

TEENAGE RELATIONSHIPS: A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

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Do you know what role do law and the justice system play in teenage relationships?

ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a time of exploration, growth and development. During this time, teenagers learn a lot. They begin to understand their lives, careers, responsibilities, social relationships, etc. In general, adolescents acquire a wide range of skills and knowledge that prepare them for adulthood and help them to navigate the world around them. Despite all these points, one thing that these teenagers explore the most is romantic relationships. Teenagers often focus on romantic relationships because this is the time when they explore their personalities and figure out who they are as individuals. Adolescent relationships can be complex and emotional, often characterized by strong feelings and a desire for intimacy. However, they can also be marked by insecurity, jealousy, and confusion. There is nothing wrong with being in a relationship at this age, but it is important to know that the relationship should be safe and healthy unless it could have multiple repercussions. On the positive side, healthy relationships can provide emotional support, help teens develop social skills, and promote a sense of identity and self-worth. On the other hand, unhealthy relationships can lead to depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Such negative relationships can lead to physical or mental abuse, sexual acts, consent, and other criminal activities. And this is the time when the law comes between these relationships. Laws and the judicial system are very important for this type of relationship. Adolescents involved in such romantic relationships are afforded several rights and remedies. The judicial system protects the victim by filing criminal charges and issuing restraining orders against the offender. There are several laws that are available to protect and help teenagers. Teenagers also need to follow some laws for safe and healthy relationships. So, in this article, the main subject of discussion is the name itself, which from a legal point of view is an adolescent relationship. Along with this discussion, this article also looks at the various characteristics and issues associated with adolescent relationships. The article also talks about the role of the judiciary. Another important area that this article sheds light on is the mindset of teenagers. Finally,

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*there is a positive approach to adolescents and the law, which is reinforced by the conclusion.*¹²

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INTRODUCTION

The experience of falling in love is undoubtedly a deep emotional encounter, regardless of age. However, during adolescence, when everything seems more meaningful and every moment is a new experience, the ups and downs can become even more intense. Legally, teenage relationships can be complex and even risky. Depending on the age of the parties involved and the nature of their relationship, their actions may have legal consequences. Teenage relationships can be a natural and important part of growing up, and it's important to be aware of the legal aspects and responsibilities that come with them. Teenage relationships can have legal implications that should be taken seriously. It is important for teenagers to understand the laws of their jurisdiction and make informed decisions about their relationships. In adolescent relationships, it is important that both parties strictly follow the rules that are regulated by law because at that age they don't have the proper knowledge of rules and responsibilities. Adolescents should be aware of the laws and protections in place to prevent exploitation and abuse and should enter into relationships that are respectful, healthy and relaxed.³

Adolescent relationships can vary in nature depending on a number of factors such as the age of the individuals involved, their cultural background, and their individual characteristics and experiences. When an adolescent comes into a relationship, then a plethora of feelings and emotions come along with it. They start experiencing multiple emotions at the same time. They get excited, they start feeling nervous, sometimes they become cheerful and sometimes they become insecure about their relationship. And experiencing multiple emotions at the same time is a common experience for teenagers, as they navigate the complex social and emotional landscape of adolescence. This can be a confusing and overwhelming experience, as different emotions can be conflicting or contradictory. From a legal point of view, experiencing multiple emotions at the same time is not a crime or an offense in and of itself. Emotions are a natural and normal part of the human experience, and experiencing different

¹<https://raisingchildren.net.au/pre-teens/communicating-relationships/romantic-relationships/teen-relationships>

²<https://study.uq.edu.au/stories/what-is-healthy-teenage-relationship>

³<https://www.megaessays.com/viewpaper/67311.html>

emotions simultaneously is a common occurrence. However, if a teenager's emotions lead him or her to engage in behavior that violates the law, such as committing a crime or engaging in risky behavior, the person may face legal consequences. It's also worth noting that some emotional states, such as depression or anxiety, can impact a teenager's decision-making abilities and lead them to engage in behaviors that are not in their best interest. Overall, experiencing multiple emotions at the same time is not a legal issue, but the actions that result from those emotions may have legal consequences.⁴⁵

LEGAL ASPECTS

Teenage relationships can be characterized by intensity, as teenagers often experience their emotions in a more intense way than adults do, leading to strong feelings of love and passion. Additionally, teenagers are still figuring out who they are and what they want in life, and relationships can be a way for them to explore and experiment with different aspects of their personality. However, this exploration can also lead to drama and conflict, as teenagers are prone to misunderstandings and miscommunications due to their inexperience in relationships. Furthermore, peer pressure can also impact teenage relationships, as teenagers are often influenced by their peers and may feel pressure to conform to certain norms or behaviors.

All these characteristics and attributes are involved in a teenage relationship, but when it is from the legal perspective, the aspects involved depend upon several factors. These legal characteristics depend upon multiple bases including:

- Consent: In any relationship, consent is crucial. Both individuals must consent to engage in any sexual activity or romantic relationship. If one person is underage or unable to give informed consent, it can lead to legal consequences for the other person.
- Power dynamics: Relationships between teenagers can have power imbalances, such as one person being older, more experienced, or more socially dominant. If the power dynamic is significant, it can lead to concerns about manipulation or coercion, which can be illegal.
- Age of the individuals: In most countries, there are legal age limits for individuals to engage in sexual activities or have a romantic relationship. For example, the age of

⁴<https://www.weekendnotes.com/teenage-relationship/>

⁵<https://www.megaessays.com/viewpaper/67311.html>

consent in India is 18 years old. This means that any sexual activity with a person under the age of 18 is considered a criminal offense, regardless of whether or not the activity was consensual. It is important to note that even if a person gives their consent to engage in sexual activity if they are under the age of 18, the law considers them incapable of giving valid consent. Therefore, any sexual activity with a minor is illegal and punishable by law.

- Parental involvement: Depending on the age of the individuals involved, parental involvement may be required or recommended. For example, in some jurisdictions, a teenager under the age of 18 may need parental consent to engage in certain activities, such as getting married or obtaining certain medical procedures.
- Social norms and values: Social norms and values can also play a role in shaping teenage relationships. For example, certain cultural or religious beliefs may influence what is considered appropriate or acceptable behavior in a relationship.⁶⁷

Overall, the legal characteristics of teenage relationships depend on a variety of factors, and it's important to consider the specific laws and regulations in a particular jurisdiction.

Thus, it can be determined that the legal characteristics which are involved in adolescent relationships are highly dependable on various factors. But now the point arises what are those features that are being discussed here. There are many attributes that are a part of these relationships. Some of them are:

- ❖ Sexting: The exchange of sexually explicit messages, photos, or videos between minors can also result in legal consequences, such as charges of distributing child pornography or the creation and distribution of sexually explicit images of minors.
- ❖ Romeo and Juliet Laws: Some states have enacted Romeo and Juliet laws, which are designed to provide legal protections to teenage couples who engage in consensual sexual activity when one or both partners are below the age of consent. These laws typically provide exemptions from statutory rape charges for couples who are close in age.
- ❖ Domestic violence: If the relationship becomes violent or abusive, either party can seek legal protection through a restraining order or other legal means.

⁶<https://www.iowalegalaid.org/resource/teens-rights-in-your-dating-relationship>

⁷<https://youthfirstinc.org/teen-dating-the-dos-and-donts/>

- ❖ Age of consent: The age of consent is the age at which a person is considered legally capable of consenting to sexual activity. In many jurisdictions, the age of consent is 18, although it can be lower in some places. If one or both parties are below the age of consent, sexual activity between them may be considered statutory rape or other similar offenses.
- ❖ Child pornography: If either party in the relationship shares or possesses sexually explicit images of a minor (under the age of 18), they may be guilty of child pornography-related offenses.
- ❖ Parental Consent: In some situations, minors may need to obtain the consent of their parents or legal guardians before engaging in certain activities, such as getting married or obtaining medical treatment.
- ❖ Protection orders: In cases where a teenage relationship becomes abusive or violent, either partner may seek a protection order from the court. This order may prohibit one partner from contacting or approaching the other and may be enforced by law enforcement.⁸⁹¹⁰

It's important to note that the specifics of these legal features can vary widely depending on the jurisdiction and the circumstances of the relationship. It is essential for teenagers and their parents to understand the legal features of teenage relationships in their jurisdiction, and to seek legal advice if they have any questions or concerns.

MENTALITY AND MINDSET OF ADOLESCENT INDIVIDUALS

Adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood, characterized by significant changes in the brain, body, and social environment. The mentality of teenagers can be shaped by various factors such as genetics, hormones, upbringing, culture, peers, and experiences. It is often marked by an increased sense of independence, self-awareness, identity formation, exploration, risk-taking, and peer influence. The mentality of teenagers can have a significant impact on their well-being, relationships, academic performance, and future prospects.

Teenagers are at an age where they are going through significant changes in their lives, both physically and emotionally. At this age, they are also experiencing new feelings and

⁸<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/ajayamitabhsumanspeaks/age-of-consent-and-romeo-juliet-clause-32417/>

⁹<https://www.drishtias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/age-of-consent-for-adolescents>

¹⁰<https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-4345-teenagers-and-sexual-abuse.html>

emotions, including a strong desire for intimacy and connection with others. For most of them, romantic relationships can be a way to explore and navigate their emotions and social experiences during a time of significant change and growth. Romantic relationships provide an opportunity for teenagers to explore these new feelings and emotions in a safe and supportive environment. These relationships can help teenagers develop social and emotional skills, such as communication, empathy, and problem-solving, that are important for future relationships and overall well-being. Moreover, teenagers are often seeking validation and acceptance from their peers and romantic relationships can be a way to gain social status and recognition. In addition, media and popular culture often portray romantic relationships as glamorous and exciting, which can contribute to the appeal of being in a romantic relationship.

They may feel deeply connected to their partner and enjoy spending time together, talking, and expressing affection. However, it's important to recognize that teenage relationships can also come with challenges and potential risks. Teenagers may struggle with communication, jealousy, and insecurities. They may feel pressure to conform to societal expectations about what a relationship should look like, leading to feelings of confusion or dissatisfaction.

There is a number of reasons why teenagers are attracted to a romantic relationship. Their mentality at this age starts working in such a way that they become centrally fascinated with a romantic relationship. Here are some of the common perspectives and attitudes that some teenagers may have toward romantic relationships:

- Many teenagers may be interested in exploring romantic relationships and may place a high value on finding a partner who they connect with emotionally and physically.
- Some of them may see romantic relationships as a way to gain validation or social status and may prioritize finding a partner who is popular or attractive.
- They may also have varying opinions on the importance of physical intimacy in a romantic relationship, with some seeing it as an essential aspect while others may prioritize emotional intimacy.
- Some teenagers may feel pressure from peers or societal expectations to be in a romantic relationship, while others may prefer to focus on their personal goals and development before pursuing a relationship.

- They may also have different expectations and standards for what they want in a romantic partner, with some valuing loyalty, trust, and communication, while others may prioritize shared interests and physical attraction.¹¹¹²¹³

It's important to keep in mind that these are just generalizations, and individual adolescents may have vastly different thoughts and beliefs about romantic relationships.

In this regard, the question arises: does the mentality of adolescents affect the law and jurisdiction?

The simple answer to the mentioned question is YES. The influence of adolescent thinking on the law and the judicial system, of course, is there. The mentality of teenagers can have a significant impact on the laws surrounding romantic relationships. The law establishes a minimum age for sexual activity or romantic relationships in order to protect minors from harm and exploitation. If adolescents do not fully understand the meaning and consequences of their actions, they may engage in acts that violate these laws, such as engaging in sexual relations before they are legally allowed to do so. This can lead to criminal charges and criminal convictions, which can have long-term implications for their future prospects. In addition, the mentality of adolescents can also influence how laws are enforced in cases of sexual assault or other forms of violence in romantic relationships. Some teens may be slow to report such incidents or may not fully understand what constitutes consent, which can result in perpetrators escaping justice and victims not getting the support they need. Also, teenagers may have different expectations and goals when it comes to romantic relationships. Some teens may view relationships as a way to explore their emotions and learn about themselves, while others may be looking for a more serious commitment. It is important for teenagers to communicate openly and honestly with their partners and to enforce their boundaries and rights. It is therefore essential for education and awareness-raising efforts to be in place to help teenagers understand their rights and responsibilities within romantic relationships and to ensure that laws are enforced fairly and effectively to protect them from harm.¹⁴¹⁵

¹¹<https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/love/is-teen-love-real-can-it-last/>

¹²<https://www.theartofsimple.net/teenmindset/>

¹³<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01772/full>

¹⁴<https://www.smithdickeydempster.com/blog/2018/10/7-reasons-teenagers-get-in-legal-trouble/>

¹⁵<https://raisingchildren.net.au/teens/behaviour/behaviour-questions-issues/legal-age-teenagers-and-the-law>

THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF TEEN LOVE

Teen love can be a wonderful experience, but it can also come with its own set of challenges. Adolescents often encounter intricate and demanding circumstances when it comes to falling in love, as they navigate the process of establishing romantic connections while also contending with various societal and developmental pressures. One of the main challenges in teen love is the issue of emotional intensity, where young people may feel overwhelmed by their feelings and struggle to manage them effectively. Additionally, teens may struggle with issues of trust, jealousy, and communication, as they learn how to navigate the complexities of romantic relationships. Other challenges may include issues of peer pressure, social expectations, and the need to establish their own sense of identity while also trying to form a meaningful connection with another person. Ultimately, navigating the challenges of teen love requires a combination of self-awareness, emotional regulation, communication skills, and supportive relationships with trusted adults.

In addition to these concerns, there are several predicaments from a legal standpoint. Most of the legal challenges involved in teen love are related to the age of parties, sexting, consent, etc. But there are several legal challenges that can arise in teen love beyond the typical issues of age of consent and sexting. Here are some other factors to consider:

- **Emancipation:** If one or both of the teens are emancipated minors, meaning they have legally been granted the rights and responsibilities of an adult, they may face different legal consequences than other minors.
- **Custody and guardianship:** If one or both of the teens are living with a legal guardian or custodian, the guardian may have the legal authority to limit or control the relationship.
- **Domestic violence:** If the relationship becomes physically or emotionally abusive, the law can intervene to protect the victim.
- **Pregnancy:** If a teen becomes pregnant, they may face legal issues related to parental consent for medical treatment, custody, and child support.
- **Child pornography:** Even if both teens consent to exchange explicit images or videos, possession and distribution of such material can lead to criminal charges.
- **Stalking and harassment:** If one teen becomes overly possessive or threatening towards the other, they may face charges of stalking or harassment.

- Civil liability: If the relationship ends badly, one or both teens may sue for emotional distress, breach of contract (if they made promises to each other), or other civil claims.
- Cyberbullying: Social media and digital communication have created new challenges for teen relationships. Cyberbullying and online harassment can occur, and social media can be used to spread rumors and cause emotional harm.¹⁶¹⁷¹⁸¹⁹

In a summarised way, it can be determined that while age of consent and sexting are important legal considerations in teen love, it is also important to be aware of the potential for emotional abuse, sexual assault, and digital dangers. Teens should educate themselves about these issues and seek help if they feel they are in an unhealthy relationship.

RELEVANCE OF JUDICIARY

The role of the judiciary in teen relationships varies depending on the specific circumstances and legal issues involved. Generally speaking, the judiciary is responsible for interpreting and enforcing laws related to relationships, including those involving teens. In cases where a teen is being abused or harassed by a partner, the judiciary may play a role in issuing restraining orders or other protective measures. In cases of teen dating violence or sexual assault, the judiciary may be involved in prosecuting the offender and ensuring that justice is served.

Additionally, the judiciary may play a role in deciding legal issues related to teen relationships, such as custody disputes involving teen parents or cases involving statutory rape or the age of consent laws. Ultimately, the judiciary's role in teen relationships is to uphold the law and protect the rights and safety of all individuals involved, particularly vulnerable teens who may be at risk of harm.

Jurisdiction relevance can be determined using the following reasons and steps:

- Education: By providing comprehensive education to teenagers on healthy relationships, consent, safe sex practices, and the risks associated with unhealthy relationships, such as domestic violence, sexually transmitted infections, and unintended pregnancies.

¹⁶<https://parsi-times.com/2018/08/teens-and-toxic-relationships/>

¹⁷<https://studymoose.com/teenage-love-why-it-is-controversial-essay>

¹⁸<https://blog.ipleaders.in/teen-dating-violence-india/>

¹⁹<https://ritusingal.com/8-common-problems-in-teenagers%27-relationship-with-their-parents>

- Parental involvement: By encouraging parental involvement and communication about their children's relationships. Parents can be provided with resources and support to have open and honest conversations with their children about relationships.
- Age of consent laws: Through establishing clear and consistent age of consent laws that protect minors from exploitation and abuse by adults. These laws can also prevent teenagers from engaging in harmful relationships with significant age gaps.
- Support services: The jurisdiction can also provide accessible support services to teenagers who are experiencing relationship issues, such as counseling, therapy, and legal advice.
- Prevention programs: By developing and implementing prevention programs that address the root causes of unhealthy relationships, such as gender inequality, social norms, and cultural factors that perpetuate violence.
- Counseling: Jurisdictions can also offer counseling services to teenagers who are in relationships or who have experienced relationship problems. Counseling can help them develop healthy relationship skills and address any underlying issues that may be affecting their relationships.
- Support groups: Another option is to establish support groups for teenagers who are experiencing relationship problems. These groups can provide a safe and supportive environment where they can discuss their experiences and receive advice and guidance from peers and professionals.
- Outreach: Jurisdictions can also work with schools, community centers, and other organizations to raise awareness about healthy relationships and provide information and resources to teenagers.
- Enforcement: Finally, it's important to enforce laws that protect teenagers from abuse or exploitation in relationships. This can include taking action against those who engage in abusive or illegal behavior, as well as providing legal and other support to victims of abuse.²⁰²¹²²

Thus, it can be concluded that the role of the judiciary system in teenage relationships can vary depending on the specific circumstances involved. In cases where a teenager is involved in an abusive or unhealthy relationship, the judiciary system can play a crucial role in

²⁰<https://www.publichealthpost.org/research/teen-dating-violence-state-laws-on-school-prevention-and-response/>

²¹<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35962581/>

²²<https://www.aals.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Weisberg-paper.pdf>

providing protection and legal recourse. This may involve obtaining restraining orders, filing charges against an abusive partner, or providing access to counseling and support services. On the other hand, the judiciary system may also be involved in cases where teenage relationships involve criminal activity, such as statutory rape or sexual assault. In these situations, the system can help to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions and ensure that justice is served. Ultimately, the role of the judiciary system in teenage relationships is to provide a fair and impartial framework for resolving disputes and protecting the safety and well-being of all individuals involved.

MAPPING THE WAY FORWARD: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The teenage years are a time of significant growth and change, and relationships during this period can play a crucial role in shaping an individual's future. Here are some effective approaches that can help teenagers navigate their relationships:

- Encourage open and honest communication: Teenagers should feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings to their partners. Encouraging open communication can help build trust and strengthen the relationship.
- Promote mutual respect: It is essential to teach teenagers about the importance of mutual respect in a relationship. They should respect each other's boundaries, opinions, and feelings.
- Teach healthy conflict resolution: Conflicts are a part of every relationship, but it's essential to teach teenagers how to resolve them in a healthy and respectful manner. This includes active listening, empathy, compromise, and finding common ground.
- Set boundaries: It's crucial for teenagers to set boundaries in their relationships and communicate them clearly to their partners. This can help prevent misunderstandings and ensure that both individuals feel safe and respected.
- Encourage independence: Teenagers should be encouraged to maintain their independence and pursue their own interests outside of the relationship. This can help build self-esteem and prevent codependency.
- Provide guidance and support: Parents, teachers, or trusted adults can provide guidance and support to teenagers as they navigate their relationships. This includes

discussing healthy relationships, providing resources, and being available to listen and offer advice when needed.²³²⁴²⁵

The following is my personal input on teenage relationships, aimed at providing a deeper comprehension of the topic.

Here are some of the suggestions:

- ❖ **Communication is the key:** Open and honest communication is essential for any relationship. Make sure you are able to express your feelings and opinions to your partner, and that you are also willing to listen to their perspective. If something doesn't feel right or if you're uncomfortable with something your partner is doing, speak up and communicate your concerns.
- ❖ **Respect each other:** Respect is an important aspect of any relationship. Treat your partner with kindness and consideration, and make sure they do the same for you. Never engage in any behavior that is coercive or non-consensual, and always obtain explicit consent before engaging in sexual activity.
- ❖ **Age of consent laws:** Be aware of the age of consent laws in your state or country, as they can vary. Generally, the age of consent is 18 in most places, which means that engaging in sexual activity with someone under 18, even with their consent, can result in criminal charges.
- ❖ **Support and Trust:** To foster a healthy relationship, it is recommended to be mutually supportive of one another during both favorable and challenging times. Encouraging each other's aspirations and objectives is crucial, and it is advisable to offer a receptive ear or aid whenever necessary. Trust is a critical element in any strong relationship, and it is essential to maintain honesty and transparency. Keeping secrets is discouraged as it can lead to a breach of trust, and if trust is compromised, the parties involved should work together to restore it to its previous level.
- ❖ **Don't lose sight of your individuality:** While building a strong bond with a partner is crucial, it is equally important to maintain individuality. Pursuing personal interests and hobbies is encouraged, and individuals are advised not to compromise their identity in any way. Maintaining one's individuality can also help avoid potential legal issues that may arise when a person feels that their individual rights or interests have

²³<https://www.parentcircle.com/teen-love-how-to-deal-with-it/article>

²⁴<https://raisingchildren.net.au/pre-teens/communicating-relationships/romantic-relationships/teen-relationships>

²⁵<https://youth.gov/youth-topics/teen-dating-violence/legal-responses>

been overlooked or violated in a relationship. Therefore, it is recommended that individuals continue to assert their individuality within the confines of a relationship to ensure that their legal rights are protected.

- ❖ Online privacy: Be mindful of the information you share online, including with your partner. Once you share something online, it can be difficult to remove it completely, and it can potentially harm your reputation in the future.
- ❖ Be Patient: It is important to recognize that relationships require effort, and they may encounter obstacles along the way. It is advisable to maintain patience with one another and to work together to overcome any challenges that arise. From a legal perspective, patience can be helpful in avoiding disputes or legal issues that may arise due to misunderstandings or disagreements between partners. Working through challenges together can help build trust and strengthen the relationship, which can have a positive impact on any legal implications that may arise as a result of the relationship.
- ❖ Love and Respect yourself: It is essential to recognize and value one's self-worth and to maintain a healthy sense of self-love and self-respect in any relationship. Individuals are advised not to settle for anything less than a healthy and fulfilling relationship. From a legal perspective, valuing oneself is important in protecting one's legal rights in a relationship. It is essential to maintain boundaries and assert one's rights in a relationship, as neglecting to do so may lead to potential legal issues, such as abuse or neglect. Therefore, individuals should prioritize self-love and respect in a relationship, and not compromise on their values or standards.²⁶²⁷

CONCLUSION

As shown throughout the article, it can be concluded that adolescent relationships can be a source of happiness, growth, and learning for adolescents. They provide a platform for teenagers to explore themselves and others, develop communication skills and experience different emotions. When we talk about this topic from a legal perspective, we can say that adolescent relationships can be complex and require thoughtful consideration by parents, educators, legislators, and society at large. While teenagers have the right to form relationships, the law requires certain restrictions to protect them from exploitation and abuse. It is important to recognize that adolescents are capable of healthy and consensual

²⁶<https://www.verywellfamily.com/five-truths-teens-and-dating-2611146>

²⁷<https://drnehamehta.com/teenage-relationship-advice-teen-friendship/>

romantic relationships. It is critical to ensure that adolescents are armed with the knowledge and tools they need to build healthy relationships, communicate effectively and set healthy boundaries. Open and honest communication between adolescents and their parents, as well as teaching healthy relationships and consent, can go a long way in encouraging safe and respectful behavior. In doing so, we can help teens build strong and positive relationships that will serve them well in their future lives.²⁸²⁹



²⁸<https://www.studymode.com/subjects/conclusion-of-teen-dating-page1.html>

²⁹<https://www.mentalhelp.net/adolescent-development/summary-and-conclusion/>