A Study on Teenagers' Preferences and Priorities: A Survey-Based Research

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Abstract

Understanding adolescent priorities is essential for supporting psychological and social development. This study examines teenagers' preferences related to personal growth, emotional resilience, and life skills. Data were collected using an online structured questionnaire comprising 30 multiple-choice questions, administered to 71 respondents aged 16–19 years through convenience sampling. The data were analysed using percentage-based descriptive analysis to identify dominant preference patterns. The findings reveal that a significant proportion of respondents prioritized overcoming fear and failure (54%), positivity and confidence (35%), and decision-making and independence (49%) over social media influence (10%). These results indicate a developmental shift among adolescents toward internal growth and autonomy. The study is theoretically grounded in Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory (Erikson, 1968) and Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1997), emphasizing the role of identity formation and self-belief in shaping adolescent priorities.

Keywords:

Adolescent Priorities, Personal Growth, Emotional Resilience, Life Skills, Self-Efficacy

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1. Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional stage marked by significant emotional, psychological, and social changes (Santrock, 2019, pp. 42–45; Steinberg, 2020, pp. 88–92). During this phase, teenagers begin to form their identity and develop perspectives that influence their future lives. Modern teenagers face challenges such as academic competition, peer pressure, emotional instability, and digital exposure. Although social media is often assumed to dominate teenage life, recent trends suggest that teenagers are increasingly focused on inner growth and self-improvement. This study aims to understand what truly matters to teenagers by analysing their preferences and priorities through survey data.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the relative importance teenagers assign to personal values, emotional well-being, and life skills.
- To analyse preference patterns across different dimensions of teenage life using quantitative survey data.
- To identify emerging trends indicating a shift from external influences, such as social media, toward internal personal development.
- To interpret adolescent preferences through established psychological theories of identity development and self-efficacy.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design to examine teenagers' preferences and priorities related to personal development, emotional well-being, and life skills.

3.1 Sample and Sampling Technique

The study was conducted among 71 teenage respondents aged 16–19 years, representing late adolescence—a critical phase for identity formation and decision-making development, as proposed by Erikson's psychosocial theory (Erikson, 1968, pp. 128–133).

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A convenience sampling method was employed due to the accessibility and availability of participants. Although convenience sampling limits generalizability, it is considered appropriate for exploratory studies aimed at identifying emerging trends and behavioural patterns within a specific population group.

3.2 Instrumentation

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of 30 multiple-choice questions. The questionnaire was designed to capture respondents' preferences across three major dimensions:

- Personal values and challenges
- Emotional and psychological priorities
- Life skills and independence

The questions were simple, non-intrusive, and contextually relevant to teenage life, ensuring clarity and ease of response.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly followed throughout the research process. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed that they could withdraw at any stage. No personal identifiers were collected, ensuring complete anonymity and confidentiality of responses. The data were used solely for academic research purposes.

3.4 Justification for Percentage-Based Analysis

A percentage-based analytical approach was adopted to interpret the survey data. Since the study focuses on identifying relative importance and preference patterns among teenagers rather than establishing causal relationships, percentage analysis is both suitable and effective.

4. Analysis and Interpretation

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The analysis of responses revealed that 38 out of 71 respondents (54%) identified overcoming fear and failure as the most important aspect of teenage life. This finding aligns with Bandura's concept of self-efficacy, which emphasizes individuals' belief in their ability to overcome challenges (Bandura, 1997, pp. 37–42).

Similarly, 20 respondents (28%) prioritized values and integrity, indicating moral awareness and ethical sensitivity during adolescence. In contrast, social media influence was selected by only 7 respondents (10%), challenging the common assumption that digital platforms dominate teenage priorities.

In terms of emotional well-being, positivity and confidence emerged as the most significant factor, chosen by 25 respondents (35%). This supports positive psychology theories that emphasize optimism and self-confidence as key contributors to adolescent mental health. Self-discovery was selected by 14 respondents (20%), reflecting teenagers' active engagement in identity exploration.

Regarding life skills, decision-making and independence were identified as the top priority by 35 respondents (49%). This finding strongly corresponds with Erikson's stage of *identity versus role confusion*, during which adolescents strive for autonomy and self-definition.

5. Theoretical Linkage

The findings of this study are theoretically grounded in Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, particularly the stage of Identity versus Role Confusion, during which adolescents seek purpose, independence, and self-understanding (Erikson, 1968, pp. 128–134). The emphasis on decision-making, confidence, and overcoming failure also aligns with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which highlights the role of self-belief and perceived self-efficacy in shaping behaviour and motivation (Bandura, 1997, pp. 79–83).

By prioritizing internal growth over external validation, the respondents demonstrate developmental maturity consistent with contemporary psychological frameworks on adolescent autonomy and identity formation (Santrock, 2019, pp. 214–218; Steinberg, 2020, pp. 102–106).

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6. Discussion

When compared with recent studies on adolescent behaviour, the findings both align with and diverge from earlier research. While earlier studies often emphasize the dominance of social media in teenage life, more recent research (post-2018) indicates a growing awareness of mental health and life skills among adolescents (World Health Organization, 2022, pp. 11–15; OECD, 2021, pp. 27–30). The findings of the present study support this emerging perspective, suggesting a gradual shift in adolescent priorities toward sustainable personal growth rather than immediate digital gratification.

7. Results

7.1 Personal Values and Challenges

Among the 71 respondents, 38 participants (54%) identified overcoming fear and failure as their primary priority. This was followed by values and integrity, selected by 20 respondents (28%). Social media influence was chosen by 7 respondents (10%), while self-defence was selected by 6 respondents (8%).

7.2 Emotional and Psychological Priorities

The highest preference was observed for positivity and confidence, selected by 25 respondents (35%). Self-discovery was chosen by 14 respondents (20%), while emotional rollercoaster and family matters were each selected by 13 respondents (18%). Building good habits received the lowest preference, with 6 respondents (8%).

7.3 Life Skills and Independence

In the life-skills category, decision-making and independence were prioritized by 35 respondents (49%). Power of communication was selected by 14 respondents (20%), followed by *dream big, start small* with 12 respondents (17%), and social responsibility with 10 respondents (14%).

8. Interpretation and Comparative Analysis

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A comparative examination across survey sections reveals a consistent pattern: teenagers demonstrate a stronger inclination toward internal developmental factors rather than externally driven influences.

The preference for overcoming fear and failure (54%) over social media influence (10%) suggests that adolescents increasingly perceive success and self-worth as outcomes of personal effort rather than online validation. This trend may be attributed to heightened academic competition, increased awareness of mental health challenges, and greater exposure to motivational and self-help narratives.

Similarly, the prioritization of positivity and confidence (35%) over habit-building (8%) indicates that teenagers value emotional resilience more than structured routines, possibly because confidence is perceived as an immediate coping resource during emotional fluctuations.

Across all sections, decision-making and independence (49%) emerged as the most dominant life skill, reinforcing the importance adolescents place on autonomy. When compared with emotional and value-based preferences, this finding suggests a developmental convergence toward self-governance and personal responsibility (Steinberg, 2020, pp. 145–148).

9. Conclusion

The study concludes that teenagers place greater importance on personal development, emotional strength, and independence than on digital popularity. Overcoming fear and failure, building confidence, and developing decision-making skills emerged as key priorities for leading a meaningful and balanced life. These findings underscore the importance of integrating life-skills education and emotional development programmes within school and college curricula to support adolescents' holistic growth and well-being.

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