that current understandings of hanging out remain partial.

Furthermore, within the Indonesian context, studies that specifically explore the experiences of youth as central actors in hanging out practices are still relatively limited, particularly those employing theoretical approaches to examine the construction of meaning in depth. As a social group undergoing identity formation, youth possess distinctive ways of interpreting their activities. Without directly engaging with their perspectives, the phenomenon of hanging out risks being reduced

to a mere lifestyle trend or consumptive behavior, thereby overlooking its essential subjective dimension.

Addressing these gaps, this study seeks to fill the existing void by focusing on how youth actively construct the meaning of hanging out in their everyday lives. Drawing on a symbolic interactionist perspective, this research aims to trace the interpretive processes through which individuals assign meaning through social interaction, as well as how these meanings are continuously negotiated across different contexts, both in face-to-face relations and in relation to digital culture. This approach enables a deeper understanding of hanging out; not merely as an observable social practice, but as a meaning-laden social process.

The novelty of this research lies in its perspective, which not only positions hanging out as a form of consumption, entertainment, or modern lifestyle as found in many previous studies. But also as a social process that produces and reproduces meaning through symbolic interactions between adolescents. This research shows that adolescents are active actors who construct meanings of hanging out activities according to their respective, recreation, relieving, boredom, fulfilling existential needs on social media, or as a symbol of identity and modern lifestyle.

In addition, this research reveals a strong connection between the culture of hanging out and social media practices, where activities carried out in physical spaces do not stop at direct interaction, but continue into the digital space through documentation and publication of photos and videos as a form of self-representation. By taking the specific context of Café Kebun Latte Tangerang Selatan, this research makes a new contribution to the study of the sociology of adolescents and urban lifestyles by showing that hanging out activities are an arena for the formation of meaning, identity, social relations, and self-expression formed through social interactions and the use of symbols in the daily lives of adolescents.

Accordingly, this study is expected to contribute to the development of youth sociology and lifestyle studies, particularly by enriching our understanding of the relationship between social space, interaction, and meaning

construction in the lives of urban youth. At the same time, it offers a more contextual perspective for interpreting everyday practices that are often perceived as trivial, yet in fact reflect broader social dynamics within contemporary society.

## 2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study strategy to gain an in-depth understanding of how adolescents construct the meaning of hanging out as part of urban lifestyles. This approach is selected because it enables the exploration of individuals' subjective experiences and interpretive processes in everyday life, particularly within the context of socially meaningful interactions (Prabowo et al., 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018). By adopting a case study design, the research focuses on a specific context, allowing for a more contextualized and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2018).

The study was conducted at Café Kebun Latte in South Tangerang, a social space that is representative of urban youth hanging out practices. This location was chosen due to its popularity among young people and its provision of facilities that support both social interaction and digital content production. As such, this setting enables the researcher to observe social dynamics that are closely aligned with the objectives of the study.

The research participants consisted of six informants selected through purposive sampling, based on their involvement in hanging out activities at the research site. The primary informants were adolescent café visitors who regularly engaged in hanging out, while supporting informants included café managers and staff, who provided additional perspectives on visitor behavior and interaction patterns. Informants were selected carefully to ensure that the data collected were directly relevant to the focus of the study (Etikan et al., 2016).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow flexibility in exploring participants' experiences and interpretations while

maintaining a clear research focus. Observations were carried out directly at the research site to capture patterns of interaction and activities in their natural setting. Documentation was used to complement the data, particularly in relation to visual practices and social media use within hanging out activities. The combination of these methods enabled the researcher to obtain rich, contextualized, and comprehensive data.

Data analysis was conducted through a systematic process involving data reduction, categorization, and interpretation. Collected data were first organized and simplified, then grouped into themes relevant to the research focus. Subsequently, the data were interpreted using a symbolic interactionist perspective to understand how the meaning of hanging out is constructed through social interaction and individual interpretive processes. This approach emphasizes that meaning is not fixed, but continuously negotiated within social experiences (Blumer, 1986; Umiarso, 2022).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study employed triangulation techniques, including both source and methodological triangulation. Data obtained from different informants and collection methods were compared to assess the consistency of findings. In addition, member checking was conducted by confirming interpretations with the informants to ensure that the researcher's analysis accurately reflected their intended meanings. These procedures are essential for maintaining the credibility and reliability of qualitative research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were carefully observed, particularly regarding informed consent and data confidentiality. All informants were provided with a clear explanation of the research objectives and gave their consent prior to participation. Informants' identities were anonymized to protect their privacy and ensure their comfort during the research process.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Space for Interaction and the Production of Social Meaning

One of the most prominent findings of this study is that hanging out is understood by adolescents as a space for interaction and the sharing of experiences. Informants consistently described hanging out as a moment to 'gather', 'chat', and 'share stories' with peers. The interactions that take place are not limited to casual conversations but also include the exchange of experiences, discussions of particular issues, and even forms of emotional support within friendships.

*"When we hang out, we mostly chat and share stories with friends. Sometimes we even discuss serious topics, but in a relaxed way. The conversation usually flows naturally, from light topics to personal experiences or problems we are facing. It makes us feel relieved because we can share and listen to each other"* (Informant Abe)

A closer examination reveals that the meaning of hanging out is not inherently attached to the activity itself but is instead constructed through the social interactions that occur within it. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, human action is based on meanings that emerge from interaction with others, and these meanings continuously evolve through interpretive processes (Blumer, 1986; Umiarso, 2022). In this sense, hanging out can be understood as an 'interpretive space' in which individuals not only interact but also simultaneously construct and negotiate the meanings of their social experiences.

Within this context, hanging out may be viewed as a social practice that enables the formation of collective meaning through everyday interaction. Adolescents are not merely physically present in the same space; rather, they are engaged in processes of mutual understanding, response, and interpretation of shared situations. This helps explain why an activity that appears simple on the surface carries significant social importance in their lives. In the Indonesian context, spaces such as coffee stalls and cafés have long functioned as informal public spaces that facilitate fluid and egalitarian social interaction

(Lukitaningsih, 2021; Solikatun et al., 2015).

This finding is consistent with the work of Ferreira et al. (2021), which demonstrates that coffee shops function as social spaces that facilitate informal interaction and connection within urban life. Their study highlights that such spaces are not merely sites of consumption but also important mediums for building social relationships and collective experiences. Thus, hanging out can be understood as part of a broader social practice in which space, interaction, and meaning are interconnected and mutually constitutive.

### 3.2 Means of Recreation and Emotional Regulation

In addition to being understood as a space for social interaction, hanging out is also perceived by adolescents as a way to cope with boredom and fatigue arising from daily routines. Several informants described hanging out as a way to 'refresh', 'relieve stress, or simply 'change the atmosphere' after engaging in academic or work-related activities. In this sense, hanging out represents an accessible and flexible option for responding to everyday pressures.

*"Usually, we hang out to relieve stress, especially after classes or when we have a lot of assignments. Staying in the room all the time just makes us feel more tired and bored. By hanging out with friends, the atmosphere becomes more relaxed and our minds feel lighter"* (Informant Taty)

A deeper analysis suggests that hanging out functions not merely as entertainment, but as a form of socially embedded emotional regulation. The process of relieving stress does not occur in isolation; rather, it takes place through engagement in social interaction. Casual conversations, the presence of peers, and the relaxed atmosphere of hanging out spaces become important elements that help individuals process their emotional experiences. In this regard, hanging out can be understood as a form of social coping,

whereby individuals manage psychological pressures through social relationships and shared experiences.

This finding can also be interpreted through the perspective of Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934), which argues that meanings emerge through social interaction. For adolescents, hanging out is not merely a leisure activity but a social setting where experiences, emotions, and everyday pressures are collectively interpreted. Through interaction with peers, hanging out spaces come to symbolize comfort, support, and a sense of belonging, making them meaningful environments for coping with stress.

From a sociological perspective, this highlights the significant psychosocial dimension of hanging out activities. Adolescents are not only seeking enjoyment, but also spaces where they can feel lighter, accepted, and socially connected. This is consistent with studies on leisure and youth, which emphasize the role of leisure activities in maintaining emotional well-being while fostering social bonds (Kleiber et al., 2017; Iwasaki, 2020). In this context, leisure is not merely a passive activity but an active space in which individuals restore emotional energy and strengthen social relationships. Leisure activities also play an important role in maintaining emotional balance, particularly during adolescence (Havighurst & Feigenbaum, 2013). Furthermore, individuals' engagement in enjoyable activities is often shaped by their anticipation of happiness (Kumalasari et al., 2022).

Viewed through the lens of Symbolic Interactionism, these findings suggest that the emotional benefits associated with hanging out are constructed through ongoing social interactions. The sense of acceptance, comfort, and connectedness experienced by adolescents does not emerge automatically from the activity itself, but from the meanings they attach to interactions with peers. Through shared conversations and experiences,

adolescents collectively define hanging out spaces as environments that provide emotional support and social belonging. As a result, leisure spaces become symbolically meaningful settings where emotional well-being is reinforced through interaction.

Thus, hanging out can be understood as an everyday practice that simultaneously encompasses both recreational and emotional regulation functions. It serves as a means for adolescents to navigate the pressures of dynamic urban life while maintaining a balance between individual demands and the need for social connection.

From a Symbolic Interactionist perspective, the dual function of hanging out as both recreation and emotional regulation reflects the meanings adolescents construct through their everyday interactions. Through repeated engagement with peers in leisure spaces, hanging out becomes more than a routine activity; it is interpreted as a meaningful social practice that provides opportunities for self-expression, emotional support, and social belonging. These meanings are continuously reinforced through interaction, shaping how adolescents understand and experience hanging out in their daily lives.

### 3.3 Practice of Symbolic Consumption and Lifestyle

From a Symbolic Interactionist perspective, consumption practices are not merely driven by practical needs but are shaped by the meanings individuals construct through social interaction. According to Mead (1934), individuals develop understandings of themselves and their social world through interactions with others, while Blumer (1969) argues that people act toward objects, activities, and places based on the meanings those things hold for them. In this sense, hanging out can be understood as a symbolic practice through which adolescents' express identity, communicate social belonging, and engage with particular lifestyle meanings attached to urban

leisure spaces.

Another important finding of this study indicates that hanging out has evolved into an integral part of urban youth lifestyles. Informants do not perceive hanging out merely as a social activity, but as something habitual; an embedded routine in their everyday lives. Interestingly, the choice of hanging-out venues is not random; rather, it involves careful consideration of factors such as ambiance, café design, and the image associated with the place. Informant Cappy says that *“hanging out has become a habit now; it feels like if you don't do it, you're missing out”*. In supporting this statement, another informant says:

*“Usually, we choose cafés with good aesthetics so they're nice for taking photos. Nowadays, many cafés have visually appealing designs, which makes them more attractive to visit. Besides being comfortable for hanging out, they also provide a good background for social media posts. So it's not just about gathering, but also about finding visually appealing spots”* (Informant Tedi)

This phenomenon suggests that hanging out is no longer simply an activity but has become a form of symbolic consumption. Adolescents do not merely ‘attend and gather’; they also consume the symbolic values embedded in the spaces they choose. Cafés with particular concepts, for instance, may represent modernity, aesthetic appeal, or even prestige. In this sense, the choice of hanging out venues becomes part of how individuals present themselves and construct their social image in front of others. Among youth, hanging out has increasingly developed into a lifestyle that reflects broader urban social dynamics (Fauzi et al., 2012; Priyanti et al., 2022).

This understanding aligns with perspectives on consumer society, which argue that consumption is driven not only by functional needs but also by the symbolic value attached to objects (Baudrillard, 1998). In the context of

hanging out, what is consumed is not only food or beverages, but also experiences, atmospheres, and social meanings associated with the space. In other words, hanging out becomes a medium through which social identity is negotiated via everyday consumption practices.

Furthermore, in contemporary lifestyle studies, activities such as hanging out are often understood as forms of self-expression linked to individuals' preferences, interests, and values. Ferreira et al. (2021) demonstrate that coffee shops function not only as gathering places but also as spaces where individuals display lifestyles and construct social identities through consumption practices. Thus, hanging out can be seen as situated at the intersection of consumption, identity, and social representation. This consumptive lifestyle is also reflected in how individuals choose spaces based on their symbolic value rather than purely utilitarian functions (Ompusunggu & Djawahir, 2014). In the context of social media, such practices are further reinforced by the need to project an idealized self-image (Mufidah & Wulansari, 2018; Hidayat, 2021).

For urban adolescents, this becomes particularly significant, as they are in a phase of identity exploration. Hanging out provides a space where they can experiment with, display, and negotiate their identities within their social environments. Therefore, understanding hanging out as a lifestyle requires going beyond its frequency and examining how it is embedded within broader symbolic practices.

### 3.5 A Strategy of Existence in Digital Culture

The findings also reveal that hanging out is closely intertwined with social media practices. Nearly all informants associated their hanging-out experiences with documenting moments through photos or videos, which are then shared on digital platforms such as Instagram or TikTok. This activity is not merely a form of personal documentation but also a way of sharing experiences and asserting one's presence in a broader social

space.

*“Whenever we hang out, we always take photos and upload them on Instagram so we can keep the memories. Moments with friends feel too valuable not to be documented. It’s also nice to share those moments with others on social media. So hanging out is not just about meeting, but also about remembering and sharing”* (Informant Jella)

*“Sometimes we go to cafés because they’re aesthetic, so we can create content. A visually appealing place is important for producing good photos or videos. So besides hanging out, we also think about what content we can upload”* (Informant Fita)

A closer examination suggests that hanging out has shifted into a strategy of existence within digital culture. Activities that initially occur in physical spaces are extended and acquire additional meanings in virtual environments. Adolescents are not only physically present in social interactions but also actively construct representations of themselves through the content they produce. In this sense, hanging out becomes a point of convergence between offline social experiences and online self-representation.

Within this framework, hanging out can be understood as a process of digital identity production. Adolescents selectively capture moments, curate visual elements, and present themselves in ways that align with the image they wish to convey. This process demonstrates that identity is not fixed but continuously constructed and negotiated through interaction, both in physical and digital spaces. This perspective aligns with studies on social media that conceptualize digital platforms as arenas for identity performance, where individuals actively manage how they are perceived by others (Rahmawati, 2019; Soto et al., 2023).

Moreover, the relationship between offline and online practices in hanging out

suggests that the two cannot be clearly separated. The experience of hanging out extends beyond face-to-face interaction and becomes part of a digital narrative consumed by a broader audience. In this sense, the meaning of hanging out becomes layered: as a social experience, as visual representation, and as a symbol of existence within digital networks. This is consistent with Ferreira et al. (2021), who argue that spaces such as cafés function not only as sites of interaction but also as backdrops to produce shareable experiences.

Thus, hanging out can be understood as a practice situated at the intersection of social interaction and digital performance. Adolescents do not merely ‘hang out to meet’, but also ‘hang out to be seen’, making this activity part of a broader strategy for constructing and maintaining their existence in the digital age.

### 3.6 Synthesis: Hanging Out as a Multidimensional Social Practice

Hanging out among urban adolescents can be conceptualized as a multidimensional social practice that encompasses various interconnected functions beyond leisure and recreation. As demonstrated throughout this study, hanging out serves as a site of social interaction, emotional regulation, lifestyle expression, and identity construction.

These dimensions are mutually constitutive and acquire meaning through ongoing processes of interaction and interpretation, reflecting the core assumptions of Symbolic Interactionism (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969). Accordingly, hanging out represents an important arena through which adolescents navigate social life and construct meanings within contemporary urban contexts.

Through the interactions that occur during hanging out, adolescents construct shared meanings that are continuously negotiated within their social relationships. At the same time, this activity provides a space for managing emotional experiences, expressing lifestyle

preferences, and presenting oneself within a broader social context. The interplay between physical and digital spaces further reinforces that the meaning of hanging out is not singular but continuously evolving in response to interactional dynamics and social contexts.

Thus, hanging out can be understood as an arena in which social meanings are produced, negotiated, and reproduced in the everyday lives of urban youth. This perspective highlights that seemingly simple everyday practices embody complex social dynamics that reflect broader transformations in how individuals interact, construct identity, and make sense of their experiences in contemporary society.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that hanging out among urban adolescents cannot be understood merely as a recreational activity, but rather as a multidimensional social practice. It serves as a space in which adolescents build social relationships, regulate emotions, express lifestyles, and produce and represent their identities through both face-to-face interaction and digital media. The meaning of this activity is not fixed but continuously constructed through processes of interaction and interpretation in everyday life. Accordingly, hanging out can be understood as a social arena that integrates dimensions of interaction, symbolic consumption, and identity performance within contemporary urban society.

By applying a Symbolic Interactionist perspective, this study contributes to the sociology of youth and everyday life by demonstrating how ordinary leisure practices function as meaningful processes of identity construction, social interaction, and symbolic expression in an increasingly digitalized urban context. These findings also highlight the importance of recognizing adolescents leisure spaces as significant environments for social development, emotional well-being, and identity formation.

Based on these findings, this study

recommends broader attention to adolescents' everyday practices as part of more complex social dynamics, both among researchers, educators, and policymakers. Approaching hanging out not merely as a form of consumptive behavior, but as a space for meaning-making and social relationship formation, can provide a more comprehensive understanding of youth life.

However, this study has several limitations, particularly the limited number of informants and its focus on a single research site, which may not fully capture the diversity of youth experiences across broader urban contexts. Therefore, future research is encouraged to expand the scope of study locations, include more diverse participant backgrounds, and integrate approaches that more deeply capture the interplay between offline and online dynamics.

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