Pathways to Empowerment: The Role of Adjustment in Adolescent Psychological Health

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ABSTRACT

An important part of adolescence's agency comes from the adjustment phase. While going through this time of profound personal and social change, adolescents learn to adapt by acquiring the knowledge, self-awareness, and resiliency that will serve them well. Adolescents gain self-awareness, coping skills, and the ability to regulate their emotions during the process of adjustment. They are able to keep their mental health in check, deal with their emotions in healthy ways, and manage stress because to this empowerment. Adolescents are given the power to find their own unique set of strengths, values, and interests. With this power, they can form their identity and make decisions that reflect who they really are. They can learn to set boundaries, communicate effectively, and form supportive relationships with others. With this power, they can also achieve their goals, make informed decisions, and take action towards their dreams. Teens gain agency during the adjustment process because it promotes emotional health, self-awareness, goal attainment, autonomy, resilience, and adaptability. In doing so, it prepares kids for the challenges of adolescence and paves the way for their own development, happiness, and agency as adults.

Keywords: Adjustment, Psychological Empowerment, Adolescents, Coping Skills, Decision making.

1. Introduction

Human rights, gender, education, health, protection, psychology, economics, and a host of other fields all share a multi-faceted understanding of empowerment. People are able to make a difference in their own lives when they are empowered because they have the information, skills, and self-assurance to do so. According to Zimmerman (1995), there are three distinct facets of psychological empowerment: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and behavioural. One example of intrapersonal empowerment is believing in one's own talents to make a difference (self-esteem) and in one's ability to work with others to achieve a common objective (leadership efficacy and civic efficacy), according to Messman, E. et. al. (2022) [1]. Many personal, social, developmental, and cultural characteristics define adolescents. These characteristics include, but are not limited to, sex, gender, developmental stage, race and ethnicity, location, ability or disability, socioeconomic position, and other aspects of a person's life. Puberty (the time when a person's sexuality and preferences become more apparent) and societal and gendered preconceptions shape how adolescents see and engage with the environment. They leave the safety of their family behind to build strong friendships, do new things, and find their place in the world. The assistance they get, the resources they are able to access, the social norms that govern their communities, and the degree to which they may influence choices that impact them are all factors that determine their chances [2]. A person's self-perception shifts from one of complete worthlessness to one of confidence and competence as a contributing member of society and a political actor during the "Empowerment" process, an interactive interaction between the person and his surroundings. A critical political awareness, the ability to collaborate, the resilience to deal with setbacks, and the will to fight for environmental change are the hallmarks of the qualities that emerge from this process (Keiffer, 1984) [3]. A sense of belonging increases the likelihood that individuals will support and contribute to the group's objectives. The capacity of the group to meet individual needs and carry out key duties for the individual is, on the other hand, dependent on the sense of group togetherness. At the individual level, there is evidence that suggests that close relationships with supportive people can help young adults navigate adulthood more confidently. This confidence is based on the idea that they are more equipped to handle the difficulties they face, which in turn predicts better mental health outcomes [4]. As a result, the overarching goal of this research paper is to provide a conceptual framework for understanding how adjustment assistance could foster psychological empowerment in adolescents.

1.2. The Need and Significance of the Study

Physical, psychological, and social changes abound during adolescence, making it an important developmental stage. Adjustments are typically necessary to successfully navigate this period of transition from infancy to adulthood. Mood swings, increased emotional intensity, and a growing need for autonomy are all hallmarks of adolescence. As part of the adjustment process, it is important to learn to cope with stress, become more resilient, and reach out for emotional support from people you trust or trained specialists. When people are teenagers, they are still developing their sense of self, which includes

their interests, values, and worldview. Making these changes calls for introspection, investigating one's many guises, and ultimately, settling on a consistent sense of who one is. Their interactions with adults, including parents and teachers, undergo transformations. The process of coming into one's own and learning to live independently of one's parents also takes place throughout adolescence (Erikson, 1968). As a natural part of growing up, figuring out "Who am I?" and making sense of one's experiences is what's known as "identity formation" (Erikson, 1968). (From Großevant and Von Korff, 2011) [5]. To sum up, being able to make it through adolescence unscathed calls for adaptability, self-awareness, the support of reliable people, and the ability to change and grow with the times. Adolescents develop resilience as they learn to adapt to difficulties and failures. In the end, they get the courage to tackle future challenges head-on because they learn to persevere through setbacks, solve problems creatively, and adapt to novel circumstances.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

The present study is entitled as "**Pathways to Empowerment: The Role of Adjustment in Adolescent Psychological Health**."

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1. To determine how adolescent empowerment may be advanced via the process of adjustment by creating self-awareness.

2. To learn how crucial adjustment assistance is for equipping adolescents with coping mechanisms.

3. To find out how adjustment plays a part in empowering adolescents via the implementation of future directed behaviours.

4. To know how the change facilitates self-discovery and, by extension, adolescent agency.

2. Review of Related Literature

The review of related literature of the study were given below:

- **Messman, E., Scott, B., Smith-Darden, J., Cortina, K., Thulin, E., Zimmerman, M., & Kernsmith, P. (2022).** Psychological empowerment as a route for positive adjustment during adolescence. Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 83, 101458. The current study considers reciprocal associations between psychological empowerment and adolescents' prosocial behavior, responsible decision making, social support giving, and delinquent behavior across the school year (n = 837 8th grade youth; 50.5% female). Results from cross-lagged analyses support Zimmerman's (2000) model of empowerment.

- **Mertens, E. C., Deković, M., Van Londen, M., & Reitz, E. (2022).** Parallel changes in positive youth development and self-awareness: The role of emotional self-regulation, self-esteem, and self-reflection. *Prevention Science*, *23*(4), 502-512. These findings suggest that interventions aiming to stimulate positive youth development might be optimized by also focusing on youth's self-awareness, though more knowledge about how self-awareness can be stimulated best is needed.

- **Staerklé, C. Mouna Bakouri Christian Staerklé. (2015).** The study investigates psychological empowerment are located at the intergroup level of analysis and based on the relevance of a particular categorical identity, this study suggests an understanding of the role of in-groups in terms of the sense of connectedness they provide and the resulting efficacy beliefs. The study thereby focuses on the less explored so level of interactions in individuals' direct environment.

- **Cheng, C., Lau, H. P. B., & Chan, M. P. S. (2014).** Coping flexibility and psychological adjustment to stressful life changes: a meta-analytic review. Psychological bulletin, 140(6), 1582. The analysis covers all available studies conducted between 1978 and 2013 that empirically tested the relationship between coping flexibility and psychological adjustment. The results of a random-effects model revealed a small to moderate overall mean effect size (r = .23, 95% CI [.19, .28], 80% CRI [–.02, .49], k = 329, N = 58,946). More important, the magnitude of the positive link between coping flexibility and psychological adjustment varied with the conceptualization of such flexibility.

2.1. Research Gap

Previous studies have addressed on the empowerment and positive adjustment process but it has not outlined how the adjustment process build empowerment within adolescence, it has not outlined the detailing and processing part to manage stress, handle emotions effectively, and maintain their mental well-being for empowering the adolescence. It has not addressed on the how empowerment allows adolescents to discover their strengths, values, and interests, enabling them to shape their identity and make choices that align with their authentic selves, enables them to develop the skills necessary for goal achievement, make informed decisions, and mount future-directed actions that align with their aspirations, allows adolescents to assert their individuality, make choices that align with their values and goals, and to take ownership of their lives and enables them to communicate effectively, establish boundaries, and foster supportive connections with others. Thus researcher invested interested on developing the exploratory approach which was entitled as "**Pathways to Empowerment: The Role of Adjustment in Adolescent Psychological Health**."

3. Methodology of the Study

The study is solely qualitative nature where exploratory approach was adopted by the investigator in developing the theory.

4. Analysis and Interpretation

The study analysed with the help of interpretation of the data in the following section.

4.1. Pertaining to objective 1

O₁: To determine how adolescent empowerment may be advanced via the process of adjustment by creating self-awareness.

Self-awareness is the ability to see ourselves clearly (Eurich 2017), that is, to become the object of our own attention. . The content of self-awareness has internal and external components. Internal self-awareness includes our affect, beliefs, cognitions, interests, goals, personality, values, and meaningful life patterns. External self-awareness includes our perceptions of our physical appearance and our behavior. The process of self-awareness includes thinking about ourselves such that we become aware of our characteristics, sustain this awareness, and use it as we behave and interact with others. These can determine an individual's readiness to engage in interventions that encourage self-reflection and mindfulness [6]. Self-awareness brings many psychological benefits, including increased self-regulation, more attention to others' needs (pro-sociality), and less stress and anxiety (Donald et al. 2019, Hali et al. 2021, Hülsheger et al. 2021, and Rasheed et al. 2019). Self-awareness affects behaviors and outcomes through internal states (e.g., self-confidence, self-identity) and accuracy of how we believe others view us and how we perceive others. Individuals who are low in self-awareness are likely to exhibit self-protection mechanisms such as denial, withdrawal, self-aggrandizement, and fear of failure (Wohlers & London 1989). As people become more self-aware, they become more resilient and better at adaptive performance—the ability to analyze uncertain, stressful situations; identify possible solutions; improvise; and maintain composure (Park & Park 2019) [6].

Self-awareness allows individuals to recognize and understand their emotions more effectively. By being aware of their emotional states, individuals can identify triggers, patterns, and underlying causes of their emotions. This awareness enables them to regulate their emotions, cope with stress, and manage conflicts more effectively. It facilitates self-reflection, which involves examining one's thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors. Through self-reflection, individuals can gain insights into their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for growth. This process allows for self-evaluation, enabling individuals to make adjustments and improvements in their psychological well-being and overall functioning [7]. This awareness enhances their ability to make conscious and informed decisions that align with their values and long-term goals. It reduces impulsive behavior and promotes thoughtful decision-making based on a deeper understanding of oneself [8]. When individuals have a strong sense of self-awareness, they are more likely to recognize and appreciate the differences and perspectives of others. This promotes better interpersonal relationships, effective communication, and empathy towards others' experiences and emotions.

4.2. Pertaining to objective 2

O₂: To learn how crucial adjustment assistance is for equipping adolescents with coping mechanisms.

Coping refers to conscious and unconscious thoughts or actions that allow a person to deal with a stressful situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Each individual has a repertoire of strategies they deploy according to their interpretation of stressful situations. Thus, reaching a fuller understanding of the coping strategies of younger adolescents is a relevant objective, with a view to equipping them for later adolescence, a high-risk period when internalizing symptoms and low self-esteem are more likely to become recurrent [9]. In the context of coping, flexibility in coping promotes psychological adjustment to stressful life changes. It is important to note that people do not react passively to environmental changes. Vital plasticity theory (Baldwin & Poulton, 1902) posits that individuals are self-initiating, self-organizing systems who are dynamically responsive to changing contexts, with the environment playing a merely secondary and eliciting role. Hence, coping flexibility occurs within individuals, specifically within their cognitive and behavioral systems, to counter fixity and provide a basis for adaptability. Coping flexibility thus equips individuals with the active responses necessary to deal effectively with a changing environment [10]. Adjusting to new situations and challenges in adolescence requires problem-solving abilities. By navigating these adjustments, adolescents learn to assess problems, generate and evaluate potential solutions, and make informed decisions [11]. These problem-solving skills are crucial coping mechanisms that empower them to effectively handle various difficulties. Adjustments in adolescence often involve facing setbacks and obstacles. Through these experiences, adolescents learn to bounce back, adapt, and develop resilience. Resilience is a coping skill that empowers adolescents to maintain a positive mindset, persevere through difficulties, and view setbacks as opportunities for growth [12]. Adjusting to these stressors helps adolescents develop coping skills related to stress management. They learn techniques such as time management, relaxation exercises, prioritization, and healthy lifestyle habits that empower them to reduce and cope with stress effectively.

4.3. Pertaining to objective 3

O₃: To find out how adjustment plays a part in empowering adolescents via the implementation of future directed behaviours.

Adjustment plays a crucial role in mounting future-directed actions in adolescence. It involves making necessary changes and adaptations to align one's actions and choices with future goals and aspirations. Adjustment requires adolescents to identify their long-term goals and aspirations. By reflecting on

their interests, values, and aspirations, they can set meaningful and achievable goals. Adjusting their mindset and behaviors to align with these goals empowers them to take purposeful actions towards their desired future [13]. It involves developing effective planning and organizational skills. Adolescents learn to break down their goals into actionable steps, create schedules, and prioritize tasks. This adjustment enables them to manage their time and resources efficiently, ensuring progress towards their future-directed actions. By adjusting their academic focus, selecting relevant courses, seeking out internships or part-time jobs, and seeking guidance from mentors or career counselors, adolescents can take steps towards their desired future [14]. It requires resisting immediate temptations and making choices that contribute to long-term goals. This adjustment empowers adolescents to prioritize their future-directed actions over instant gratification, enabling them to make decisions that lead to greater fulfillment and success in the long run. Adolescents may encounter obstacles, setbacks, or failures along the way. By developing resilience, adjusting their mindset, and viewing challenges as opportunities for growth, adolescents can maintain their motivation and continue taking actions towards their future goals. Adolescents can benefit from the wisdom and experiences of others who have achieved success in their desired field or have navigated similar paths [15]. Adjusting by seeking mentorship empowers them with insights, support, and guidance to make informed decisions and take appropriate actions towards their future goals. Thus adjustment in mounting future directed actions for empowering adolescence.

4.4. Pertaining to objective 4

O₄: To know how the change facilitates self-discovery and, by extension, adolescent agency.

The ideas of self and identity are complex and multi-faceted, and as previously said, there is no one, easy way to define either. Finding one's own identity is an important element of growing up, especially in the teenage years. A more complete picture of one's identity, values, interests, strengths, and shortcomings may be achieved via introspection. According to Erikson, one of the most important psychosocial tasks of adolescence is coming to terms with one's own identity as an adult, drawing on and integrating the many identities one has formed throughout childhood.' The process of coming into one's own identity is therefore defined as a "normative event of adolescence [16]." Adolescents may go through the process of adjustment by reflecting on and maybe revising their own set of core values and beliefs. Their viewpoints are shaped by their exposure to many cultures, ideas, and experiences. They are able to develop a distinct set of values and beliefs that are in harmony with their growing sense of self via this process of adjustment, which also involves critically evaluating their views and adopting new viewpoints. Many identities and personas are tested throughout adolescence [17]. Adolescents explore a wide range of interests, participate in a wide range of activities, and take on a wide range of responsibilities within their families, schools, and communities as they adapt. Through this period of adaptation, individuals are able to try on many roles until they find one that really suits them and makes them happy. Integrating one's many identities into a unified whole is a key component of adolescent adjustment [17]. As they grow into adulthood, teenagers find a way to balance their many identities by bringing together their interests, beliefs, and responsibilities. Through this period of adjustment, individuals are able to unite disparate parts of their identity, work through internal tensions, and establish a solid foundation for who they are. Overall, coming into one's own throughout adolescence is directly related to the process of adjustment [18]. Adolescents are able to form a more solid and genuine sense of self throughout the adjustment process via activities such as exploring, reflecting on, developing views and values, navigating social interactions, experimenting with roles, integrating, being autonomous, and embracing cultural identity. As a result, they are better able to take charge of this formative period of their lives and make decisions that will affect who they become.

5. Conclusion

Finally, adolescence is greatly aided by the adjustment process. While going through this time of profound personal and social change, adolescents learn to adapt by acquiring the knowledge, self-awareness, and resiliency that will serve them well. Adolescents may learn to control their emotions, gain insight into themselves, and develop coping strategies by embracing the process of adjustment. They are better able to deal with stress, control their emotions, and keep their mental health and empowering abilities up to par because of this empowerment. Adolescents are given the freedom to explore their interests, beliefs, and talents, which helps them form their own unique identity and make decisions that reflect who they really are. As they grow into adulthood, teenagers learn to envision their ideal future, map out a path to get there, and take calculated risks. Through this sense of agency, individuals are empowered to cultivate the abilities that will propel them towards their goals, make well-informed choices, and take future-oriented behaviours that are in line with their ambitions. Adolescents are able to show their uniqueness, make decisions that reflect their beliefs and aspirations, and accept responsibility for their life as a result of this empowerment. Teens gain agency during the adjustment process because it promotes emotional health, self-awareness, goal attainment, autonomy, resilience, and adaptability. In doing so, it prepares kids for the challenges of adolescence and paves the way for their own development, happiness, and agency as adults.

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