

A Socio-Psychological Analysis of Adolescents' Choice of Ideals in an Environment of Social Pressure

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ABSTRACT

Adolescents' choice of ideals is not solely determined by personal interests or talents, but is also strongly influenced by various social pressures from the surrounding environment. This research aims to examine how social pressures from family, peers and the media shape adolescents' decision-making process in determining their future direction. This literature study reveals that social pressures can cause internal conflict, trigger inauthentic decisions, and impact on identity formation and psychological well-being. In many cases, such pressures lead to anxiety and dissatisfaction when the career path taken does not match personal aspirations. This research highlights the importance of healthy social support and reflective and empathic career education and guidance approaches to help adolescents undergo a full process of self-exploration. With a better understanding of the social dynamics of ideal formation, stakeholders can create a more open and supportive space for adolescents to grow as individuals who are free to choose their futures. This research makes theoretical and practical contributions to the discourse of adolescent development and the development of empowered human resources.

INTRODUCTION

In the life trajectory of adolescents towards adulthood, the choice of goals is one of the important processes that structure the future direction of the individual. This process does not take place in a sterile space of external influences. Adolescents grow up in a social environment that has certain standards, values, and expectations for their future. (Myszka-Strychalska, 2018). Dominant value systems often shape perceptions of what professions are considered "worthy", "respectable" or "promising", and this creates psychological pressures that are not always realized. In many cases, these pressures influence the direction of the chosen ideal, not because of interest or potential, but to fulfill social expectations (Czerwińska-Jasiewicz, 2011).

Pressure from the family environment is often the first force that shapes adolescents' orientation towards the future. There are many parents who, with good intentions, direct their children to choose certain career paths such as doctors, engineers, teachers based on views of economic security or social prestige. Whereas, in some situations, the child does not have a strong interest in the field. When this mismatch is allowed to

persist, psychological risks such as chronic stress, loss of motivation, and even regret in adulthood become very likely. This pressure forces children into educational or career paths that are not in line with their desires or talents. This is where we see that ideals decisions are not only an expression of freedom, but also a product of compromise with social pressure (Angelkoska & Mancheva, 2016). Parental support and respect for children's choices are important factors that need to be balanced.

More broadly, social media is becoming an increasingly powerful actor in shaping idealized images of success and careers. The images of popular jobs that are repeatedly displayed through online media create pressure, especially for adolescents who are in the process of self-discovery. Giddens (1991) mentions that in modern societies, identity is not inherited but continuously shaped through self-reflection influenced by information flows. In such a climate, the line between true aspiration and imitative desire becomes increasingly blurred. Adolescents may feel attracted to certain professions not because they fit their personal character, but because of the symbolic pressure from the social world that labels

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"cool professions". Social media becomes a channel of information and an arena for self-meaning.

This reality shows that adolescents' choice of ideals cannot be separated from the social terrain in which they grow up. The dynamics of these social pressures silently direct their choices, and at a certain point can erode self-authenticity. If future choices are shaped not by internal awareness and maturity, but by fear or the desire to be accepted, then we are dealing with a serious problem in the development of young human quality. It is important to explore how social pressure works, and how it intervenes in the process of shaping adolescents' ideals and life direction.

Social pressures that influence adolescents' choice of ideals remain a neglected issue in educational research and developmental psychology. Many researches focus more on aspects of internal motivation or academic achievement, and exclude interventions from social structures that shape their perceptions and decisions. Marcia (1980) within the framework of identity status theory emphasizes that external pressures can inhibit the exploration process and make individuals make premature decisions, referred to as identity foreclosure. In this case, adolescents do not really undergo a mature selection process, but rather accept the choices presented by the environment.

The impact of this pressure is not just psychological, but can also extend to the social and economic spheres. Adolescents' who are forced to take educational or career paths that do not match their interests and talents are vulnerable to alienation and low job satisfaction in the future. According to Arnett (2004), emerging adulthood is a period of active exploration in terms of love, work and outlook on life. When this exploration process is blocked by overly strong social pressures, individuals lose the opportunity to find their authentic selves. This kind of situation certainly does not support the development of creative and competitive human resources.

Moreover, systemic social pressure creates symbolic stratification of professions. Bourdieu (1986) mentions that in social structures, symbolic capital such as professional prestige becomes a cultural control tool that determines one's social status. Adolescents are encouraged to pursue careers that are considered to have high symbolic value, even if they do not match their personal values. When this symbolic status becomes the main basis for decision-making, then career choices are no longer about contribution or meaningfulness in life, but competition for social recognition. This has the potential to create a generation that loses its value orientation and is unable to survive

when the reality of life is not as beautiful as the social narrative they are pursuing.

The shifting social and information dynamics of the past decade have made the pressures on adolescents' not only more intense, but also more complex and layered. The constant flow of information accelerates the spread of social values, norms and expectations infiltrating their daily lives. Identity, which should be shaped through personal experience and deep reflection, is now also constructed by various external channels that shape collective opinion. In other words, adolescents not only absorb information, but also internalize the social expectations that come with it. They learn to judge themselves not only by their personal achievements, but also by how they "look" to others in the digital social space. In the midst of this flow, not all have the capacity to distinguish between personal aspirations and social illusions.

Research on social interventions on ideals formation is relevant not only for academic purposes, but also for educators, policy makers and families to consider in building an ecosystem that supports the development of healthy career choices. By understanding the extent to which social pressure works and how it shapes the life trajectories of adolescents', more transformative and empathetic measures can be designed to create a more whole, confident and meaning-oriented generation.

This research aims to review how social pressure influences adolescents' decision-making process in choosing their ideals and its impact on the authenticity of their choices and the process of self-identity formation. This research is expected to provide a more critical understanding of the relationship between social construction and the future orientation of the younger generation, as well as to contribute to the formulation of educational and social approaches that are more responsive to the dynamics of adolescent development.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method as the basis for analyzing the issue of social pressure and adolescents' choice of ideals. This approach allowed the researcher to examine various scientific papers, academic journals, books on developmental psychology and sociology of education, as well as relevant previous research results. Literature study was chosen because it is effective in developing theoretical and conceptual arguments on complex and multidimensional topics, such as the relationship between social structure and the formation of personal aspirations. As explained by Creswell (2007), a qualitative approach is very appropriate to

explore the meaning and patterns of interaction in human experiences that are subjective and contextual.

Data collection techniques were conducted through literature searches of credible scientific sources, both in print and digital form. The analysis procedure used the content analysis method, with a focus on identifying key themes related to social pressure, adolescent identity formation, and the career decision-making process. This literature study was designed not only to summarize previous findings, but also to construct new critical and synthesized understandings. As Punch (2005) points out, a strong literature review not only presents what has been found, but also explains how these ideas interact with each other to form a theoretical foundation for future research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Adolescents' is a phase of life that is full of change and self-discovery. At this stage, individuals seek to understand who they are and what their place in society is. This process involves discovering interests, talents and aspirations that shape life goals and future choices, including careers. Along the way, social pressure from the surrounding environment is often the dominant factor that directs decisions. These pressures can come in many forms, from family, peers and the media, which often set standards that are not aligned with an adolescent's personal desires or potential (Simmons & Blyth, 2017).

Families are often a source of great expectations and demands on their children, with the aim that they follow a particular path that is perceived as more secure or prestigious. These demands can make adolescents feel trapped in choices that do not stem from their own desires, but rather a desire to fulfill parental expectations or maintain the family's social status. Often, this pressure leads to career choices that do not match interests or talents, leaving adolescents feeling disconnected from the work they are doing. This can create feelings of disappointment, confusion, and difficulty in finding happiness in the work they do (Kannammal, 2014).

Peer groups also play a major role in shaping adolescents' career decisions. The desire for group acceptance can lead adolescents to choose certain career paths that are popular or accepted by their peers, even if they do not match personal interests. Similarly, the media, both social and traditional, often present idealized images of certain jobs or lifestyles that are associated with success. All of these factors work together to shape the mindset of adolescents, who often get caught up in fulfilling social expectations, instead of pursuing a path that truly matches their desires and

potential (Wekerle et al., 2020). It is important for teens to have healthy guidance and reflective space.

Social pressure plays a crucial role in the career decision-making process of adolescents. Adolescents' is a period of identity exploration, where individuals seek an understanding of themselves and their role in society. This process is ideally done through experience, reflection, and recognition of interests and potential. Pressure from social environments, such as family, peers and the media, can influence career choices. Adolescents may feel compelled to choose a particular career path not out of personal interest, but out of a desire to fulfill social expectations or avoid rejection. This kind of pressure can lead teens to make decisions that don't reflect their true selves. This can inhibit a healthy identity exploration process and lead to inauthentic career decisions (Fernandes & Bance, 2015).

Families are often a significant source of social pressure in adolescent career decision-making. Parents may have certain expectations of their children's careers, based on cultural values, social status or personal experiences. Adolescents who feel bound to these expectations may neglect their own interests and talents in favor of meeting family expectations. This can lead to internal conflict and dissatisfaction in the long run (Juneja & Rikhi, 2017). According to Dietrich and Kracke (2009), balanced and non-coercive parental support can help adolescents make career decisions that are more suited to them.

Peers also have a major influence on adolescents' career choices. Adolescents tend to seek approval from their peer group, and career choices that are popular among their peers can influence their own decisions. Pressure to conform to group norms may cause adolescents to neglect their personal aspirations. Adolescents can be driven to choose a certain major or occupation not because of their interests or talents, but because they want to fit in and not feel left behind by their peers. Research by Schultheiss et al. (2001) suggests that social interactions with peers can influence adolescents' perceptions of viable and desirable career choices.

Mass media and social media also play a role in shaping adolescents' perceptions of ideal careers. Images of glamorous or successful careers presented by the media can create unrealistic standards and pressure to achieve similar success. Adolescents may feel compelled to pursue certain careers because of the image formed by the media, rather than because of their own interests or abilities. This can lead to dissatisfaction and stress if the reality of the career does not match expectations. According to Lent et al. (2002), perceptions of the world of work shaped by

the media can influence adolescents' beliefs about their ability to succeed in a particular career.

Strong social pressure can hinder the process of healthy identity exploration in adolescents (Helfert & Warschburger, 2013). Adolescents who feel pressured to make certain career decisions may not have the opportunity to explore different options and understand themselves deeply (Dumas et al., 2012). This can lead to inauthentic career decisions and long-term dissatisfaction (Irianti, 2009). According to Erikson (1968), failed identity exploration can lead to role confusion and difficulty in forming a stable identity.

Career decisions influenced by social pressure can have a negative impact on adolescents' psychological well-being. Adolescents who feel forced to follow a particular career path may experience stress, anxiety and depression. A mismatch between the chosen career and personal interests can lead to dissatisfaction and decreased motivation. Research by Creed et al. (2007) showed that congruence between career choice and personal interests is associated with higher psychological well-being in adolescents.

Social pressure can also influence adolescents' perceptions of their ability to succeed in a particular career. Adolescents who feel supported by their social environment tend to have higher self-efficacy and feel more capable of facing career challenges. In contrast, adolescents who feel unsupported or pressured may doubt their abilities and avoid career choices that match their interests. According to Bandura (1997), high self-confidence plays an important role in decision-making and goal achievement.

Effective career education and guidance can help adolescents cope with social pressures and make more authentic career decisions. Guidance programs that encourage self-exploration and the development of decision-making skills can strengthen adolescents' ability to make choices that match their interests and values. According to Gati and Asher (2001), interventions designed to increase self-awareness and decision-making skills can assist adolescents in the career selection process.

The role of educators and counselors is crucial in helping adolescents deal with social pressures in career decision-making. By providing appropriate support, information and guidance, they can help adolescents explore different career options and understand the consequences of each choice. This can help adolescents make more conscious and self-appropriate decisions. According to Savickas (2005), a career guidance approach that focuses on

individual narratives can help adolescents form a cohesive career identity.

The school environment can also influence adolescents' career decision-making. Schools that provide comprehensive career information and opportunities for exploration can help adolescents make better decisions. In contrast, a lack of information and support at school can reinforce social pressures and inhibit healthy decision-making processes. According to Watson and McMahon (2005), a supportive school environment can play an important role in adolescent career development. Support from teachers and counselors who understand the dynamics of adolescent development is crucial in helping them deal with social pressures and evaluate career choices more objectively.

A conducive school environment serves as a place for academic learning, and as a socialization space where values, expectations and social norms are formed and reproduced. In this regard, teachers and career counselors have a significant influence on the direction of students' aspirational choices. When educators show sensitivity to the diversity of students' interests and talents, and provide dialogical space for self-exploration, students will feel more confident in developing their future goals. If schools impose certain standards on ideal occupations or judge success solely on academic aspects, then social pressure from educational institutions themselves can actually become a barrier to the formation of an authentic career identity.

A curriculum that is too rigid and does not provide space for the development of individual interests can narrow students' perspectives on available career options. When learning orientation is too focused on cognitive achievement without integrating character education and early career exploration, adolescents risk making ideal decisions based solely on external expectations. This is exacerbated by social comparisons between students that are often triggered by competitive ranking and evaluation systems. As stated by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994), confidence in making career decisions is strongly influenced by the interaction between personal factors, environment, and learning behavior. Schools as one of the most significant environments in the lives of adolescents have a great responsibility to provide a safe and reflective space to accompany the process of discovery and formation of students' ideals.

The relationship between social constructionism and the future orientation of adolescents' is an important theme that demands critical understanding across fields ranging from the sociology of education to developmental psychology to cultural studies.

Social constructionism, in this case, refers to the norms and values passed on by families, schools, the media and wider society, and includes collective expectations of what counts as an “ideal of ideals”. In this space, adolescents do not grow up in a social vacuum; they shape their aspirations through a negotiation between personal desires and pressures from the social structures around them. When this space is too narrow - for example due to gender stereotypes, social class, or homogenized standards of success - then individual choices are vulnerable to being co-opted by dominant narratives, rather than reflecting authenticity.

A critical understanding of this process is important because adolescents' is a crucial stage in identity formation, and future orientation is integral to identity itself. Numerous studies indicate that unconscious social pressures – like the drive to pursue prestigious or socially approved careers – can trigger internal conflict and identity crises in adolescents when personal values clash with societal expectations. A more responsive educational and social approach is needed, one that allows adolescents to explore life's possibilities in ways that are reflective, participatory and supportive of their authentic development. The contribution of this kind of thinking is not only important for the design of adaptive curricula or inclusive guidance programs, but also in shaping a society that better values diverse life paths and the meaning of success.

CONCLUSION

Social pressures have a complex and profound influence on adolescents' decision-making process in determining their ideals. Adolescence is a pivotal period in identity formation, where individuals seek to understand who they are and what their purpose in life is. In the midst of identity exploration, many adolescents are faced with expectations from family, peers, and media influences that shape perceptions of ideal careers. Normative social interventions often keep adolescents from making authentic choices, cause internal conflict, and lead to a mismatch between their potential and their career path. This suggests that social pressures can significantly influence identity formation and psychological well-being, necessitating a deeper understanding of the social dynamics surrounding adolescents' personal decisions.

From these findings, it can be understood that the process of forming a choice of ideals is not something that takes place in a vacuum, but is strongly influenced by social structures and the dynamics of interpersonal relations. Educational institutions, families, and those involved in fostering

adolescents' need to consider aspects of social pressure in designing self-development approaches. The existence of unhealthy social pressure risks hindering individual development in finding a meaningful life path that is in accordance with their identity, so that the implications touch psychological aspects, education, and broader social dimensions. This finding confirms that the choice of ideals cannot be understood simply as an expression of personal desire, but rather as the result of constant interaction with the surrounding environment.

Efforts to reduce unproductive social pressure in the process of choosing ideals need to be oriented towards establishing an environment that is supportive, inclusive and open to the diversity of individual interests and potential. Families need to be empowered through parenting education on the importance of providing healthy exploration space for children. Schools and counseling institutions should adopt empathy-based, personalized guidance to help adolescents make reflective decisions grounded in self-understanding. The entire educational and social ecosystem needs to be geared towards creating a safe space for adolescents to construct their future narratives independently and responsibly. By creating safe and supportive spaces, adolescents can grow into individuals who are able to make career decisions based not only on social expectations, but also on a deep understanding of themselves and their potential.

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