




Exploring the Indicators of Self-Silencing in Adolescent Romantic Relationships

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E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In Introduction, paragraph 4, the sentence "Among adolescent girls, self-silencing has been linked to experiences of sexual dating violence..." is highly important but underdeveloped. Providing a specific citation and briefly explaining the causal mechanism or mediating variables would strengthen the claim.

The claim in Introduction, paragraph 5—"In some family systems, particularly those marked by parentification..."—introduces parentification without defining it. Adding a brief definition or example would aid readers unfamiliar with this term.

In Data Analysis, the description of open, axial, and selective coding is sound, but lacks an example. Including an excerpt or code tree sample could help illustrate how raw data transitioned to subcategories.

The subtheme "Unequal Decision-Making" in Findings – Power Imbalance and Control could be enhanced by providing a more nuanced explanation of whether this was perceived as harmful or normalized by participants.

In Findings – Relational Expectations and Social Norms, the quote "Everyone online looks so happy in their relationships..." opens an important discussion on digital influences. A more critical discussion of performative digital behavior and FOMO could enrich the analysis.

The sentence in Discussion, paragraph 4—"Particularly among female participants, silence was portrayed as a sign of devotion..."—could benefit from integration with sociolinguistic theories of gendered speech patterns (e.g., Tannen's work).

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The final paragraph of the Introduction begins with a strong rationale for the study but ends abruptly. The sentence “This study addresses that gap...” could be expanded into a more explicit research aim or guiding question.

In Methods – Study Design, the phrase “relevance and diversity in age, gender, and relationship background” is vague. Clarify what criteria were used for diversity—e.g., were participants from single-parent homes, varying cultural groups, or different relationship lengths?

In Data Collection, consider specifying how many interviews were conducted per day or week, and whether there was any interviewer-participant gender matching, which may influence responses on emotionally sensitive topics.

In Findings, the demographic paragraph would be strengthened by reporting the gender breakdown with percentages and including socioeconomic status indicators beyond “different socioeconomic backgrounds.”

In Findings – Emotional Inhibition, the subcategory “Low Emotional Literacy” is important. However, the quote “I didn’t really know what I was feeling...” should be contextualized with the participant’s gender and age to deepen interpretive richness.

In Findings – Power Imbalance and Control, the subtheme “Emotional Dependency” is compelling. Yet the phrase “felt like if I told him the truth, he might leave...” would benefit from linking this dependency to attachment theory or emotional regulation models.

The subcategory “Cultural and Social Values” in the Findings is significant but broad. Including one or two culturally specific examples from Bulgaria (or the specific ethnic communities represented) would improve cultural specificity.

In the Discussion, paragraph 1, the sentence “This supports earlier findings...” is useful but overly general. Specify which elements of the current study extend or contrast previous findings (e.g., new subthemes, participant narratives).

In Discussion, paragraph 2, consider distinguishing more clearly between “dominant partner behavior” and “coercive communication,” as these are conceptually overlapping but distinct constructs.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.