

Identifying Psychological and Contextual Factors Influencing Teenagers' Future Orientation

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to explore and identify the psychological and contextual factors that influence the development of future orientation among teenagers.

Methods and Materials: This research employed a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews with 23 adolescent participants aged 13 to 19, selected through purposive sampling from various regions in Turkey. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. All interviews were conducted in person or online, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thematically using NVivo software to extract categories, subcategories, and core concepts that shaped adolescents' perceptions and behaviors related to their future orientation.

Findings: Three main categories emerged from the data analysis: psychological drivers, social and environmental influences, and cognitive and planning capacities. Psychological drivers included hope and optimism, fear of failure, self-identity, motivation and ambition, and emotional regulation. Social and environmental influences comprised parental support, peer influence, school environment, socioeconomic constraints, and community expectations. Cognitive and planning capacities encompassed goal-setting skills, time perspective, decision-making ability, problem-solving skills, information-seeking behavior, and academic self-efficacy. Adolescents' narratives reflected a complex interplay between internal motivations, emotional resilience, and external support systems in shaping their visions for the future. Direct quotations illustrated how individual aspirations were facilitated or hindered by family, peers, educational access, and cultural norms.

Conclusion: The study highlights the multifaceted nature of teenagers' future orientation and emphasizes the need for supportive family environments, inclusive educational practices, and community engagement to empower adolescents in shaping their futures.

Keywords: Future orientation, adolescents, qualitative research, psychological resilience, contextual influences, Turkey, career planning, youth development.

1. Introduction

The process of adolescence represents a pivotal developmental phase characterized by identity formation, emotional transformation, and the establishment of long-term life goals. Among the most critical developmental tasks during this stage is the construction of a future orientation—a multidimensional psychological construct that encompasses adolescents' thoughts, aspirations, plans, and expectations about their future. The ability of teenagers to envision and strive for a meaningful future has profound implications for their mental health, decision-making, educational attainment, and overall life satisfaction (Silva et al., 2024). Future orientation is shaped not only by internal cognitive and emotional processes but also by the social, cultural, and economic contexts in which adolescents live (Arinata, 2023; Safta & Suditu, 2024).

Future orientation includes components such as hope, goal-setting, time perspective, and perceived control over future outcomes (Rambe et al., 2024). Teenagers who develop a clear and optimistic vision of their future are more likely to make responsible decisions and engage in behaviors aligned with their long-term goals (Safta & Suditu, 2024). Conversely, adolescents with a weak or negative orientation toward the future may exhibit increased vulnerability to risky behaviors, lack of motivation, and emotional disturbances (Manzanilla et al., 2024; Milliam, 2021). These concerns are particularly pronounced in contexts where structural barriers such as poverty, educational inequality, and limited access to career resources constrain adolescents' opportunities and perceived agency (Fahrezi & Ni Putu Gita Jayanti, 2024; Panda et al., 2024).

The family environment plays a vital role in shaping adolescents' attitudes toward their future. Supportive parenting, open communication, and active involvement in career discussions are known to foster a stronger sense of agency and motivation in teenagers (Ade & Maloti, 2024; Andrian & Akmal, 2019). Emotional security within the family also enables adolescents to take future-oriented risks such as pursuing higher education or exploring novel interests. In contrast, family instability, limited parental education, and economic hardship can hinder teenagers' ability to make long-term plans, often leading them to prioritize short-term survival over aspirational thinking (Fajria et al., 2018; Nussipzhanova et al., 2018).

In addition to familial influences, peer interactions are instrumental in adolescent development. Adolescents often look to their peers for validation and inspiration when

thinking about their future selves (Nurfazriah et al., 2024). Shared dreams, competition, and social comparison contribute to shaping their career aspirations and perceived possibilities (Wong et al., 2021). Furthermore, the emergence of digital spaces and social media platforms has amplified peer influence, exposing adolescents to a diverse range of success narratives and lifestyle choices that can either broaden or distort their vision of the future (Du, 2024). In many cases, adolescents actively curate their identities online in ways that align with future-oriented ideals, engaging in performative behaviors that reflect their hopes and anxieties (Silva et al., 2024).

School and community environments also constitute key contextual factors in the development of future orientation. Educational institutions offer both formal and informal structures through which adolescents can explore their interests, gain knowledge about potential career paths, and receive encouragement from teachers and mentors (Gray, 2024). For many teenagers, school is the primary setting where goal-setting and decision-making skills are cultivated (Mourtzouchou et al., 2022; Rambe et al., 2024). However, disparities in school resources, lack of individualized guidance, and overly rigid curricula can limit students' opportunities to develop a meaningful future orientation (Prabowo, 2024). In parallel, the wider community—through its values, norms, and socioeconomic structure—either supports or restricts adolescents' aspirations. Local labor market realities, gender expectations, and cultural scripts often dictate what is perceived as a “realistic” future for youth, particularly in traditional or economically marginalized settings (Arinata, 2023; Собкин & Kalashnikova, 2021).

Urban design and participatory planning initiatives have also been shown to influence teenagers' thinking about their futures, especially when young people are actively involved in shaping the environments they inhabit (Almeida et al., 2020; Shtebunaev et al., 2023). When teenagers participate in public decision-making or are invited to contribute to the design of their communities, their sense of agency and civic identity is enhanced. These opportunities create a sense of belonging and responsibility that extends into future-oriented behavior and aspirations (Gray, 2024). Conversely, exclusion from such processes reinforces the notion that teenagers are passive recipients of adult decisions, thereby diminishing their motivation to envision or influence the future (Shtebunaev et al., 2023).

Cognitive and emotional capacities also intersect significantly with contextual variables in shaping how

teenagers anticipate and plan for their future. Adolescents' ability to regulate emotions, solve problems, and evaluate alternatives are all crucial skills that support responsible decision-making (Seftina et al., 2024). For instance, a teenager who can reflect on long-term consequences and resist short-term gratification is more likely to succeed in school and pursue higher education (Safta & Suditu, 2024). These capacities are not innate but can be developed through targeted interventions, such as counseling programs, life skills education, and mentorship initiatives (Ade & Maloti, 2024; Rambe et al., 2024). Psychological resilience—often strengthened through positive social relationships and self-reflection—further equips adolescents to adapt their goals in the face of uncertainty (Fahrezi & Ni Putu Gita Jayanti, 2024; Nurfazriah et al., 2024).

In recent years, research on adolescent future orientation has expanded in response to global concerns over youth unemployment, educational disengagement, and mental health challenges (Manzanilla et al., 2024; Panda et al., 2024). Cross-cultural studies reveal both universal themes and local differences in how adolescents construct their futures. For example, teenagers in technologically advanced urban settings may face decision paralysis due to overwhelming options, while youth in rural or underserved communities may experience a sense of futility due to lack of resources and social capital (Milliam, 2021; Yuliawati, 2023). Additionally, public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic have disrupted adolescents' developmental trajectories, narrowing their perceived life options and intensifying anxiety about the future (Milliam, 2021). These dynamics underscore the importance of understanding how contextual and psychological variables interact in diverse settings to influence future orientation.

Despite the growing body of literature on adolescent development, there remains a need for in-depth, qualitative exploration of how teenagers themselves experience and make meaning of their future orientation. Much of the existing research has relied on quantitative surveys or intervention studies, which often overlook the nuanced, subjective narratives that shape adolescents' goals and expectations (Andrean & Akmal, 2019; Du, 2024). Particularly in non-Western contexts, where cultural norms and socioeconomic structures vary greatly, adolescents' voices are underrepresented in academic discourse (Nussipzhanova et al., 2018; Ральникова et al., 2023). As such, qualitative approaches are essential for capturing the lived realities, aspirations, and challenges of teenagers

navigating complex futures (Oryngaliyeva et al., 2024; Prabowo, 2024).

This study seeks to fill this gap by identifying and analyzing the psychological and contextual factors that influence teenagers' future orientation through a qualitative methodology. Drawing on in-depth interviews with adolescents in Turkey—a country characterized by rapid social change, educational reform, and diverse cultural traditions—the research investigates how teenagers interpret, construct, and plan their futures in their own words. The aim is to uncover the internal and external mechanisms that either support or hinder the development of future-oriented thinking, and to provide insights for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals working to foster positive adolescent development (Mourtzouchou et al., 2022; Oryngaliyeva et al., 2024; Silva et al., 2024).

By focusing on adolescents' narratives and meanings, this study contributes to a more holistic understanding of future orientation that transcends narrow academic definitions. It emphasizes that teenagers are not merely passive recipients of adult expectations or societal trends but are active agents in shaping their own life paths—even within the constraints of their environments. Through the exploration of cognitive, emotional, social, and structural dimensions, this research illuminates the complex interplay of individual agency and contextual influence that defines adolescent futures (Almeida et al., 2020; Seftina et al., 2024; Shtebunaev et al., 2023). In doing so, it aims to support more responsive and inclusive strategies for empowering youth to navigate an uncertain and rapidly evolving world.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the psychological and contextual factors shaping teenagers' orientation toward the future. The research was grounded in an interpretive approach to gain deep insight into adolescents' subjective experiences, beliefs, and perceptions. The participants included 23 teenagers residing in Turkey, purposefully selected to ensure diversity in terms of age, gender, educational background, and socioeconomic status. Inclusion criteria required participants to be between the ages of 13 and 19 and willing to share their views in an interview setting. Sampling continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, meaning no new themes emerged from the data.

2.2. Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted face-to-face and online, depending on the participant's availability and preference. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses about adolescents' future-related thoughts, emotional experiences, and contextual influences such as family, school, and peer relationships. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, were audio-recorded with consent, and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility in probing and clarifying participants' responses while ensuring consistency across interviews.

2.3. Data analysis

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach using NVivo software to support the coding and organization of qualitative data. The transcripts were read multiple times to achieve immersion and initial codes were generated inductively. These codes were then categorized into broader themes through constant comparison and refinement. Researcher reflexivity was maintained throughout the

process to minimize bias, and peer debriefing was used to ensure credibility and confirmability of findings. The final thematic structure was developed collaboratively by the research team based on the saturation of recurring patterns in the data.

3. Findings and Results

The study sample consisted of 23 adolescent participants from various regions of Turkey, selected through purposive sampling to ensure a range of perspectives. The participants included 12 females and 11 males, with ages ranging from 13 to 19 years (mean age = 16.4). The majority were high school students, while a smaller number were enrolled in middle school or had recently graduated. Participants came from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, including lower, middle, and upper-middle income families. Parental education levels varied, with some parents holding university degrees and others having only completed primary or secondary education. The diversity within the sample allowed for the exploration of a wide range of psychological and contextual experiences related to future orientation.

Table 1

Thematic Structure of Psychological and Contextual Factors Influencing Teenagers' Future Orientation

Category	Subcategory	Concepts (Open Codes)
1. Psychological Drivers	Hope and Optimism	Belief in better days ahead, imagining success, confidence in personal abilities, positive mindset about challenges, refusal to give up
	Fear of Failure	Anxiety about outcomes, pressure to meet expectations, self-doubt, avoiding risks, uncertainty about the future, fear of disappointing others
	Self-Identity	Sense of purpose, exploration of values, understanding strengths, questioning life direction, desire to be unique, reflection on personal goals
	Motivation and Ambition	Setting long-term goals, internal drive, competition with peers, desire to make family proud, being inspired by role models, focus on achievement
	Emotional Regulation	Managing stress, coping with uncertainty, balancing emotions in planning, resilience after setbacks, self-awareness during decision-making
2. Social and Environmental Influences	Parental Support	Encouragement from parents, open communication at home, involvement in educational choices, feeling emotionally safe, modeling future planning
	Peer Influence	Motivation through peers, peer pressure about careers, comparison with friends, shared dreams, influence of social media on choices
	School Environment	Teacher encouragement, access to resources, exposure to career paths, academic pressure, relevance of school content to future goals, sense of belonging at school
	Socioeconomic Constraints	Limited financial resources, prioritizing immediate income, inequality of opportunity, lack of access to extracurriculars, concern about family burdens
	Community Expectations	Cultural norms about success, local job market realities, gendered expectations, societal pressure to succeed, influence of neighborhood role models, religious values shaping aspirations
3. Cognitive and Planning Capacities	Goal-Setting Skills	Creating step-by-step plans, breaking down goals, managing short- and long-term tasks, adapting plans when needed
	Time Perspective	Thinking about long-term consequences, balancing present and future, reflecting on past mistakes, visualizing life in 10 years
	Decision-Making Ability	Weighing pros and cons, identifying options, evaluating outcomes, making informed choices, learning from previous decisions
	Problem-Solving Skills	Finding alternatives, overcoming barriers, resourcefulness in tough situations, seeking help when stuck

Information-Seeking Behavior	Researching career options, using the internet for guidance, asking mentors, attending workshops, exploring college pathways
Academic Self-Efficacy	Belief in academic ability, persistence in studying, interpreting feedback constructively, coping with exam stress, setting academic benchmarks

Psychological Drivers

One prominent subcategory identified was *hope and optimism*. Many adolescents expressed a belief in the possibility of a better future and emphasized the importance of maintaining a positive outlook despite uncertainty. For instance, one participant stated, *“Even if things seem hard now, I know I’ll find a way. I just try to think positive and keep moving.”* This hopeful stance often included imagining success, focusing on self-confidence, and actively rejecting a defeatist mindset.

In contrast, *fear of failure* emerged as a significant psychological obstacle. Several teenagers expressed anxiety about meeting expectations or making the wrong choices. The pressure to succeed, often amplified by family or social comparisons, led to self-doubt and avoidance behaviors. One adolescent shared, *“I’m scared to even talk about my future. What if I disappoint my parents?”* The pervasive sense of uncertainty created internal conflict and emotional distress.

The theme of *self-identity* also played a crucial role in shaping future orientation. Adolescents described actively exploring their personal values, strengths, and interests as they tried to make sense of who they are and who they want to become. A participant noted, *“I think a lot about what kind of person I want to be. I don’t want to just follow what others do.”* This reflection often led to the formation of individualized goals and aspirations.

Motivation and ambition emerged as another key driver. Several adolescents described setting long-term goals and being inspired by personal ambition or external role models. A participant remarked, *“I want to be successful not just for me, but to show my family that I can do something big.”* This inner drive was often linked to a sense of responsibility and desire for achievement.

Lastly, *emotional regulation* appeared as an enabling factor. Adolescents who demonstrated greater ability to manage their emotions and remain resilient in the face of setbacks appeared more proactive in planning for their future. As one participant said, *“When I get overwhelmed, I take a break and then try again. I’ve learned not to panic.”* Emotional awareness and coping mechanisms contributed to their capacity for sustained future thinking.

Social and Environmental Influences

Parental support was a foundational theme in the participants’ narratives. Many teenagers indicated that

encouragement and open communication with their parents positively influenced their vision of the future. One adolescent shared, *“My mom always tells me to believe in myself. She listens when I talk about my dreams.”* Feeling emotionally supported and involved in family discussions about future choices fostered confidence and planning behaviors.

The role of *peer influence* varied but was consistently impactful. Some participants mentioned peers as a source of inspiration, while others highlighted the stress of comparison. For example, one teenager noted, *“My friends talk about studying abroad, and it makes me feel like I should aim higher.”* Peers shaped aspirations both positively—through shared goals—and negatively—through pressure and competitiveness.

The *school environment* emerged as a key contextual factor. Adolescents highlighted the importance of teacher support, exposure to career paths, and the relevance of school content to their future ambitions. A participant explained, *“My English teacher talks about real life, not just grammar. It makes me think about how I can use what I learn.”* Access to resources and a sense of belonging at school were also linked to stronger future orientation.

However, *socioeconomic constraints* were mentioned as major barriers. Financial limitations often influenced decision-making, with some adolescents prioritizing short-term income over long-term goals. One participant said, *“I can’t dream too big. We need money now, not in ten years.”* The lack of access to extracurricular opportunities or private tutoring was also cited as limiting their development.

Cultural and community expectations shaped teenagers’ perceived futures, particularly in relation to gender roles and social norms. Adolescents mentioned the pressure to conform to local values or pursue traditionally respected careers. One participant commented, *“In our town, people think girls should get married early. But I want to study law.”* Community role models and religious values further influenced how teenagers envisioned success.

Cognitive and Planning Capacities

Among the cognitive capacities explored, *goal-setting skills* stood out as central. Teenagers who demonstrated the ability to break down their ambitions into manageable steps reported higher clarity and motivation. As one adolescent put it, *“I write my goals for the month and check if I’m doing*

them. *It keeps me on track.*" Planning behavior gave them a concrete sense of control over their future.

Time perspective also shaped their outlook. Participants who reflected on the long-term consequences of present actions showed more maturity in future planning. One shared, *"I used to think only about today, but now I ask myself where I want to be in five years."* This ability to balance the present with long-term thinking helped foster a realistic future orientation.

The theme of *decision-making ability* included skills such as evaluating options, weighing pros and cons, and learning from past choices. Adolescents noted that being informed and reflective enhanced their confidence in pursuing future paths. A participant explained, *"I used to just follow what others said. Now I try to make decisions based on what's best for me."*

Problem-solving skills were another critical component. Those who could overcome challenges or seek help when needed reported greater progress toward their goals. For instance, one teen said, *"When I couldn't afford a course, I talked to the school counselor and found a scholarship."* Flexibility and resourcefulness emerged as key enablers of future-oriented behavior.

Information-seeking behavior revealed how adolescents actively pursued knowledge about careers and educational pathways. They described using the internet, asking mentors, and attending workshops to gain clarity. One participant noted, *"I watched videos about different jobs until I found what fits me. It helped a lot."* Access to accurate information empowered more deliberate future planning.

Lastly, *academic self-efficacy* significantly influenced how teenagers engaged with their studies and envisioned future success. Participants who believed in their academic abilities were more likely to persist in the face of difficulty. One adolescent shared, *"Even if I fail a test, I know I can do better next time. I just have to try harder."* This belief system provided a stable foundation for long-term aspirations.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study explored the psychological and contextual factors influencing teenagers' future orientation through a qualitative approach. Findings revealed that adolescents' orientation toward the future is shaped by an intricate interplay between psychological drivers, social and environmental influences, and cognitive planning capacities. These categories reflect a multi-dimensional understanding of how youth construct and interpret their futures,

underscoring the importance of both internal and external factors in shaping adolescent development.

The first major category, psychological drivers, included themes such as hope and optimism, fear of failure, self-identity, ambition, and emotional regulation. These findings are consistent with prior research that has emphasized the centrality of individual motivation and emotional states in future planning. For example, hope was frequently linked to a forward-looking mindset and was often maintained even in the face of structural limitations. This resonates with the view that adolescents often use imagination and self-belief as coping strategies to maintain a positive orientation toward uncertain futures (Silva et al., 2024). In contrast, the fear of failure—rooted in academic pressure, family expectations, or social comparison—emerged as a barrier to active planning. Similar findings were reported by Safta and Suditu, who found that fear of making the wrong choice led adolescents to delay decision-making and avoid long-term commitments (Safta & Suditu, 2024).

Self-identity exploration also played a significant role, as teenagers in this study described how understanding their personal values and interests informed their goals. This aligns with research by Andrean and Akmal, who reported that adolescents actively engage in meaning-making processes while envisioning future roles, even in constrained environments such as orphanages (Andrean & Akmal, 2019). Furthermore, the development of motivation and ambition was frequently supported by emotional regulation, indicating that psychological resilience is essential for sustaining long-term aspirations. Adolescents who were able to cope with stress and uncertainty were more likely to persist in their planning, which echoes findings by Rambe et al. showing that counseling strategies that strengthen emotional maturity also promote career clarity and future orientation (Rambe et al., 2024).

The second core category, social and environmental influences, highlighted the importance of parental support, peer influence, school climate, socioeconomic barriers, and community expectations. Adolescents repeatedly emphasized the role of parents as motivators, advisors, and emotional anchors. This finding is supported by Ade and Maloti, who argue that structured family involvement in career planning boosts adolescents' confidence and clarity regarding their goals (Ade & Maloti, 2024). Similarly, Andrean and Akmal emphasized the significance of emotional warmth and guidance from caregivers in shaping future thinking (Andrean & Akmal, 2019). Peer dynamics were also found to be influential, often functioning as a

double-edged sword. While peers provided inspiration and camaraderie, they also created pressure through competition and comparison—an effect that is exacerbated in the age of social media, as illustrated by Du's study on the role of Douyin in shaping self-perception among youth (Du, 2024).

The school environment emerged as both a facilitator and a constraint on adolescents' future planning. Participants highlighted the importance of teacher support, access to relevant information, and the presence of opportunities for exploration within the school system. These findings align with the work of Mourtzouchou et al., who found that when schools provide interactive learning environments and exposure to real-life scenarios, adolescents are more likely to develop future-relevant skills and aspirations (Mourtzouchou et al., 2022). However, adolescents from economically disadvantaged families described how socioeconomic barriers limited their access to these educational supports, leading them to prioritize short-term income over long-term goals. Such findings resonate with those of Fajria et al., who documented how lack of access to career programs and information resources restricts adolescents' planning capacities in low-resource contexts (Fajria et al., 2018).

Cultural and community expectations also played a significant role in shaping perceived futures. Adolescents frequently mentioned gender norms, religious beliefs, and local employment trends as determining factors in what they believed was achievable. These findings mirror research by Sobkin and Kalashnikova, who showed that community values heavily influence adolescents' life positioning and perceptions of possible futures (Собкин & Kalashnikova, 2021). Similarly, the work of Arinata underscores how cultural norms surrounding adolescence in specific regions guide both the content and direction of future goals (Arinata, 2023).

The third major category, cognitive and planning capacities, comprised skills such as goal-setting, time perspective, decision-making, problem-solving, information-seeking, and academic self-efficacy. The importance of structured goal-setting was evident in adolescents who broke down large ambitions into actionable steps. This ability not only facilitated clarity but also gave adolescents a sense of control over their lives, a theme echoed in Prabowo's study, which found that future planning grounded in faith and long-term vision enhances adolescents' purpose and direction (Prabowo, 2024). Likewise, time perspective—particularly the capacity to think long-term—was associated with greater motivation

and resilience. This supports findings by Panda et al., who documented that adolescents with a developed sense of temporal awareness are less likely to engage in impulsive behaviors and more likely to pursue meaningful goals (Panda et al., 2024).

Effective decision-making emerged as a particularly critical skill. Adolescents who demonstrated the capacity to weigh alternatives, reflect on consequences, and revise plans were also those who exhibited the strongest sense of ownership over their futures. These findings are consistent with Safta and Suditu's conclusion that responsible decision-making is a key predictor of long-term career success (Safta & Suditu, 2024). In addition, adolescents with strong problem-solving skills reported a greater capacity to navigate barriers, including financial challenges or academic setbacks. Rambe et al. also emphasized the need for problem-solving training in educational counseling, showing that it increases career maturity and adaptability (Rambe et al., 2024).

The use of information-seeking strategies further reflected adolescents' active engagement in shaping their future paths. Participants frequently described searching for career information online, attending guidance workshops, and speaking with mentors, practices that are vital for informed planning. These behaviors are supported by findings from Oryngaliyeva et al., who argue that the development of psychological competence in adolescents includes the ability to self-educate and seek meaningful knowledge related to future choices (Oryngaliyeva et al., 2024). Finally, academic self-efficacy—defined as belief in one's ability to succeed in school—was repeatedly linked to persistence, hope, and goal clarity. These findings are in line with those of Wong et al., who observed that confidence in one's academic potential enhances engagement with future-oriented activities, even in non-traditional fields like e-sports (Wong et al., 2021).

In sum, the findings of this study support a growing body of evidence that adolescents' future orientation is a complex construct shaped by emotional resilience, social supports, cultural expectations, and cognitive capacities. The convergence of psychological, social, and cognitive dimensions reflects the interdependent nature of adolescent development and highlights the need for holistic interventions. When teenagers are emotionally supported, cognitively equipped, and socially validated, they are more likely to envision and pursue positive, meaningful futures (Almeida et al., 2020; Shtebunaev et al., 2023; Silva et al., 2024).

5. Limitations & Suggestions

While this study offers rich insight into the future orientation of adolescents, it is not without limitations. First, the research was conducted solely in Turkey, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or national contexts. Socio-cultural norms and economic structures vary significantly across countries, and therefore, some identified themes may not be universally applicable. Second, the study relied on self-reported narratives from adolescents, which are subject to memory biases, social desirability effects, or limited introspective capacity. Third, although thematic saturation was reached, the sample size of 23 participants may not capture the full diversity of adolescent experiences across different regions, education levels, or family structures. Finally, the study did not incorporate the perspectives of parents, teachers, or community leaders, which could have added depth to the understanding of contextual influences.

Future research should aim to expand this line of inquiry in several ways. First, conducting similar qualitative studies across diverse cultural and socioeconomic settings would allow for cross-comparative analysis and a more global understanding of adolescent future orientation. Second, integrating longitudinal methods could reveal how adolescents' future plans evolve over time and in response to life events. Third, future studies should include the perspectives of key stakeholders in adolescents' lives—such as parents, educators, and mentors—to triangulate data and understand the multi-layered dynamics influencing future orientation. Finally, future research could explore the role of digital environments and artificial intelligence in shaping how teenagers plan their futures in the modern age.

The findings of this study carry important implications for practice. Educational institutions should prioritize the integration of life skills, emotional regulation, and decision-making training within school curricula to support adolescents' future planning capacities. Career counseling programs must be tailored to reflect the diverse needs and cultural contexts of students, offering personalized and relevant guidance. Parents should be encouraged to engage in open, supportive conversations with their children about their aspirations and concerns. Community-based organizations can also play a role by creating inclusive spaces for adolescents to explore their identities and goals. Ultimately, empowering adolescents to become active participants in shaping their futures requires a collaborative effort across families, schools, and societies.

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Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed equally.

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