



## Ranking the Psychological and Social Components of Life Purpose Formation in Adolescents

Nayelli. Muñoz<sup>1</sup>, Carlos. Hernández<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Health Sciences, Private University of the North, Lima, Peru

<sup>2</sup> Department of Educational Sciences, University of Guadalajara, Guadalajara, Mexico

\* Corresponding author email address: carlos.hernandez@udg.mx

### Article Info

#### Article type:

Original Research

#### How to cite this article:

Muñoz, N., & Hernández, C. (2025). Ranking the Psychological and Social Components of Life Purpose Formation in Adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent and Youth Psychological Studies*, 6(10), 1-12.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.61838/kman.jayps.4639>



© 2025 the authors. Published by KMAN Publication Inc. (KMANPUB), Ontario, Canada. This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License.

### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aimed to identify and rank the key psychological and social components that contribute to the formation of life purpose among adolescents.

**Methods and Materials:** This research employed a mixed-method exploratory-sequential design. The first phase consisted of a qualitative literature-based analysis conducted through thematic coding using NVivo 14 to identify major psychological and social components of adolescent life purpose formation. The review continued until theoretical saturation was reached, yielding nine central themes. In the second phase, a quantitative ranking survey was carried out with 250 adolescents aged 15–18 years from various high schools in Mexico, using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire derived from the qualitative findings. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, applying Friedman's test to determine the mean rank order of each component and Cronbach's alpha to confirm reliability.

**Findings:** The analysis revealed statistically significant differences in the importance adolescents attributed to various life purpose components ( $\chi^2 = 64.37$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Self-Identity Development received the highest mean rank (4.56), followed by Motivation and Goal Orientation (4.48) and Emotional Regulation (4.41). Cognitive Maturity (4.33) and Family Influence (4.25) also demonstrated strong relevance, while Peer and Social Relationships (4.17) and Educational Context and Mentorship (4.12) held moderate positions. Cultural and Societal Values (3.95) and Existential Awareness and Meaning-Making (3.82) were ranked lower, indicating that adolescents prioritize internal psychological mechanisms over external sociocultural influences in constructing their sense of purpose.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that life purpose formation in adolescents is primarily driven by internal psychological processes—especially identity, motivation, and emotional regulation—supported by social contexts such as family and education. Strengthening these components through targeted educational and counseling programs can enhance adolescents' psychological well-being and long-term goal orientation.

**Keywords:** Adolescents; life purpose formation; psychological components; social factors; identity development; motivation; emotional regulation

## 1. Introduction

Adolescence represents a developmental period marked by intense biological, psychological, and social transformations that shape individuals' identity, aspirations, and life purpose. During these years, young people actively explore values, beliefs, and roles while constructing a coherent sense of meaning and direction for their future lives. The process of life purpose formation—defined as the development of stable psychological and social orientations that give life meaning and direction—is particularly significant during this stage. However, this process is highly sensitive to contextual influences such as family relationships, educational environments, peer interactions, and cultural norms. A growing body of research across diverse cultural settings has emphasized the interplay between psychological development and social context in shaping adolescents' life purpose and overall well-being (Fan et al., 2022; Fernandes & Lemos, 2022; Rahayu et al., 2025).

The psychosocial landscape of adolescence is complex and dynamic, encompassing the challenges of identity exploration, goal setting, and adaptation to social expectations. Adolescents' search for self-definition involves negotiating between internal drives and external pressures from family, school, and peer groups (Hermaini et al., 2023; Putri, 2023; Vanderhaegen et al., 2023). As noted in identity development theory, successful formation of a stable identity contributes to self-coherence and life satisfaction, whereas diffusion or confusion in identity formation often leads to psychosocial stress and maladaptive behaviors (Ajarni et al., 2025; Lathifah & Prastiwi, 2025). This developmental process becomes more complicated when adolescents experience social or economic challenges, mental health difficulties, or inconsistent family support, which may hinder their ability to form a clear sense of life purpose.

Recent studies have demonstrated that the psychological well-being of adolescents is strongly tied to the extent to which they can connect their goals, motivations, and social roles to an overarching sense of meaning (Dwivedi & Chandra, 2024; Tadayoni et al., 2022). Adolescents who possess a strong sense of purpose tend to display greater resilience, optimism, and emotional regulation compared to those lacking direction. The integration of purpose with everyday functioning also predicts improved life satisfaction and academic adjustment. Conversely, absence of purpose or goal diffusion has been linked with anxiety, depression,

and behavioral disorganization among adolescents (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2023; Shofa et al., 2024). These findings underscore that life purpose is not merely a philosophical construct but a vital psychological component of adolescent development.

A central dimension in life purpose formation involves psychosocial adaptation, which includes the adolescent's ability to navigate relationships, fulfill social roles, and manage environmental demands (Olutola et al., 2023; Oxana, 2021). This adaptation is strengthened by emotional regulation and social support systems that foster confidence and belonging. Studies suggest that adolescents with strong family ties and supportive peer networks demonstrate higher levels of self-efficacy and meaning-making (Ji et al., 2024; Ramawat et al., 2022). Supportive environments nurture a sense of competence and autonomy—both of which are essential for setting meaningful life goals and sustaining motivation to achieve them. Conversely, lack of support or exposure to adverse experiences, such as family instability or peer rejection, can contribute to purpose diffusion and diminished psychosocial well-being.

Family and educational systems serve as pivotal socializing agents that influence adolescents' perception of purpose and identity. Within families, parenting style, communication quality, and emotional warmth shape adolescents' self-perception and motivation (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2023; Mustika et al., 2023). Authoritative parenting and emotional availability often foster autonomy and responsibility, while overcontrol or neglect may lead to confusion and insecurity. The school environment, likewise, plays an essential role in cultivating self-awareness, social competence, and value internalization. Educational settings that emphasize participatory learning and mentorship provide adolescents with opportunities to explore interests and articulate personal goals (Dwivedi & Chandra, 2024; Rahayu et al., 2025). Such institutional support structures not only enhance cognitive maturity but also strengthen the psychological scaffolding required for meaningful life direction.

The psychological mechanisms underlying purpose formation encompass multiple cognitive and emotional components, including identity coherence, motivation, resilience, and self-regulation. Adolescents who can connect short-term actions with long-term aspirations tend to sustain higher engagement and goal persistence. Intrinsic motivation—driven by curiosity, mastery, and personal growth—has been found to predict positive developmental outcomes and emotional well-being (Gostoli et al., 2024;

Straton et al., 2024). Additionally, self-regulation and coping strategies play protective roles by moderating stress and promoting adaptive functioning in the face of challenges. Adolescents' capacity to process emotional experiences constructively is a key determinant of how they assign meaning to their goals and future plans (Ajarni et al., 2025; Shrestha et al., 2021).

Cultural and societal contexts also exert a significant impact on how adolescents conceptualize and pursue life purpose. Cultural values influence the content of life goals, the perception of success, and the moral framework guiding purposeful action (Fernandes & Lemos, 2022; Hidayah, 2025; Vanderhaegen et al., 2023). For instance, collectivist societies emphasize community belonging, familial loyalty, and social harmony as core elements of purpose, while individualistic contexts prioritize autonomy, self-expression, and personal fulfillment. Religion and spirituality further enrich this process by offering frameworks for moral reasoning, existential reflection, and transcendent meaning (Oxana, 2021; Putri, 2023). Adolescents exposed to strong cultural and ethical narratives often demonstrate a clearer sense of direction and a higher level of moral commitment in their life decisions.

The technological environment represents another emerging factor influencing life purpose formation. With the rapid expansion of digital connectivity, adolescents increasingly rely on social media and digital platforms for social validation and identity experimentation (Hidayah, 2025; Mohamed et al., 2023). While these technologies offer opportunities for self-expression and learning, they also expose youth to unrealistic standards and social comparison, which can undermine self-esteem and coherence. Excessive online engagement has been associated with emotional instability and reduced goal clarity (Öztürk & Ayaz-Alkaya, 2021). On the other hand, guided digital literacy and responsible use of online resources can promote civic engagement, knowledge acquisition, and purpose-driven creativity (Fan et al., 2022; Mustika et al., 2023). Thus, technology presents both challenges and opportunities for psychological and social development in adolescence.

Health and psychosocial well-being are also intertwined with adolescents' capacity to construct meaning and purpose. Mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, or chronic stress often disrupt the motivational and cognitive systems necessary for purposeful functioning (Ajarni et al., 2025; Gostoli et al., 2024; Shofa et al., 2024). Conversely, interventions that promote emotional resilience, life skills, and positive coping strategies have been found to

enhance well-being and reinforce purpose formation (Dwivedi & Chandra, 2024; Straton et al., 2024). Adolescents who experience supportive environments—such as those provided by youth programs, health initiatives, or community-based interventions—are better able to integrate their experiences into coherent life narratives (Hermaini et al., 2023; Mustika et al., 2023). In this sense, fostering psychological resources such as hope, empathy, and social connectedness becomes critical to cultivating purposeful living.

Gender and family structure further shape adolescents' sense of purpose. Studies indicate that boys and girls may differ in how they internalize and pursue life goals, influenced by social expectations, cultural scripts, and emotional expression patterns (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2023; Ramawat et al., 2022). Moreover, adolescents raised in non-traditional or institutional family contexts—such as orphanages or welfare centers—often face distinct challenges in achieving psychosocial stability (Ajarni et al., 2025; Tadayoni et al., 2022). For these youth, the absence of consistent emotional guidance or role models can delay identity consolidation and purpose development. Nonetheless, supportive educational and social programs have been shown to mitigate these risks by fostering belonging, mentoring relationships, and opportunities for self-expression (Olutola et al., 2023; Rahayu et al., 2025).

The interplay between psychological factors (such as identity development, motivation, emotional regulation, and cognitive maturity) and social influences (including family, peers, education, and culture) forms the foundation for a holistic understanding of adolescent life purpose. Recent research emphasizes that life purpose is not a static outcome but a developmental process sustained through reflective self-awareness and continuous interaction with social environments (Fernandes & Lemos, 2022; Vanderhaegen et al., 2023). Adolescents construct meaning through dialogue, mentorship, and shared experiences that enable them to integrate personal and collective goals. Thus, identifying and ranking the most influential psychological and social components in life purpose formation can provide crucial insights for educators, mental health practitioners, and policymakers seeking to enhance youth well-being and social engagement.

The aim of this study is to identify and rank the psychological and social components influencing life purpose formation among adolescents.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study employed a mixed-method exploratory–sequential design to identify and rank the key psychological and social components influencing life purpose formation among adolescents. The research was conducted in two distinct phases: a qualitative exploratory phase followed by a quantitative ranking phase.

In the first phase, the study utilized a qualitative approach based on an extensive systematic literature review. Relevant peer-reviewed articles, theses, and theoretical works published between 2000 and 2025 were reviewed using electronic databases such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar. The selection process continued until theoretical saturation was achieved—that is, when no new themes or categories emerged from the reviewed materials.

In the second phase, a quantitative survey was carried out to prioritize the components identified in the qualitative phase. The sample included 250 adolescents aged between 15 and 18 years, all residing in Mexico. Participants were recruited from various public and private high schools across Mexico City and surrounding regions using stratified random sampling to ensure representation by gender, socioeconomic background, and school type. Participation was voluntary, and all ethical considerations—including confidentiality, informed consent from parents or guardians, and the right to withdraw at any time—were strictly observed.

### 2.2. Measures

Data collection occurred in two stages corresponding to the study phases.

In the qualitative phase, data were collected exclusively through a comprehensive literature review aimed at identifying theoretical frameworks, empirical findings, and conceptual models relating to life purpose formation in adolescents. The review focused on extracting indicators, components, and contextual factors that contribute to psychological and social development of life purpose. Relevant information was coded and categorized until conceptual saturation was reached.

In the quantitative phase, the findings from the qualitative analysis were transformed into a structured questionnaire designed to measure the importance of each identified

component. The questionnaire consisted of statements representing each component, rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “1 = Not important at all” to “5 = Extremely important.” Prior to full administration, a pilot test with 30 adolescents was conducted to assess the clarity and reliability of the instrument. Adjustments were made accordingly to ensure internal consistency and face validity.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

In the first phase, the qualitative data obtained from the literature review were analyzed using NVivo 14 software to facilitate thematic coding, categorization, and model construction. Thematic analysis was employed to identify major psychological components (e.g., self-identity, intrinsic motivation, goal clarity, resilience) and social components (e.g., parental support, peer influence, community engagement) relevant to the process of life purpose formation. Patterns and interconnections among the themes were examined to form a conceptual model.

In the second phase, the quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency) were computed for all variables. Subsequently, Friedman’s test was employed to rank the psychological and social components based on participants’ responses, as this nonparametric test is appropriate for ordinal data derived from Likert scales. Additionally, reliability analysis using Cronbach’s alpha was conducted to ensure internal consistency of the measurement tool.

## 3. Findings and Results

In the qualitative phase of this study, a systematic literature review was conducted to explore the psychological and social components of life purpose formation in adolescents. Using the NVivo 14 software, qualitative data from scholarly articles, theoretical frameworks, and empirical studies were analyzed through thematic analysis. The goal was to identify recurring concepts, relationships, and contextual patterns that explain how adolescents construct, internalize, and sustain a sense of life purpose. Through iterative coding and conceptual refinement, nine main themes emerged—each encompassing a set of subthemes and conceptual indicators (open codes) that together provide a comprehensive understanding of the psychological and social underpinnings of life purpose formation.

**Table 1**

*Thematic Structure of Psychological and Social Components of Life Purpose Formation in Adolescents*

Main Theme (Category)	Subtheme (Subcategory)	Concepts (Open Codes)
1. Self-Identity Development	Personal values formation	moral beliefs, authenticity, personal coherence, internal value consistency
	Exploration of self-concept	self-reflection, self-awareness, self-differentiation, role experimentation, identity clarity
	Commitment to identity	sense of belonging, goal alignment, internalized identity, life direction
2. Motivation and Goal Orientation	Intrinsic motivation	curiosity, sense of meaning, personal growth drive, competence need
	Goal clarity and focus	goal-setting ability, prioritization, achievement orientation
	Future vision	long-term aspirations, optimism, planning mindset, perseverance
3. Emotional Regulation	Emotional awareness	emotion labeling, emotional introspection, affective recognition
	Coping mechanisms	stress management, mindfulness, adaptive coping, resilience
4. Cognitive Maturity	Reflective thinking	metacognitive awareness, reasoning ability, perspective-taking
	Decision-making competence	evaluating alternatives, rational judgment, consequence awareness, independence in thinking
	Purposeful problem-solving	creativity, solution orientation, critical thinking
5. Family Influence	Parental support	emotional encouragement, communication quality, shared values, role modeling
	Parenting style	autonomy support, responsiveness, family cohesion
6. Peer and Social Relationships	Peer support and belonging	acceptance, mutual trust, collaborative learning, empathy
	Social identity	social comparison, conformity, shared purpose, collective values
	Friendship quality	loyalty, openness, shared interests, constructive feedback
7. Educational Context and Mentorship	Teacher guidance	moral instruction, mentorship, feedback culture
	School climate	inclusiveness, participation opportunities, positive reinforcement
	Extracurricular engagement	leadership opportunities, teamwork, creativity outlets
8. Cultural and Societal Values	Cultural narratives	collective identity, intergenerational expectations, moral frameworks
	Social responsibility	civic engagement, volunteering, altruism
	Religion and spirituality	faith practices, spiritual belonging, ethical orientation
9. Existential Awareness and Meaning-Making	Search for meaning	self-questioning, purpose exploration, transcendence, existential reflection
	Sense of coherence	life comprehension, manageability, meaningfulness
	Value-driven action	moral integrity, life consistency, value enactment

### 1. Self-Identity Development

The first major theme emerging from the qualitative analysis was *self-identity development*, which represents the foundation of life purpose formation during adolescence. Literature reviewed emphasized that adolescents form a stable sense of self through continuous reflection on their personal values, goals, and social roles. This process involves exploring and clarifying personal beliefs,

experimenting with different roles, and committing to a coherent identity structure. Adolescents who possess a clear self-concept and internalized value system are more capable of aligning their goals with a broader sense of life direction. The development of identity coherence not only helps them understand who they are but also defines what they aim to achieve and why, thus providing psychological stability in navigating life's challenges.



## 2. Motivation and Goal Orientation

The second theme, *motivation and goal orientation*, captures the internal drives that propel adolescents toward purposeful living. Intrinsic motivation—rooted in curiosity, personal growth, and a desire for competence—was identified as a key determinant of purposeful engagement. Moreover, goal clarity and future orientation emerged as central aspects of this theme, indicating that adolescents who set meaningful, realistic, and self-determined goals are more likely to sustain engagement and commitment to their purpose. Having a clear vision for the future reinforces persistence and resilience, transforming abstract aspirations into structured pathways that support long-term growth and fulfillment.

## 3. Emotional Regulation

The third theme, *emotional regulation*, underscores the emotional underpinnings of purposeful living. The capacity to recognize, understand, and manage emotions was shown to influence adolescents' ability to maintain focus and adapt to challenges. Emotional awareness allows them to interpret life experiences with insight, while effective coping mechanisms—such as mindfulness, stress management, and resilience—promote psychological flexibility in the face of setbacks. Adolescents who can regulate their emotions constructively tend to experience greater self-efficacy and meaning in their pursuits, highlighting the integral role of affective balance in the development of life purpose.

## 4. Cognitive Maturity

*Cognitive maturity* emerged as the fourth theme, representing the intellectual processes that enable adolescents to reflect, reason, and plan meaningfully. The reviewed literature identified reflective thinking, decision-making competence, and purposeful problem-solving as core subdimensions. Adolescents with advanced cognitive maturity can engage in metacognition, evaluate alternatives, and understand the long-term consequences of their actions. This mental flexibility allows them to integrate new experiences into an evolving sense of purpose. Through deliberate reflection and rational analysis, adolescents can transform abstract values into actionable life strategies, thereby strengthening the cognitive foundation of purposeful development.

## 5. Family Influence

The fifth theme, *family influence*, highlights the vital role of family as the primary social environment shaping adolescents' sense of purpose. Parental support, emotional availability, and shared moral values were identified as key contributors to the formation of life direction. Adolescents

raised in cohesive families that foster autonomy and communication tend to exhibit stronger self-esteem, goal commitment, and social responsibility. Moreover, modeling behaviors by parents provide a template for purposeful action and ethical conduct. The family thus serves as both an emotional anchor and a guiding framework, linking personal aspirations to collective values and stability.

## 6. Peer and Social Relationships

The sixth theme, *peer and social relationships*, emphasizes the social dimension of purpose formation, as adolescence is characterized by an increasing reliance on peer interactions. Peer support, social identity, and friendship quality were central to this category. Supportive friendships provide validation, emotional security, and a sense of belonging, which in turn foster confidence and engagement in meaningful activities. At the same time, peer groups offer opportunities for collaborative learning and shared value construction. Positive social relations enable adolescents to negotiate their individuality within a group context, reinforcing both personal meaning and social purpose.

## 7. Educational Context and Mentorship

The seventh theme, *educational context and mentorship*, reflects the influence of schools, teachers, and structured learning environments on life purpose development. Teachers act as mentors who encourage reflective thinking, goal-setting, and moral reasoning, while an inclusive and supportive school climate strengthens students' engagement with learning and personal growth. Extracurricular programs further enhance self-efficacy, teamwork, and creativity, providing experiential opportunities for adolescents to test and refine their sense of purpose. Education, therefore, serves as a bridge between cognitive growth and psychosocial development, guiding youth toward purposeful academic and personal trajectories.

## 8. Cultural and Societal Values

The eighth theme, *cultural and societal values*, addresses the broader contextual influences shaping adolescents' understanding of purpose. Cultural narratives and moral traditions frame the expectations and meanings that adolescents internalize. In many societies, religion, spirituality, and civic engagement play central roles in fostering social responsibility and ethical orientation. Adolescents who participate in culturally valued practices such as community service or spiritual reflection tend to develop a deeper awareness of interconnectedness and moral responsibility. Thus, culture and society provide the moral

scaffolding upon which adolescents construct a purposeful and value-driven life.

### 9. Existential Awareness and Meaning-Making

The final theme, *existential awareness and meaning-making*, encompasses the adolescent's deeper reflection on existence, coherence, and transcendence. This theme captures the individual's ongoing search for meaning and the process of integrating experiences into a unified life narrative. Adolescents with high existential awareness engage in self-questioning, value clarification, and moral action that align with their beliefs. The sense of coherence—understanding life as comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful—emerges as a core element of psychological well-being and purpose. Ultimately, this theme represents

the culmination of personal and social influences, translating internal values and external experiences into a coherent and enduring sense of life purpose.

Following the qualitative exploration, the second phase quantitatively examined and ranked the psychological and social components of life purpose formation among adolescents. Using data from 250 participants in Mexico, each component identified in the qualitative phase was evaluated through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, applying Friedman's test to determine the relative importance of each component. The mean ranks reflect adolescents' collective prioritization of the factors contributing to life purpose development.

**Table 2**

*Ranking of Psychological and Social Components of Life Purpose Formation in Adolescents*

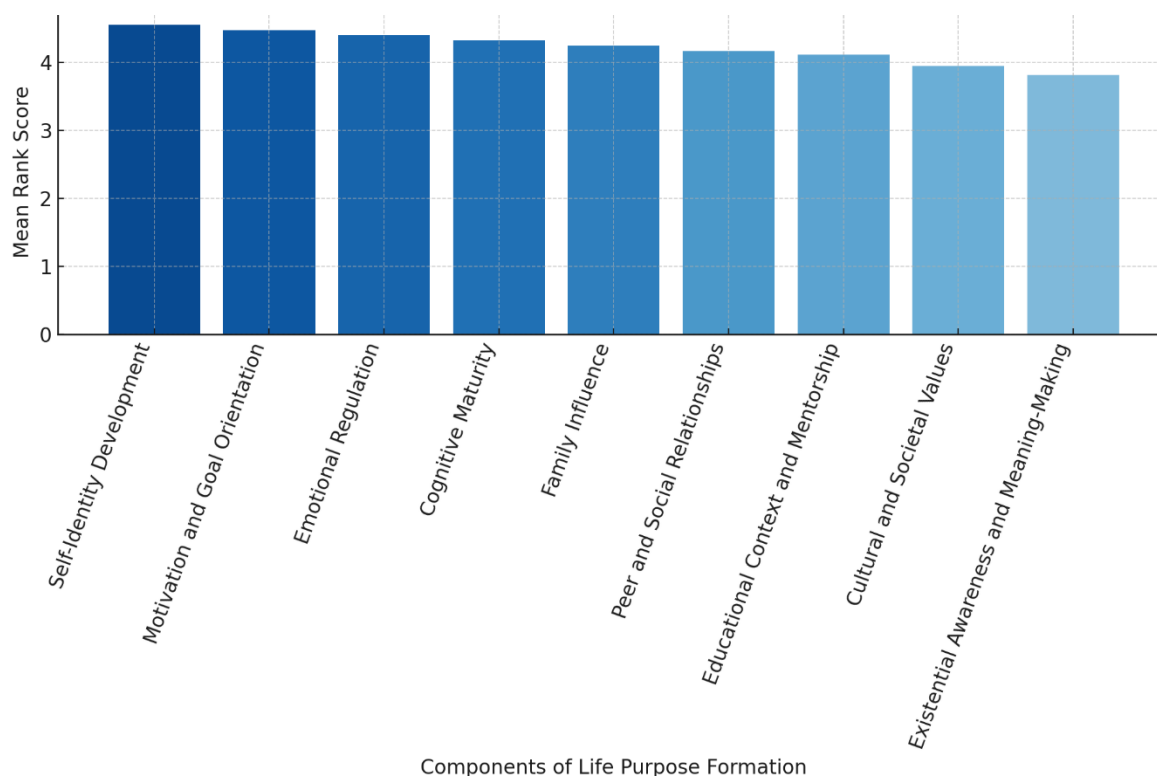
Component	Mean Rank
Self-Identity Development	4.56
Motivation and Goal Orientation	4.48
Emotional Regulation	4.41
Cognitive Maturity	4.33
Family Influence	4.25
Peer and Social Relationships	4.17
Educational Context and Mentorship	4.12
Cultural and Societal Values	3.95
Existential Awareness and Meaning-Making	3.82

As shown in Table 2, Self-Identity Development achieved the highest mean rank (4.56), indicating that adolescents view personal identity formation as the central component of life purpose development. Motivation and Goal Orientation (4.48) and Emotional Regulation (4.41) followed closely, suggesting that internal drives and emotional stability are critical mechanisms in constructing purposeful behavior. Cognitive Maturity (4.33) and Family Influence (4.25) ranked moderately high, reflecting the importance of reflective thinking and parental guidance.

Social and contextual dimensions such as Peer and Social Relationships (4.17) and Educational Context and Mentorship (4.12) were also significant but secondary, implying that interpersonal dynamics and school environments serve as supportive—rather than primary—factors. Finally, Cultural and Societal Values (3.95) and Existential Awareness and Meaning-Making (3.82) received lower rankings, indicating that adolescents prioritize immediate psychological and relational factors over abstract or societal influences in shaping their sense of life purpose.

**Figure 1**

*Ranking of Psychological and Social Components of Life Purpose Formation in Adolescents*



#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the psychological and social components contributing to life purpose formation among adolescents, as identified through a mixed-method exploratory and ranking design. Based on the integration of qualitative themes and quantitative rankings, *Self-Identity Development*, *Motivation and Goal Orientation*, and *Emotional Regulation* emerged as the top three components influencing the formation of life purpose. These results align with contemporary adolescent psychology research, which emphasizes identity construction, motivational clarity, and emotional regulation as core determinants of psychosocial development and well-being (Dwivedi & Chandra, 2024; Lathifah & Prastiwi, 2025; Rahayu et al., 2025). The dominance of these components underscores that developing a coherent sense of self and purpose is both a personal and relational process—requiring internal self-understanding and external social affirmation.

The high ranking of *Self-Identity Development* reflects adolescents' increasing need to define who they are and what

they stand for in a rapidly changing world. Consistent with developmental theories of Erikson and Marcia, identity exploration and commitment are critical in establishing a sense of purpose and direction (Lathifah & Prastiwi, 2025; Putri, 2023). The qualitative findings in this study indicated that adolescents strive for internal coherence, moral stability, and authenticity, which correspond with prior research emphasizing identity integration as a cornerstone of psychological maturity (Hermaini et al., 2023; Vanderhaegen et al., 2023). (Vanderhaegen et al., 2023) found that adolescents with stable self-concepts exhibit stronger resilience and life satisfaction even when facing challenges such as illness or trauma. Similarly, the study by (Lathifah & Prastiwi, 2025) on adolescents with terminal illnesses revealed that identity formation remains an active process even in adversity, allowing youth to retain a sense of meaning. The present study supports these findings, showing that identity is not static but continuously shaped through introspection, relationships, and cultural values.

*Motivation and Goal Orientation*, ranked second, emerged as a dynamic component closely tied to adolescents' ability to set, pursue, and maintain meaningful life goals. Motivation provides the psychological energy that



sustains goal-directed behavior and strengthens the commitment to personal values (Dwivedi & Chandra, 2024; Straton et al., 2024). In the current study, adolescents who demonstrated a higher sense of purpose tended to have clear goal structures and internalized motivation. These results align with (Dwivedi & Chandra, 2024), who showed that life skills training enhances psychological well-being by fostering motivation and autonomy. Moreover, (Straton et al., 2024) demonstrated that intrinsic motivation plays a mediating role in emotional resilience and positive self-regulation among adolescents coping with chronic stress. This consistency across studies reinforces the idea that motivation is not merely a behavioral variable but a core developmental mechanism linking self-concept to purposeful engagement.

The third-ranked factor, *Emotional Regulation*, also plays a crucial role in adolescents' capacity to sustain purpose over time. Emotional regulation refers to the ability to identify, understand, and manage emotional experiences effectively—a process that significantly affects mental health and interpersonal relationships (Ajarni et al., 2025; Gostoli et al., 2024; Shrestha et al., 2021). This study found that adolescents with better emotional regulation reported stronger clarity of purpose and fewer tendencies toward confusion or disengagement. These results correspond with previous findings indicating that adolescents who regulate emotions effectively experience lower levels of anxiety and depression (Ajarni et al., 2025; Shofa et al., 2024). (Gostoli et al., 2024) also highlighted that psychological well-being is inversely related to allostatic overload—emphasizing that emotional regulation helps adolescents maintain physiological and psychological balance. The integration of emotional regulation and motivation within identity structures thus appears central to fostering meaningful and sustained purpose.

*Cognitive Maturity* and *Family Influence*, which occupied the middle ranks, highlight the interplay between psychological development and environmental support systems. Cognitive maturity involves reflective thinking, decision-making competence, and problem-solving—skills that empower adolescents to analyze life experiences critically and connect them to long-term aspirations (Fan et al., 2022; Fernandes & Lemos, 2022). The findings suggest that adolescents who engage in reflective thinking demonstrate greater coherence in purpose development, supporting prior work that identified cognitive development as a predictor of life satisfaction (Fan et al., 2022). Family influence, meanwhile, reinforces the notion that identity and

purpose are socially grounded. Supportive parenting, open communication, and emotional security help adolescents internalize values and construct a stable sense of direction (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2023; Mustika et al., 2023). (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2023) found that positive family characteristics significantly reduce emotional symptoms and confusion during identity formation. Similarly, (Mustika et al., 2023) demonstrated how family-based educational interventions enhance adolescents' psychosocial and health awareness, indirectly promoting goal orientation and sense of responsibility.

The significance of *Peer and Social Relationships* and *Educational Context and Mentorship*, though ranked slightly lower, remains vital in understanding adolescents' socialization into purpose. Adolescents develop identity and purpose not in isolation but through peer validation, collaborative learning, and social participation (Ji et al., 2024; Olutola et al., 2023). The present study found that supportive peer environments contribute to belongingness and reinforce moral and academic commitment. (Ji et al., 2024) emphasized that social support directly influences mental health and life satisfaction, illustrating that relationships act as buffers against emotional distress. Similarly, (Olutola et al., 2023) highlighted that psychosocial factors, including peer relations, predict quality of life in school settings. The educational context also serves as an enabling structure for purpose development by fostering autonomy and moral reasoning (Dwivedi & Chandra, 2024; Rahayu et al., 2025). School mentorship and participatory programs encourage goal-setting, while constructive feedback from teachers nurtures adolescents' self-confidence and direction.

Lower-ranked components such as *Cultural and Societal Values* and *Existential Awareness and Meaning-Making* illustrate broader contextual dimensions that, while influential, may operate less directly in adolescents' immediate developmental experience. Cultural norms and collective values shape adolescents' perceptions of success, morality, and life priorities (Hidayah, 2025; Putri, 2023). For instance, (Hidayah, 2025) found that adolescents' behavioral norms in digital spaces are deeply influenced by cultural models of education and socialization. Similarly, (Putri, 2023) highlighted religious identity crises as a growing issue in modern adolescence, where exposure to pluralistic values can cause internal conflict. However, despite their lower quantitative ranking, these factors still provide the moral and spiritual frameworks through which life purpose is contextualized. Existential awareness—reflected in self-

questioning, transcendence, and coherence—serves as an integrative layer linking identity and value systems (Oxana, 2021; Tadayoni et al., 2022). This finding is consistent with (Oxana, 2021), who demonstrated that adolescents with high psychosocial adaptation scores also display greater existential awareness and resilience.

Taken together, these findings highlight that life purpose formation is a multidimensional construct emerging from the interaction between psychological self-regulation and social embeddedness. Adolescents do not simply construct purpose internally; rather, it is co-created through social exchanges, family modeling, and cultural interpretation. The results confirm the bidirectional relationship between psychosocial well-being and life purpose observed in previous studies (Fan et al., 2022; Fernandes & Lemos, 2022; Rahayu et al., 2025). When adolescents perceive themselves as competent and valued members of their environment, they are more likely to pursue meaningful goals. Conversely, when they encounter emotional instability, family conflict, or social exclusion, their sense of purpose tends to fragment. This complex interplay underscores the need for holistic educational and mental health interventions that target both individual capacities and contextual supports.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study adds to the understanding of adolescent development by integrating identity theory, motivation theory, and social ecological perspectives. It aligns with previous frameworks that conceptualize adolescence as a critical period for *meaning-making*, where purpose acts as a bridge between psychological maturation and societal integration (Rahayu et al., 2025; Vanderhaegen et al., 2023). The current findings also affirm the cross-cultural relevance of these processes. Studies from Indonesia, Malaysia, and China have similarly emphasized that the formation of life purpose is embedded in collective cultural values, highlighting the importance of family cohesion, spirituality, and civic responsibility (Ji et al., 2024; Mustika et al., 2023; Rahayu et al., 2025). At the same time, findings from European and Western contexts such as Finland and Belgium demonstrate that self-identity and motivation are universally predictive of well-being, despite differing sociocultural environments (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2023; Vanderhaegen et al., 2023). This convergence of evidence supports the universality of psychological needs in purpose formation while acknowledging local cultural expressions of meaning.

In summary, the integration of qualitative and quantitative evidence from this study underscores that adolescents' sense of purpose is sustained by a balance of

*psychological competencies* (self-identity, motivation, emotional regulation) and *social conditions* (family, peers, education, and culture). These findings advance both theoretical and practical insights into adolescent development and point to the need for context-sensitive interventions that strengthen purpose as a key component of mental health and social well-being.

## 5. Limitations & Suggestions

While this study contributes valuable insights into the multidimensional structure of life purpose formation, certain limitations must be acknowledged. First, the qualitative phase relied exclusively on literature-based data rather than direct interviews or focus groups, which may have limited the contextual depth of participants' lived experiences. Second, the quantitative ranking phase involved adolescents from Mexico, and although this provides regional insight, it restricts the generalizability of findings across cultural or socio-economic contexts. Additionally, self-reported data are subject to social desirability bias, particularly in assessing personal constructs like motivation and identity. Lastly, the study's cross-sectional nature prevents causal inferences, and longitudinal designs would be needed to examine how psychological and social factors interact over time in shaping life purpose development.

Future research should expand the scope of data collection to include multiple cultural settings, enabling comparative analysis of how societal norms, religion, and family dynamics influence life purpose formation globally. Employing mixed data sources—such as interviews, diaries, and longitudinal tracking—could yield deeper insights into the developmental trajectories of purpose. It is also recommended that future studies incorporate neuropsychological or behavioral indicators to explore how cognitive regulation and emotional processes underlie purpose-oriented decision-making. Furthermore, integrating intervention-based research could assess the effectiveness of school-based or community-driven programs designed to enhance identity coherence and motivation among adolescents.

In practice, educational and counseling professionals should prioritize programs that cultivate adolescents' self-awareness, goal-setting abilities, and emotional resilience. Schools can integrate reflective exercises, mentorship initiatives, and social-emotional learning curricula that link academic content with personal growth. Parents and families should be encouraged to adopt communication styles that

balance guidance with autonomy, fostering a safe environment for identity exploration. Community organizations and policymakers can also support youth by creating platforms for civic engagement and purposeful contribution, enabling adolescents to connect their personal aspirations with broader social and cultural values.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all those who cooperated in carrying out this study.

## Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

## Ethical 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.

## Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

## Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

## References

- Ajarni, A., Zakaria, R., Zahara, M., Abdullah, A., & Maidar, M. (2025). Depression Among Adolescents Living in Orphanages in Central Aceh District, Indonesia. *Malahayati International Journal of Nursing and Health Science*, 8(5), 630-637. <https://doi.org/10.33024/minh.v8i5.819>
- Dwivedi, P. M., & Chandra, S. (2024). Impact of Life Skills Training on Psychological Well-Being of Adolescents. *Int. J. Emerg. Knowl. Stud.*, 03(11), 967-970. <https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-03-11-015>
- Fan, W., Li, Y., Li, M., & Zhang, L. f. (2022). The Relationship Between Adolescents' Psychosocial Development and Life Satisfaction: A Cross-Lag Study. *Environment and Social Psychology*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.18063/esp.v6.i1.1391>
- Fernandes, G., & Lemos, S. M. A. (2022). Quality of Life and Self-Perceived Health of Adolescents in Middle School. *Codas*, 34(6). <https://doi.org/10.1590/2317-1782/20212021046>
- Gostoli, S., Raimondi, G., Rafanelli, C., & Gremigni, P. (2024). Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and Unhealthy Lifestyle in Adolescence: Unforeseen Role of Allostatic Overload and Psychological Well-Being. *Healthcare*, 12(10), 956. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare12100956>
- Hermainsi, U., Nasution, F., Safitri, R. A., Rahma, Q. A., & Hasibuan, H. M. (2023). Perkembangan Fisik Anak Dan Psikososial Remaja. *Observasi*, 2(1), 11-19. <https://doi.org/10.61132/observasi.v2i1.49>
- Hidayah, N. (2025). Perilaku Remaja Pengguna Gadget: Studi Dan Analisis Pada Teori Sosiologi Pendidikan. *Anwarul*, 5(3), 499-519. <https://doi.org/10.58578/anwarul.v5i3.6465>
- Ji, Y., Cheng, Y., Ting, Y., Zhang, J., & Liu, Q. (2024). The Association Between Social Support and Trying Smoking Among Rural Adolescents in Rural Western China: The Intermediary Role of Mental Health Problems and Life Satisfaction. *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, 27(6), 1109-1115. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ntr/ntae211>
- Kaltiala-Heino, R., Heino, E., Marttunen, M., & Fröjd, S. (2023). Family Characteristics, Transgender Identity and Emotional Symptoms in Adolescence: A Population Survey Study. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 20(4), 2948. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20042948>
- Lathifah, H., & Prastiwi, Y. (2025). Adolescent Identity Formation Under Terminal Illness: A Psychosocial Education Approach. *J. Found. Learn. Child Dev.*, 1(02), 35-41. <https://doi.org/10.53905/childdev.v1i02.7>
- Mohamed, N. F., Manan, N. A., Muhd Fadlin Muhammad Firdaus, C., Rahmatullah, B., Wahab, R. A., Baharudin, S. N. A., Govindasamy, P., & Abdulla, K. (2023). The Prevalence of Internet Gaming Disorders and the Associated Psychosocial Risk Factors Among Adolescents in Malaysian Secondary Schools. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 28(4), 1420-1434. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13591045231164870>
- Mustika, I., Andyarini, E. N., & Hadi, M. I. (2023). Assistance for Adolescents in Preventing Stunting During the First 1000 Days of Life Through the Formation of 'REDAKZI PENTING' (Health and Nutrition-Aware Adolescents Caring for Stunting) in Tambak Oso Waru Village, Sidoarjo. *Engagement Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 7(2), 320-336. <https://doi.org/10.29062/engagement.v7i2.1530>
- Olutola, F. B., Olutola, A. T., Mustapha, W. S., & Adejuwon, G. A. (2023). Influence of Psychosocial Factors on Quality of Life Among in-School Adolescents. *Quality of Life (Banja Luka)* - *Apeiron*, 24(1-2). <https://doi.org/10.7251/qol2301030o>
- Oxana, P. (2021). Psychological Profile of Adolescent's Personality With a High Level of Psychosocial Adaptation. *Univers Pedagogic*(2(70)), 80-93. <https://doi.org/10.52387/1811-5470.2021.2.13>
- Öztürk, F. Ö., & Ayaz-Alkaya, S. (2021). Internet Addiction and Psychosocial Problems Among Adolescents During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Cross-Sectional Study. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, 35(6), 595-601. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnu.2021.08.007>
- Putri, E. R. (2023). Krisis Identitas Agama Pada Usia Remaja. *Bayani*, 3(1), 39-51. <https://doi.org/10.52496/bayaniv.3i.1pp39-51>
- Rahayu, A., Rohmah, N., Nurrachmawati, A., Permana, L., Agustini, R. T., Fikri, M., & Feriyanti, A. (2025). Relationship Between Psychosocial and Consumption Patterns Among High School Adolescents in the National Capital City Buffer Area. *J.MenHealth*, 4(2), 94-101. <https://doi.org/10.56922/mhc.v4i2.1181>
- Ramawat, V. K., Bisnoi, D., Kumar, P., & Soni, H. B. (2022). Psychosocial Problems Among the Adolescence of Working

- and Non- Working Mothers. *GfNPSS-International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 3(3), 967-969. <https://doi.org/10.46376/ijmr/3.5.2022.967-969>
- Shofa, D. A., Anggraeni, B. A. U., Abida, A. N., Husna, N. F., Dewi, K. P., Aswandani, A., Aunurrahman, M. R. A., & Adni, A. (2024). Bipolar Disorder in Adolescents: Clinical Manifestations, Causes, and Comprehensive Management Strategies. *Jurnal Biologi Tropis*, 24(1b), 210-219. <https://doi.org/10.29303/jbt.v24i1b.7973>
- Shrestha, B. L., Gautam, S., Shrestha, J. T. M., & Shrestha, S. (2021). Psychosocial Problems Among the Adolescent School Students of Dhulikhel Municipality. *Kathmandu University Medical Journal*, 19(3), 366-370. <https://doi.org/10.3126/kumj.v19i3.49718>
- Straton, E., Anifowoshe, K., Moore, H., Streisand, R., & Jaser, S. S. (2024). Associations of Coping Strategies With Glycemic and Psychosocial Outcomes Among Adolescents With Type 1 Diabetes Experiencing Diabetes Distress. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 58(9), 628-633. <https://doi.org/10.1093/abm/kaae028>
- Tadayoni, M., Salehi, S., Soltani, A., & Jannati, A. M. (2022). The Role of Psychological Well-Being and Life Expectancy in Social Anxiety of Girls Living in Welfare Centers in Tehran in 2018: A Descriptive Study. *Journal of Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences*, 21(3), 293-310. <https://doi.org/10.52547/jrums.21.3.293>
- Vanderhaegen, J., Prikken, S., Laere, E. V., Lemiere, J., Claes, L., Moons, P., Uyttebroeck, A., Jacobs, S., & Luyckx, K. (2023). Identity Formation and General and Cancer-Specific Functioning in Adolescent and Emerging Adult Survivors of Childhood Cancer: A Longitudinal Study Into Directionality of Effects. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 57(9), 722-732. <https://doi.org/10.1093/abm/kaac075>