



PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE ROLE OF SELF-IDENTITY IN
ADOLESCENTS: A FEMALE REGIONAL QUEENSLAND PERSPECTIVE.

A Thesis submitted by

Krystal Watson

For the award of

Master of Professional Studies (Research)

2021

ABSTRACT

Adolescence and the transition into adulthood present numerous challenges for the individual experiencing it, their peers, and society generally. Personal responsibility has been established as an important consideration of adolescent development as it equips youth to gain greater control over their behaviour, emotions and thinking. In particular, the development of personal responsibility during adolescence remains an important area of research in the fields of psychology and education. What is less known is the relationship between female adolescents' self-identity and their personal responsibility in a regional Queensland setting.

Research shows that adolescence is known as a time of exploration and decision-making. Therefore, it has been proposed by the researcher that a deeper understanding surrounding the personal development of female adolescents in a Queensland regional setting is required, especially as it relates to self-identity and personal responsibility. This study addresses the gap in professional practice and literature surrounding the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility based on current definitions of the concepts.

This thesis presents the findings of an exploratory study investigating female adolescent perspectives of self-identity, personal responsibility, and the possible relationship between them in a regional Queensland all-girls private secondary school context. Primary data was collected using semi-structured focus group interviews.

The results confirmed the definitional dimensions of the concepts of self-identity and personal responsibility. Key findings concur with the study's propositions that self-identity is positively related to and influences personal responsibility. The emerging themes provided deeper understanding and insights into this relationship. However, the relationship is more complex and reciprocal than first understood. Further, the themes emerging from the analysis suggest that rather than a unidirectional relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility, instead influenced each other. Peer relations were found to have a notable influence on the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility.

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

This Thesis is entirely the work of Krystal Watson except where otherwise acknowledged, with majority of the authorship of the papers presented as a Thesis by Publication undertaken by the student. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where acknowledged.

Principal Supervisor: Luke van der Laan

Associated Supervisor: Sophia Imran

Associated Supervisor: Nicole Brownlie

(Student and supervisor's signatures of endorsement are held at the University)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my principal supervisor, Luke Van Der Laan at the University of Southern Queensland, as if it was not for his belief in me and my vision, I would not have made it through my Master's degree. Thank you for your willingness to impart valuable knowledge and for your valuable guidance.

I would like to thank my associate supervisor, Sophia Imran who guided me in such a positive way. Sophia support and willingness to provide in-depth feedback enabled me to feel confident in my abilities. I also acknowledge the early input of Nicole Brownlie as my associate supervisor. Nicole guided me through my confirmation and provided detailed knowledge regarding adolescent development. A special mention I would also like to give is to Dr Patrick Danaher for being my critical friend.

My sincere appreciation goes out to the staff and students of the high school involved in the focus groups. With the support of the high school, the study was able to conduct this research. Another, important thank you goes towards the parents who gave consent for their child to participant in valuable research. Thank you all for supporting my vision with this research.

I cannot express my gratitude enough for the opportunities I have been given as an employee of this high school. As it was my time working at the school with the students that inspired me to do this study and contribute their life's journey.

I would like to sincerely thank my family and partner Todd Sommerfield for being continually invested in supporting me through this journey.

I have been able to complete this research with the Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship and acknowledge this support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
CERTIFICATION OF THESIS.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. BACKGROUND.....	2
1.2. STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	3
1.3. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH.....	4
1.4. SCOPE OF RESEARCH.....	5
1.5. THE RESERACHER AS PRACTITIONER.....	6
1.6. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
1.6.1. ADOLESCENT PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT.....	8
1.6.2. SELF-IDENTITY.....	10
1.6.3. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY.....	13
1.7. CONCEPTUAL MODEL.....	16
1.8. RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	17
1.9. METHODOLGY.....	18
1.9.1. INTRODUCTION.....	18
1.9.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM.....	18
1.9.3. RESEARCH DESIGN.....	19
1.9.4. PARTICIPANTS.....	20
1.9.5. DATA COLLECTION.....	20
1.9.6. DATA ANALYSIS.....	23
1.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION.....	26
1.11. CONCLUSION.....	27
CHAPTER 2. RESULTS AND PUBLICATION.....	28
2.1. INTRODUCTION.....	28
2.2. RESULTS.....	28
2.2.1. SELF-IDENTITY.....	28
2.2.2. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY.....	32
2.2.3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-IDENTITY AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY.....	37
2.3. EMERGENT THEMES.....	40

2.4. PUBLICATION SUBMISSION.....	41
2.5. COPY OF SUBMISSION.....	44
2.6. CONCLUSION.....	62
CHAPTER 3. CONCLUSION.....	63
3.1. INTRODUCTION.....	63
3.2. RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	63
3.2.1. RQ1: WHAT ARE FEMALE ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SELF-IDENTITY IN A REGIONAL QUEENSLAND ALL-GIRLS PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOL SETTING?	64
3.2.2. RQ2: WHAT ARE FEMALE ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A REGIONAL QUEENSLAND ALL-GIRLS PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOL SETTING?.....	65
3.2.3. RQ3: WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-IDENTITY AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A REGIONAL QUEENSLAND ALL-GIRLS PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOL SETTING?.....	66
3.3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	67
3.4. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY.....	69
3.4.1. PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE	70
3.4.2. SCHOLARSHIP	70
3.4.3. SELF	71
3.5. FUTURE RESEARCH.....	72
3.6. CONCLUSION.....	73
REFERENCES.....	75
APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM	79
APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM	82

APPENDIX C: CONFIRMATION EMAIL

kwatson_11@hotmail.com

From: em.yjado.0.73c986.a271f0df@editorialmanager.com on behalf of Journal of Adolescence <em@editorialmanager.com>
Sent: June 6, 2021 2:00 PM
To: Luke van der Laan
Subject: A manuscript number has been assigned JOA21-438

Journal of Adolescence
Ref: JOA21-438
Title: Personal Responsibility and the Role of Self-Identity in Adolescents: A Female Regional Australian Perspective.
Authors: Krystal Watson; Luke van der Laan, PhD; Sophia Imran, PhD Article Type: Article

Dear Associate Professor Luke van der Laan,

Your submission entitled "Personal Responsibility and the Role of Self-Identity in Adolescents: A Female Regional Australian Perspective." has been assigned the following manuscript number: JOA21-438.

You may check on the progress of your paper by logging on to Editorial Manager as an author. The URL is <https://www.editorialmanager.com/yjado/>.

Thank you for submitting your work to this journal. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Kind regards,

Journal of Adolescence

Email: joa@elsevier.com
<https://www.editorialmanager.com/yjado/>
<http://www.elsevier.com/locate/adolescence>

For further assistance, please visit our customer support site at <https://service.elsevier.com/app/home/supporthub/publishing/>. Here you can search for solutions on a range of topics, find answers to frequently asked questions and learn more about EM via interactive tutorials. You will also find our 24/7 support contact details should you need any further assistance from one of our customer support representatives.

In compliance with data protection regulations, you may request that we remove your personal registration details at any time. (Use the following URL: <https://www.editorialmanager.com/yjado/login.asp?a=r>). Please contact the publication office if you have any questions.

..... 83

APPENDIX D: THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF DATA..... 84

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Conceptual model of the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility during early adolescence.....	16
Figure 2. Conceptual model of the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility during early adolescence.....	21
Figure 3. Steps of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012).	23
Figure 4. Modified Model based on the themes from the research findings.....	41
Figure 5: Conceptual model of the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility during early adolescence.....	51

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Interest in the social and emotional development of adolescent students has received increased attention in recent years. This is due to a greater awareness of the complexity of the worlds in which young people currently live (Glass, 2013). Society is ever changing, and lifestyles are becoming fast paced, causing many adolescents to miss the guidance and support they require in identifying their self-identity and developing their personal responsibility. The development of self-identity and personal responsibility gains more importance especially during adolescence, when young people are required to make more choices while developing an understanding of their role in society.

Personal responsibility does not function in isolation. It is linked with other constructs such as locus of control, personal agency and self-efficacy, self-concept and self-esteem, self-regulation, and emotional intelligence (Mergler et al., 2007). A key premise of the study is that Mergler's notion of self-concept and self-esteem being related to personal responsibility, reflects the definition of self-identity. This illustrates that understanding female adolescent development is complex. For the purpose of this research, personal responsibility was investigated as it relates to self-identity. The nature of the relationship between personal responsibility and self-identity is less known.

Future research is required to investigate what may increase the likelihood of one's commitment to personal responsibility (Mergler & Shield, 2016). The current study investigated how self-identity and personal responsibility may influence each other and whether a relationship existed between the concepts. To gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility, the perceptions of female adolescents were required. The study focused on obtaining understandings and insights from the early adolescence age group. Early adolescence ranges between 10-15 years old (Jackson & Goossens, 2020). Therefore, the female adolescent participants were from Year 9 and Year 10, attending a regionally based all-girls private secondary school in Queensland, Australia. High school becomes a major component for adolescent development, as they are well placed to teach valuable skills such as self-identity, responsibility and an awareness of others (Mergler, 2007).

This chapter outlines the background to the research (section 1.1) as it relates to the research problem (section 1.2) and explains why the research is important. The purpose of research (section 1.3) outlines the objectives related to the study. Section 1.4 includes the scope of the research to provide clarity of the study and the gap in profession practice and the gap in literature. Section 1.5 provides a background of the researcher as the practitioner. The literature review (section 1.6) provides detailed information related to adolescent development, self-identity and personal responsibility. Section 1.7 offers an understanding into the conceptual model and Section 1.8 states the research questions which both guided the study. The methodology (section 1.9) explains the chosen research paradigm and research design of the study. This section also explains the participants and how the data was collected and analysed. In addition, ethical considerations (section 1.10) are also explained in this chapter.

1.1. BACKGROUND

Challenges for adolescence are well known across cultures as a time of great tests and trials (Siegel, 2015). Being a teenager in modern society can be quite a confusing and overwhelming time. Searching for the meaning of life especially during the teen years can lead to a crisis of identity, vulnerability to peer pressure and a lack of direction and purpose (Siegel, 2015). As adolescents are vulnerable, it may be vital for them to understand the value of self-identity and how it relates to their cognitive perception of who they are and how they want others to perceive them.

Scholars have found, adolescents' self-identity becomes more complicated, especially during the transition through adolescence (Arnett, 2014). This highlights the importance of the guidance needed in supporting youth to develop their self-identity. This research proposed that developing the foundation of self-identity can influence personal responsibility in guiding adolescents to form positive choices. However, the extent to which self-identity influences personal responsibility is unknown. Although there is evidence that behaviour and self-identity are related processes during adolescence, the role these processes may play in adolescent development is unclear (Pfeifer & Berkman, 2018).

The concept of personal responsibility is seen to play a key role in adolescent development. During adolescence, young people desire greater independence and make decisions that may have far-reaching implications on themselves and the communities they function in (Mergler & Shield, 2016). If adolescents fail to recognise that they can control their thoughts and their behavioural choices, they may experience negative cognition, which hinders their personal growth (Mergler, 2007). Mergler and Shield (2016) have found adolescents that demonstrate self-control and personal responsibility, are more resilient in their transition into adulthood. Increasing personal responsibility can equip adolescents with the skills and knowledge required in making better and more valuable choices (Mergler, 2007).

The literature has overlooked the role of personal responsibility in the context of adolescent development and studies on personal responsibility and its relationship with self-identity are rare especially in regional communities. In addition, young people in regional areas of Australia experience higher levels of psychological distress and lower levels of personal and social well-being (McAllister et al., 2018). Adolescents are building their identity and independence resulting in complex learning and development (McAllister et al., 2018).

As such, the study responded to the need for future research in self-identity as it relates to personal responsibility amongst adolescent females. Undertaking this research provides an opportunity to contribute to the personal development of female adolescents. How youth navigate their adolescent years and their personal development, has a direct impact on how they will live the rest of their lives (Siegel, 2015).

1.2. STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Adolescents are the next generational input into the social fabric of societies and the values and relative success of their development are critical factors (van der Laan, 2014). Adolescents require provision of necessary skills to equip them to move positively towards their future. Personal development of adolescence becomes increasingly imperative as youth are laying the foundations of their adult health and well-being (Reavley et al., 2017). Adolescence is known as a time of exploration, development, and decision-making. Therefore, this research proposed that a deeper understanding of self-identity and personal responsibility was required.

Research shows that regional Queensland experiences higher mental ill health rates than other metropolitan areas (McAllister et al., 2018). Adding an extra layer of complexity to how females in regional Queensland experience their adolescent years. A focus on adolescent development in regional Queensland becomes more prominent as researchers agree that unique stressors related to regional areas, such as isolation could adversely impact health outcomes, particularly within mental health, contributing to risk-taking behaviour (McAllister et al., 2018).

Within the psychology and education fields, the role of personal responsibility during adolescent development remains largely overlooked and few researchers examine how adolescents perceive and enact personal responsibility (Mergler, Spencer & Patton, 2007). Self-identity among adolescence also remains of high interest to psychologist and across the social sciences (Leary & Tangney, 2011). The study responded to the gap in professional practice and the gap in literature to provide new insights into the nature of the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility. The knowledge gained contributed in informing further opportunities to positively strengthen the personal development of adolescent females.

This research responded to the need to better understand adolescent perceptions of self-identity and personal responsibility in a regional Queensland context by investigating their perceptions of self-identity and personal responsibility. The study explored whether a relationship existed between the two concepts and what impact this relationship could have towards the personal development of female adolescents. The knowledge gained can help guide and support adolescents with their development of self and their decision-making skills. The research provided clarity as to what relationship exists between self-identity and personal responsibility, contributing to the area of youth development.

1.3. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to discover a deeper understanding of the importance of developing personal responsibility in adolescents and the extent to which self-identity can be a positive influencer. To achieve this purpose, the study investigated the significance of the relationship, if any, between self-identity and personal responsibility. The exploratory study made a contribution to professional practice that informed and provided knowledge that could guide adolescents at such an important and vulnerable point in life. Conducting

this initial study in the field of adolescent development also addressed the gap in literature related to the proposed relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility. The premise adopted by the study was that being more aware of one's identity and consciously developing one's awareness, positively influences the degree to which an adolescent will be more likely to be self-responsible. The research provided insight into the understanding of both concepts and how they are related among female adolescents in a regional Queensland all-girls secondary school. In particular the study builds on the work of Mergler (2007) and Arnett (2014) and has contributed to the discourse associated with adolescent perceptions of self-identity and personal responsibility. Further, the study identified emerging themes and a deeper understanding of how these perceptions influence their life, in terms of healthy social and emotional development in young female in regional communities.

1.4. SCOPE OF RESEARCH

An underlying premise of this study is that the identification of self-identity during early adolescence can contribute positively to personal responsibility and therefore to behavioural choices. The study investigated how self-identity can be an indicator towards the personal responsibility for early adolescents. The population of early adolescents is understudied yet vulnerable. One of the limitations towards the scope of the study, is that its focus is limited as it only looked at the relationship and not at increasing the developmental pathways for female adolescents.

The research was conducted at an all-girls private secondary school in regional Queensland. The study conducted semi-structured focus group interviews consisting of twelve participants. From Year 9, eight students participated, forming two focus groups with four students in each group. Four students from Year 10 participated and formed one focus group. The students' ages ranged between 13-15 years old. These insights developed new knowledge in understanding the understudied relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility and provided significant resources for further research.

The perceptions from stakeholders such as teachers, psychologists and parents are also critical in researching the phenomena, however, were outside the scope of this study. Female adolescents instead were the prime focus of this study and the researcher explored the world they live in, from their point of view. The

perspectives from the participants provided valuable insights into early adolescence as it relates to self-identity and personal responsibility. Because of the narrow scope of the study, which was only confined to one school in regional Queensland, the study results can-not be generalised. However, this research provided a basis for doing further studies within the area of developmental pathways for female adolescents.

1.5. THE RESERACHER AS PRACTITIONER

The researcher has worked closely with a diverse range of people with unique goals, needs and values throughout her professional practice. This included working as a Youth Worker, supporting vulnerable youth experiencing out-of-home care and within the mental health sector as a support worker. The researcher also has an extensive basketball career in coaching female athletes at various levels. However, the professional practice that has strongly driven this study is the work the researcher has completed at an all-girls private secondary school. The researcher has worked as a sports coach in fitness, athletics and basketball, also providing supervision and mentoring in the boarding school. From this practice the researcher has developed deep insight related to the study phenomenon.

While working with adolescents, the researcher had opportunities to observe and discuss different issues, worries, and fears the youth were experiencing. After observation and interaction, it was clear that some adolescents, i) lacked confidence and belief in themselves; ii) felt lost without a sense of purpose; iii) were unable or unwilling to develop a deeper understanding of their self-identity; iv) vulnerable to peer pressure and v) inclined to make poor choices. The researcher questioned whether youth are given the opportunity to ask deeper questions about the self, such as: Who am I? What do I really want to achieve? What do I really desire? What are my strengths and weaknesses?

The researcher felt strongly that self-identity is the first requirement in strongly assisting personal responsibility and personal development. With a sense of who you are, a vision of the person you want to become and an understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses, a plan for personal development can be created to allow young adolescents to achieve their potential. The researcher also considered the main concept in assisting adolescents with the choices they make and what can keep

them accountable. The concept that was implemented as the basis of the study is personal responsibility.

The researcher discovered in her own professional practice that the students were feeling lost in their lives, without a clear path forward. The researcher wanted to assist the students beyond fitness as she recognised the students were being affected. The researcher created a program for the students titled, “Be All You Can Be”, consisting of a fitness schedule as well as self-identity and self-reflective exercises. While assisting the students through the program, the researcher witnessed positive outcomes after increasing their self-identity. The outcomes consisted of students performing better in their fitness session because they understood why they were there and what they were trying to achieve. There was also feedback from the students that understanding themselves made them feel happier and provided them more meaning in life.

After observing the positive results, the researcher wanted to further explore if self-identity can influence their personal responsibility. The researcher wanted to explore whether a developed sense of self-identity and a deeper understanding of who each student is as individual could positively increase the decisions they make towards self and towards other.

1.6. LITERATURE REVIEW

It is essential to provide the much-needed attention and explicit guidance needed to positively develop youth through their adolescence. How we navigate the adolescent years and positively inspire their development, has a direct impact on how they will live the rest of their lives (Siegel, 2015). In particular, the development of personal responsibility during adolescence remains an important area of research in the fields of psychology and education. What is less known, is the relationship between female adolescents’ self-identity and personal responsibility in a regional Queensland setting. The literature revealed that developing self-identity has the ability to influence motivation, thought processes, understanding of self and others, behavioural choices and the ability to self-regulate (Leary & Tangney, 2011). Self and identity theorists have stated there is a common theme in which self-identity is important towards behaviour (Leary & Tangney, 2011). Based on this evidence, the literature review explores the current knowledge across three elements: personal

development of adolescence, the role of self-identity, and the importance of personal responsibility.

1.6.1. ADOLESCENT PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Adolescence is a continual period of personal development while building a foundation for their future. The adolescence period empowers individuals to develop cognitively, physically and sexually (Reavley et al., 2017). This provides youth the opportunity to establish a basis of their self-identity, while making choices towards their behaviour. Youth endure a number of developmental changes as they transition from childhood to adulthood, experiencing foundational learning (Dahl, Allen, Wilbrecht, & Suleiman, 2018). Adolescence is a prime time for individuality and the exploration of who they are and how they want to act. This is due to the ability adolescents have to think about who they are as a person or the person they want to become in society (Crocetti, 2017).

It is important to understand that during the onset of puberty, female adolescents experience the temptation to self-objectify especially when bodies begin to mature and are often evaluated by others (Slater & Tiggemann, 2015). Females are increasingly aware of being looked at and commented on by others, influencing their individual conception of self. Self-objectification is more likely to intensify for females during adolescence and increase with the physical changes and increased levels of self-awareness. If self-objectification is not addressed positively, it can lead to many issues for females including: poor self-image, disordered eating, body shame and appearance anxiety (Slater & Tiggemann, 2015). Therefore, it is exceptionally important to provide positive guidance towards developing a healthy self-identity to increase their personal responsibility, and lower self-objectification.

The developmental process for adolescents is an important time in a lifespan and creates the foundation of one's self-identity. This period sets the development of core characteristics and enables a sense of purpose (Siegel, 2015). Establishing self-identity within adolescence, supports commitment in adult life and sets a foundation for further development as they transition into adulthood (Arnett, 2014). When adolescents establish their self-identity, they make a lot of important choices. These choices have a strong impact towards their development and their future. If adolescents are more aware of their decisions and take ownership of the consequent

outcomes, they are more likely to consider their choices and lessen the likelihood to of acting inappropriately (Smithikrai, Longthong, & Peijssel, 2015). Therefore, this research proposed that the ability for youth to reflect on their thoughts will have an impact on the choices they make towards their self-identity and their behaviour.

From age 11, cognition is experienced in which young people start to think systemically about possibilities and hypotheses, known as formal operations (Arnett, 2014). Formal operations enable adolescents to experience abstract and complex thinking. During adolescence, it is important to provide young people, the opportunities to consider their choices, consequences and how their choices and actions impact on their lives and on others (Mergler, 2007).

Adolescents also develop metacognition, the capacity to think about their thoughts (Arnett, 2014). Metacognition enables adolescents the ability to consider the control they have over how they think and what they think about (Mergler, 2007). If mastered correctly adolescents have the ability to reason their thought processes, creating positive choices (Arnett, 2014). As such, the development of formal operations and metacognition give adolescents ownership towards their thoughts and behaviour. Adolescents begin to make important independent choices that they become accountable for and they gain the ability to understand and implement personal responsibility. As adolescents evolve into independent young adults they are faced with life-changing choices and have the power to choose how they feel and how they react (Mergler & Patton, 2007). Establishing personal responsibility during this process is valuable for adolescents (Mergler & Patton, 2007).

During adolescence, youth are also seeking autonomy from their parents as they begin the process of exploring and committing to their identity and making connection to their peers (Pfeifer & Berkman, 2018). Adolescent independence gives youth the opportunity to think, feel and make decisions on their own. The development of independence carries through into adulthood, however, autonomy in adolescence is building the foundation for adulthood independence.

Young females have found experiencing adolescence to be quite overwhelming and confusing in terms of decision making (Slater & Tiggemann, 2015). This emphasises the significance of implementing a supportive framework to assist youth during this time. The changes experienced during adolescence can be incredibly

unsettling, however, if equipped with appropriate skills, youth can constructively be prepared to successfully handle this developmental period. During the transition from adolescence to adulthood, resources are required in identifying and improving self-identity, developing decision-making skills and evolving a strong sense of personal responsibility. As adolescents seek independence away from their parents, they are sometimes missing the guidance they require in building positive self-identities and personal responsibility. The development of self can assist in self-regulation and motivated behaviour, as adolescence explore their identity while increasing their autonomy (Pfeifer & Berkman, 2018).

1.6.2. SELF-IDENTITY

One of the most distinctive features of adolescence is that it is a time of thinking about who they are, where their life is going, what they believe in and how their life fits into the world around them (Arnett, 2014). Adolescents are influenced by many external factors which may cause complexities in determining their identity. During the life span of personal development there are no periods more important for adolescence than the development of self (Sigelman & Rider, 2014). Building the foundation of self-knowledge is a key developmental task for adolescents to explore emerging identities that support positive independence (Pfeifer & Berkman, 2018).

This phase of life for young people brings new challenges and ambiguities, demanding more autonomy and a new meaning to self (Onetti, Fernandez-Garcia & Castillo-Rodriguez, 2019). Self-identity can influence motivation, thought processes, actions, and the control to regulate feelings (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012). This developmental process of building a coherent understanding of self-identity is significant for adolescents as it creates the elements of and the foundations for their future.

For the purpose of the study, self-identity is defined as; “an individuals’ perceptions of their characteristics and abilities, their beliefs and values, their relations with others, and how their lives fit into the world around them” (Arnett, 2014, p. 170). The development of a positive self-identity enables a path for adolescence to integrate into society. An understanding of the ‘self’ influences adolescent experiences and how they internalise the experiences as a measure of ability and self-worth (Benninger & Savahl, 2017). Constructing the meaning of ‘self’ promotes

healthy development, behaviour and well-being (Benninger & Savahl, 2017), and assists in being a crucial guide towards exploration and seeking independence (Sigelman & Rider, 2014).

During adolescent development, identity formation is a known process. Identity formation allows youth to reflect on their traits, abilities and interests while exploring life choices (Arnett, 2014). Identity formation also coincides with identity crisis which is handled either positively or negatively by youth (Dameshghi & Kalantarkousheh, 2016). How adolescents respond to their self-identity, has a direct impact on their reputation and their future.

The development of identity is an important task (Verhoeven et al., 2019), and the adolescence period is the prime time in developing self-identity. An increased focus of self-identity is critical as adolescents are concerned about building an image of who they are, who they want to be and how they want others to perceive them (Verhoeven et al., 2019). For young people to be confident in making positive and certain personal and ideological choices, a level of self-identity is required (Arnett, 2014). Self-identity begins the journey of discovering individual thoughts, feelings and behaviours, creating worldviews and developing character and values.

Marcia (1968), classified adolescents' identity into one of four identity statuses involving diffusion, moratorium, foreclosure, and achievement, grounded on exploration and commitment. The first identity status is diffusion which includes low exploration and low commitment, involving a lack of identity formation. Foreclosure is the second status, an identity has been formed without exploring other options, consisting of low exploration and high commitment. The third status is moratorium, adolescents have high exploration and low commitment, seeking out possibilities for identity without yet making a clear identity choice. Lastly, the fourth identity status is achievement, embracing high exploration and high commitment, integrating an established identity based on adolescents' beliefs, values and goals.

While going through adolescence young people develop their identities in distinctive ways and can discard values they think do not align with a picture of their future (Dembo & Eaton, 2000). These values are malleable in terms of how they create their future self. Reaching a level of achievement and identity is the goal for female

adolescents when developing their self-identity. Adolescents who have the ability to reflect by asking serious questions about the self, will be better for it (Sigelman & Rider, 2014). Therefore, youth require positive guidance to explore and make commitments towards their identity.

During adolescence, it is possible that youth experience egocentrism, forming misconceptions towards the self and others (Jackson & Goossens, 2020). If an adolescent has negative thoughts about themselves, they may also think that their peers share the same negative thoughts. This type of behaviour in adolescence can enable youth to be self-conscious (Jackson & Goossens, 2020). How young people assign meaning to their self-identity plays a role towards their choices and behaviour. Through the transition to adulthood, it is important to encourage adolescents; to consider their choices, the power they hold in making those choices, the impact their choices can have, and being willing to embrace accountability on how their choices inform the direction in their life (Mergler, 2007).

Life is complex and presents itself with big options, requiring decisions and choices. Adolescents' cognitive perceptions of who they are and how they want others to perceive them is crucial in their individual development and their decision-making. Adolescents without a fully informed sense of self-identity may be limited in knowing which choices should be considered. Self-identity and other self-related processes may be beneficial in shaping what choices youth make and their motivated behaviour (Pfeifer & Berkman, 2018). Therefore, it is proposed that establishing a sense of identity allows adolescents to understand who they are as functioning individuals in society. An informed sense of self-identity enables adolescents to make identity-informed choices which guides their behaviour. This awareness can influence how youth respond, either positive or negatively, to various situations that may occur during the vulnerable period of adolescence.

Adolescents who are searching for the meaning of life without a developed self-identity can experience a crisis of identity, vulnerability to peer pressure, and a lack of direction and purpose (Siegel, 2015). Adolescents who demonstrate low self-esteem, feel worthless or incompetent can display low personal responsibility and shy away from accepting responsibility for behavioural choices (Mergler, 2007). Youth who are able to define their identity and reflect on oneself consistently,

experience more positive consequences including high well-being (Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008). The study proposes that developing a strong sense of self-identity can promote positive outcomes and becomes a guide for behavioural choices to further develop levels of personal responsibility in adolescents.

It is well-known that youth spend the majority of their time within their school setting, however, research related to schools' role in the development of identities is scarce (Verhoneven et al., 2018). Future research is needed to map what extent identity development can be implemented into the curriculum within formal education and successfully support adolescents (Verhoneven et al., 2018). Further research in this area can broaden the gaps in literature and provide insight into the role schools play in shaping adolescents' personal responsibility and their self-identity.

1.6.3. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

High dynamics, diversity and changes in society today can be considered by adolescents as a challenge and seen as a risk factor. If youth are not equipped in making positive choices, the more serious the risks they may involve themselves in (Mergler, 2017). An important consideration of adolescent development is equipping youth to gain control over their behaviours, emotions and thinking. Aiming to develop a strong foundation on how adolescents inform their decisions which can impact their future. The choices youth make towards their individual developmental layers (i.e., cognitive, physical, sexual) may also have associated consequences. These consequences can have a strong influence on whether the next generation has a healthy start to life (Reavley et al., 2017)

It is during adolescence that young people desire greater independence to make important choices that may have far-reaching consequences (Mergler & Shield, 2016). These choices are informed by the level of responsibility, self-identity and situational awareness of the adolescent. Due to the choices the youth are required to make, it is valuable for young people to develop personal responsibility.

Adolescents who demonstrate self-control, and social and personal responsibility are more resilient in their transition into adulthood (Mergler & Shield, 2016).

Personal responsibility is defined as “the ability to regulate one's own thoughts, feelings and behaviour, along with a willingness to hold oneself accountable for the choices made and the social and personal outcomes” (Mergler, 2007 p.66). Personal responsibility in adolescents involves behavioural, emotional and cognitive control, and a willingness to hold oneself accountable for one’s choices (Mergler & Shield, 2016). Teaching responsibility towards emotions and actions is essential for positive youth development and their future. Personal responsibility also includes self-control, especially as it relates to behavioural choices (Mergler, 2017).

Mergler and Patton (2007) identified that personal responsibility in adolescents has four components. These are:

An awareness of, and control over, one’s thoughts and feelings.

An awareness of, and control over, behaviour choices.

A willingness to hold oneself accountable for one’s behaviour and its outcome (consequences).

An awareness of, and concern for, the impact of one’s behaviour upon others.

Developing personal responsibility can be an integral aspect of adolescent life, as it is during their personal development that youth can feel overwhelmed and confused, especially in terms of making decisions (Slater & Tiggemann, 2015). A sense of personal responsibility may strengthen an individuals’ ability to reflect on outcomes and provide strategies for making future decisions and outcomes.

Adolescents, evolve independently while making life-changing choices, in which personal responsibility plays a valuable role (Mergler & Patton, 2007). Personal responsibility can support youth in holding themselves accountable and having the ability to be aware of thoughts and emotions to make informed choices. This allows adolescents to make choices that meet their personal needs, without offending or harming others (Karaś, & Ciecuch, 2018). With adolescents gaining autonomy and making more in-depth choices, they also need to be aware of the associated consequences. Adolescents who are willing to accept the consequences linked to their actions are more likely to produce positive outcomes (Mergler & Spooner-Lane, 2008).

Humans require responsibility for survival and for adolescents, specifically their level of responsibility determines their future and the future of a country (Wei, 2020). On this basis, it seems that responsibility is one of the important factors which play a vital role in peoples' roles and functions. A willingness to take full responsibility can influence what choices an individual makes and therefore what associated consequences will occur (Smithikrai, Longthong, & Peijsel, 2015). An important consideration regarding one's understanding of personal responsibility, is the willingness to accept responsibility for one's behaviour and choices, giving a sense of personal control over future (Mergler, 2017).

Although, personal responsibility is an important concept that enables an individual to hold themselves accountable and to make good decisions, it has often been disregarded. Personal responsibility remains largely overlooked in the fields of psychological and educational development of adolescents. Very few researchers in this field have examined how youth perceive and enact personal responsibility (Mergler & Patton, 2007).

What is even less known is the nature of the relationship between personal responsibility and self-identity. Despite the importance of self-identity, it is unclear of the role it plays in adolescent behaviour (Pfeifer & Berkman, 2018). Research is needed not only to increase our understanding of adolescent health and well-being and its determinants, but to find effective ways to improve it (Reavley et al., 2017). Adolescents explore their identity and seek independence, during this time the development of self can motivate behaviour (Pfeifer & Berkman, 2018).

As adolescents spend most of their time in school, it becomes an important milieu for self-discovery and personal development. Schools are in an ideal position to teach values and responsibility to enable that adolescents are developmentally ready to take on their role in society (Mergler, 2007). Limited attention has been given to students within formal education to support their self-discovery and the type of person the students may become in the future (Mergler, 2007). This study agrees that the lack of personal development pathways within formal education, especially relating to self-identity and personal responsibility development in high school can hinder adolescents' personal growth.

It is therefore suggested that the notion of personal responsibility can influence the ability of the adolescents to take responsibility for their behaviour choices, positively handle emotional situations, and understand that relationships with others can influence choices and actions. The developmental process of adolescence not only generates the foundation of personal development, it also is a period for youth to essentially develop and understand the concept of personal responsibility. Personal responsibility provides a sense of power and control to hold oneself accountable, to achieve goals and provides a sense of reflection related to choices and strategies (Smithikrai, Longthong, & Peijsel, 2015). Therefore, personal responsibility can strengthen adolescent development and their futures, ensuring total success. A key premise of this study was that by exploring the perceptions of adolescents and personal responsibility, insights can be gained to inform further studies in facilitating personal development of female adolescents in secondary school.

1.7. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

This section outlines the theoretical background of the study and explains the proposed model that guided this research. The proposition of the study was that developing an understanding of one's self-identity can influence personal responsibility. The researcher created a conceptual model to visualise the representation of the proposition and to enhance understanding. Figure 1 presents the conceptual model underpinning the study which suggested that self-identity is related to and influences personal responsibility.

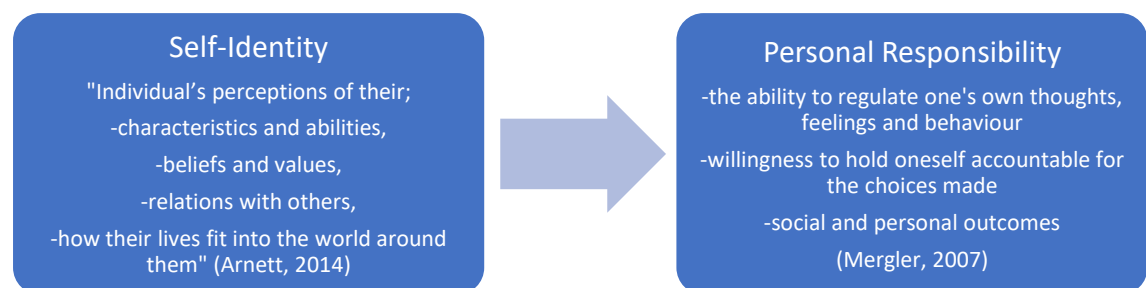


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility during early adolescence.

This model is based on the dimensions given under self-identity drawn from Arnetts' (2014) definition of self-identity. The dimensions for personal responsibility are taken from Merglers' (2007) definition of personal responsibility. As the model depicts in Figure 1.1, the study explored how self-identity is related to personal responsibility. Adolescents develop their own self-understanding based on tools they have been provided, norms, and values, furthermore, the self-understanding youth create informs their decision and future goals (Verhoeven et al., 2019).

To gain insight into the context of female adolescents lived experiences, the study explored:

- i) Whether any relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility is evident?
- ii) What is the nature of the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility?

By exploring the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility, the researcher can develop a deeper understanding towards improving female adolescents' personal development. The perspectives of female adolescents is valuable as they are living the adolescent experience.

1.8. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility of female adolescents was explored within the context of a regional Queensland all-girls private secondary school. As an exploratory study, the perceptions of female adolescents were an important starting point to understand how self-identity influenced personal responsibility. In order to explore the nature of this relationship, the study answered the following research questions:

RQ1. What are female adolescents' perceptions of self-identity in a regional Queensland all-girls private secondary school setting?

RQ2. What are female adolescents' perceptions of personal responsibility in a regional Queensland all-girls private secondary school setting?

RQ3. What is the relationship between identity development and personal responsibility in a regional Queensland all-girls private secondary school setting?

To address the research questions; a constructivist paradigm was endorsed, using a qualitative approach. By asking these research questions, the study can seek a deeper understanding of the world in which adolescents live, especially as it related to their understanding of self-identity and personal responsibility. By gauging how female adolescent participants view and/or incorporate these concepts into their daily life, allows the researcher to optimise opportunities in strengthening their personal development. The perceptions of self-identity and personal responsibility will also highlight the relationship between the concepts. Understanding this relationship can support professional practice and the gap in literature.

1.9. METHODOLOGY

1.9.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter of the review of literature provided insight into the research phenomenon that informed the background of the study and the related conceptual model. This chapter outlines the methodology of the study and the rationale of using the selected research methods. Section 1.9.2. explains the research approach of how the research problem was understood and addressed. Section 1.9.3. defines the research design that was implemented to achieve the research aims and objections. Section 1.9.4. discusses the participants selected for this study, including the participant recruitment. Section 1.9.5. explains the phases of the data collection and section 1.9.6. discusses how the data was analysed. Section 1.10 identifies the ethical considerations that were needed to undertake the study, following the ethical requirements set out by the University of Southern Queensland.

1.9.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM

Due to the exploratory nature of the research, the researcher utilised a constructivist paradigm approach. This was especially appropriate as the study considered the perceptions of adolescents in Year 9 and Year 10, between the ages of 12-15. The intent of the study was to rely on the participants' view to seek understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2014). It is acknowledged that the perceptions

of other stakeholders (parents, teachers, coaches, etc.) are critical in constructing a holistic understanding of the phenomena but were outside the scope of this study. The adolescents were in a compelling position to provide their lived experience and insight into their understanding of personal development.

The constructivist paradigm was implemented as it understands the world through interpretation of the participants views (Creswell, 2014). This paradigm underpinned the research to understand the lived experiences and to create new knowledge. Critical feedback was obtained from the female participants for an initial insight of their understanding towards self-identity and personal responsibility. The purpose for utilising qualitative research for this study was to capture beliefs and understandings from a student perspective. Research was conducted at an all-girls private secondary school in regional Queensland. It was chosen due to the researcher being employed at the school. To avoid any conflict of interest and bias the researcher involved the school administration to select the students and two outsiders to conduct the interviews with the selected participants.

1.9.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study was exploratory and utilised a qualitative approach, as the most appropriate approach for this research. The qualitative approach was consistent with a constructivist research philosophy. The chosen research design was based on the comprehensive review of the literature. The insights from the literature review assisted in developing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative approach builds the capacity for generating detailed human experiences (i.e., emotions, beliefs and behaviours) within the original context in which observations occur (Castro et al., 2010). The study examined the participants in their school environment.

The study investigated the significance of the relationship, if any, between self-identity and personal responsibility, from the insights gained from female adolescents. Qualitative research incorporated the participants' point of view, which contributed a better understanding of the research problem (Flick, 2004). Focus group interviews can gain a deeper understanding of social issues within qualitative research (Nyumba et al., 2018). Face-to-face semi-structured focus group interviews were deemed the most appropriate method for data collection.

1.9.4. PARTICIPANTS

The study recorded the perceptions of twelve female high school students from Year 9 and Year 10 in a private all-girls' secondary school located in regional Queensland. The research relied as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied (Creswell, 2014). Listening to the voices of adolescents provided insight into their understanding of self-identity and personal responsibility. This allowed the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between to two concepts.

A convenient sampling technique was used to select the participants. This was done by the Principal and the Principals' Assistant, who approached participate from Year 9 and Year 10 to voluntarily patriciate in a 30-minute focus group interview during a designated time arranged by the school. It was important that participants were not coerced into part-taking in the study and instead accepted to participate voluntary. The selected participants were available and willing to participant within these age groups. This sampling technique was chosen due to the researchers' employment at the school where the focus group interviews were conducted. Participants are invited to partake in the study based on availability, location, time, and willingness to volunteer (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

Participants were aware of the research they were going to be involved in and were provided consent forms for their parents/guardian to complete. The researcher also coordinated with the school to ensure the school Guidance Counsellor was also aware of the focus group interviews and was available for any participants. The researcher was aware that although highly unlikely, some participants may have uncomfortable thoughts regarding the research questions and therefore may need to discuss these thoughts with the Guidance Counsellor.

1.9.5. DATA COLLECTION

The study incorporated data collection steps, which included setting the boundaries for the study, collecting the data and establishing a protocol for recording the data (Creswell, 2014). Data was collected to gain insight into for emerging themes to confirm the relationship and gain a deeper understanding of self-identity, personal

responsibility; and the relationship between the two concepts. The process of the data collection and how themes were identified is shown in Figure 2.

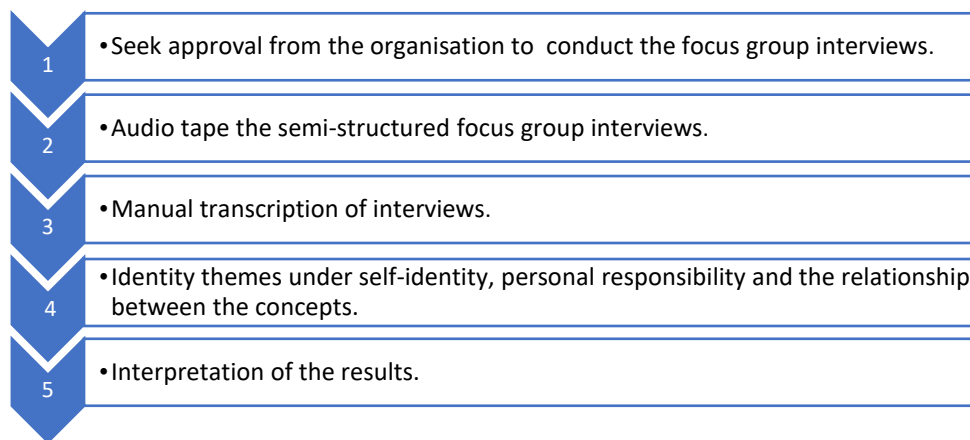


Figure 2. Conceptual model of the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility during early adolescence.

The focus group interviews were approved by the school principal and students were approached through the Executive Assistant to the Principal with an invitation to participate voluntarily to the study. The duration of each interview was between 30-45 minutes and conducted in a classroom setting during the participants' lunch break. The designated time for the interviews was arranged by the school. The school was responsive and extremely accommodating to ensure the focus group interviews could be conducted.

The study conducted three, face-to-face semi-structured focus group interviews. Interviews were the key method in collecting the data because it allows the researcher to enter the world of the participants (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). The focus groups consisted of four participants in each group. The focus groups were divided into year groups, including two Year 9 groups with four students in each group and one Year 10 group consisting of four students. Qualitative interviews allowed the researcher to explore the participants' perspectives and develop answers for the research questions. The small sample size of focus groups allowed the researcher to gain rich and detailed data from each participant (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

The direct data collected from the study, included face-to-face interactions and recordable spoken words that set the context of the study (Lopez & Whitehead,

2013). The data considered the thoughts, feelings, experiences, responses and interactions of the participants (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). An interview protocol was implemented related to the questions being asked during the interviews and how the answers were recorded. Each focus group interview was audio recorded, manually transcribed and analysed. All participants and their parents were aware of this procedure and agreed for their answers to be recorded.

The focus group interviews were conducted by two experienced and professional external interviewers. Due to the researcher being an insider researcher, it was deemed appropriate that the interviews were conducted by external interviewers to avoid bias and any conflict of interest. Skilled interviewers can gain insight into participants' lived experiences and learn the perspectives of each participant in the study (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The external interviewers were highly regarded researchers from the University of Southern Queensland with PhD qualifications. They were selected based on their understanding of female adolescents and the nature of this study. The first external interviewer, interviewed two focus groups, consisting of one Year 9 group and one Year 10 group. The second external interviewer interviewed the last year 9 group. Each focus group consisted of four female adolescent students.

The principal focus group interview questions developed to generate discussion on self-identity included:

1. What do you think we mean by the term self-identity?
2. What do you think is needed to improve self-identity?

The interview questions related more specifically to personal responsibility involved:

3. What do you think we mean by the term personal responsibility?
4. In terms of your actions, do you think about:
 - a) Your consequences?
 - b) How your behaviour impacts on others?
 - c) Has peer pressure influenced your actions?
5. How does the way you think about yourself affect how responsible are you to:
 - a) Your consequences?

- b) Your behavioural and emotional control?
- c) Your cognitive control?

The semi structured focus group interviews asked a set of questions, addressing the research questions and objective, however, still allowing the participants to seek clarification (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). The interview questions were formulated to target the research questions relating to self-identity and personal responsibility.

1.9.6. DATA ANALYSIS

The second stage of the data collection was to analyse the data generated from the semi-structured focus group interviews. The researcher used thematic analysis to analyse the qualitative data collected from the participants. Thematic analysis systematically identified, analysed, organised and interpreted themes that emerged from the data to comprehend participants' perceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

The researcher followed the steps of Braun & Clarke (2012) while using thematic analysis to find emergent themes to confirm the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility. Figure 3 shows each step that is followed when using thematic analysis for data analysis.

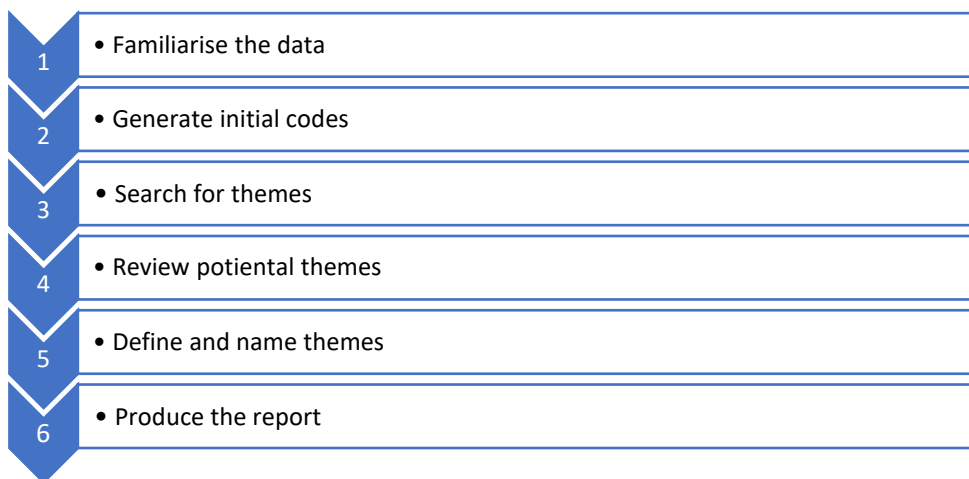


Figure 3. Steps of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Step 1: Familiarise the data. The first step of Thematic Analysis included immersing into the data by reading and rereading the transcripts of the focus group interviews to become familiar with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This allowed

the researcher to note relevant links to the research questions. The researcher also manually transcribed the audio recorded data, to have a deeper understanding of the context in which the participants answered the interview questions. The researcher transcribed the data verbatim to avoid any bias. Making notes on the data, while actively listened to the interviews enabled the researcher to analytically and critically think about what the data means (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Step 2: Generate initial codes. The second step is to generate initial codes related to the data. The data was coded to deidentify the names and identity of the participating students. The participants were deidentified by having their names replaced with their school year level. Codes are the foundation of analysing data, providing an interpretation related to the data context relevant to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

The researcher manually coded data by colour coding and categorising according to the underlying dimensions of the two concepts. The results of the focus group interviews were structured around the four dimensions of self-identity and the three dimensions of personal responsibility. These dimensions became the coding within the data analysis.

The dimensions of self-identity incorporated into the study and data analysis were adopted by Arnett's (2014) definition of the concept. These dimensions included: i) characteristics and abilities; ii) beliefs and values; iii) relation to others; and iv) how one fits into the world around them. The dimensions of personal responsibility were adopted from Mergler's (2007) definition which are: i) an awareness of, and control over, one's thoughts and feelings; ii) an awareness of, and control over, behaviour choices; iii) a willingness to hold oneself accountable for one's behaviour and its outcome (consequences); and iv) an awareness of, and concern for, the impact of one's behaviour upon others.

For the purpose of this study, the above dimensions were slightly altered. Dimension two and dimension three were combined, forming one dimension instead. Therefore, the dimensions adopted for the study and data analysis for personal responsibility included: i) an awareness of, and control over, one's thoughts and feelings; ii) accountability for one's behaviour and its outcomes (consequences); behavioural

choices; and iii) an awareness of, and concern for, the impact of one's behaviour upon others.

Step 3: Search for themes. The next stage was to identify and group the main themes that were identified from the coded data. Searching for themes is an active process that identifies broad topics and issues from reviewing the coded data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The researcher explored ways to combine the codes into themes by examining the codes and the data. The researcher organised data relevant to each theme practically to review the liability of each theme that was generated. This process generates and constructs themes rather than discovering them (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Themes are created to generate knowledge about the data that is beneficial to the research questions. From the coded data, the researcher was able to generate five themes and assigned a name to each theme.

Step 4: Review potential themes. Step four is to review the generated themes, explore whether the themes relate to the research questions, and cross-reference the themes with the coded data to provide quality-checking (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The main purpose of the research was to confirm the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility in female adolescents. The data was screened manually to identify emerging themes that represented the participants' understanding related to the research questions. However, after thoroughly reviewing the coded data, the researcher confirmed further emergent themes. The researcher examined each emerging theme with the coded data and assessed the quality of the representation of data. The researcher also ensured that the themes generated, contributed to the research questions.

Step 5: Define and name the themes. The fifth step relates to the researcher defining what is specific about each theme and to provide a comprehensible name to each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2012). It is important for the readers to understand each theme and how the researcher concluded the themes. Themes should directly address the research questions to provide an overall understanding of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Step 6: Produce the report. The last step in the Thematic Analysis process, is to produce a report to provide a deeper understanding of the data analysis and findings

(Braun & Clarke, 2012). The report from the study was collated by the researcher and used in the publication and thesis. The report needs to provide a comprehensive understanding of the data analysis that is convincing and clear (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The reports generated by the researcher, confirmed emerging themes from gainer a deeper understanding of the participants' understanding of self-identity, personal responsibility, and the relationship between the concepts.

1.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The ethical considerations for the study involved: i) considering the ethics process; ii) understanding the ethical considerations in relation to the study; and iii) seeking ethics approval. The researcher followed the ethical processes outlined by the University of Southern Queensland as the study included human participants. The research methods involved focus group interviews with adolescent students under the age of 18 years. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Southern Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee (H19REA041).

Once ethical approval was granted the researcher recruited participants for the voluntary focus group interviews. The participants were under the age of 18 years, therefore, consent was required and obtained from the participants' parents/guardians before their participation in the focus groups. The participants and their parents were fully informed of the study and were provided a participant information sheet (see participants information form in Appendix A) that detailed the background of the research and the interviews questions. They were asked to provide signed consent (see consent form in Appendix B). If participants changed their minds about participating, they were free to withdraw at any stage. It was also made aware that the focus group interviews would be audio recorded.

Although minimal risks were associated with the participation of the study, the researcher was mindful that issues may arise. During the focus group interviews, emotions may occur and it is important to offer appropriate support if support is needed (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). It was highly unlikely that participants would feel distressed or uncomfortable about the focus groups and the questions being asked. However, if the participants needed to talk to someone, the Guidance Counsellor from the school participating was made available.

The data collected as part of this study has been stored securely in accordance with the University of Southern Queensland Research Data Management Policy. Data collected was confidential and kept securely by having a passcode on the researchers' laptop, only known to the researcher. Confidentiality was maintained by deidentifying the participants' names and replacing with a year level. Participants were informed that they may request that any data collected about them be withdrawn and confidentially destroyed.

1.11. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study is to explore whether self-identity influences personal responsibility. This chapter has established the context of the study as it relates to addressing the gaps in professional practice and the gaps in the literature. The literature review provided knowledge to highlight the importance of self-identity and personal responsibility to female adolescents and their personal development. The methodology presents how the qualitative study will explore self-identity, personal responsibility, and the relationship between the two concepts from the perspectives of female students attending an all-girls private secondary school in regional Queensland. To address the research questions and confirm the conceptual mode, the researcher uses a thematic analysis to analysis the data collected.

Chapter two will discuss the results (section 2.2) of self-identity, personal responsibility and the relationship between the two concepts. The results have been interpreted by the researcher from the focus groups interviews with the Year 9 and Year 10 female participants. From the perspectives of the participants, emergent themes (section 2.3) were discovered. Section 2.4, discusses the publication submission and provides a copy of the submitted publication (section 2.5).

CHAPTER 2. RESULTS AND PUBLICATION

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter one described the context and background to the study, the problem statement, a review of the relevant literature, the conceptual model of the study, the research questions, the research proposition, and the research methodology adopted to answer the research questions.

This chapter presents the analysis of qualitative data collected via focus group discussions and the results of the study. Following Braun and Clark's (2012) thematic analysis approach the study sought to identify emerging themes. These are presented after the results of the study. Based on the findings, a publication was developed and submitted to the Journal of Adolescence (ISSN 01401971, 10959254) and is currently under review.

The results shown in the next section have been analysed by using the dimensions of self-identity and personal responsibility and sought to identify emerging themes. The dimensions are based on definitions of the concepts from the literature as adopted by the study.

2.2. RESULTS

2.2.1. SELF-IDENTITY

Based on the definition of self-identity the analysis focused on the dimensions of the concept. Self-identity was defined for the purpose of this study as, "an individuals' perceptions of their characteristics and abilities, their beliefs and values, their relations with others, and how their lives fit into the world around them" (Arnett, 2014, p. 170). The results were established by using the dimensions of self-identity as codes to analyse the data.

Characteristics and abilities. The findings of the research indicated that participants from both Year 9 and Year 10, had the ability to identify characteristics and link these with their understanding of self-identity. The participants identified characteristics such as their personality, self-perceptions and identification.

Participants commented:

“[Self-identity]...means your character and who you are, your personality and what you think of yourself” (Year 9 student).

“[Self-identity is] how you define yourself or what your personality is and what you do” (Year 9 student).

“[Self-identity is] basically, just what you think of yourself” (Year 10 student).

Participants showed an understanding that their perceptions of self-image were important in their development of self-identity. A student stated,

“If you think positively about yourself then you’re going to be happy and more enjoyable to be around, whereas if you’re negative, you’re going to be sad and not everyone will want to hang around you” (Year 10 student).

Participants from Year 10 perceived that their personal characteristics such as their assertiveness and stubbornness assisted in recognising and resisting peer pressure and reduced their vulnerability to peer pressure. This was illustrated by the comment,

“Personally, I am really stubborn so, usually if I don’t agree with something, I won’t do it” (Year 10 student).

This comment indicated that a strong sense of self-identity could limit the influence of peer pressure. Participants felt that recognising and rectifying their weaknesses and accepting who they were, improved their self-identity. A participant commented,

“Recognising your weaknesses and trying to build on them to make them stronger, [improves your self-identity]” (Year 10 student).

“Acceptance of who you are [improves your self-identity]” (Year 9 student).

These comments showed that they perceived a link between the perceptions of their own characteristics and abilities and their self-identity.

Beliefs and values. The participants' responses revealed that their belief in one's individuality and values such as morals and being true to oneself, influenced their self-identity. Participants described self-identity as:

“Being true to yourself and knowing who you really are” (Year 9 student).

“Identifying your morals and what you think is right and wrong and living by those” (Year 10 student).

The participants did not refer to specific beliefs and values, or comment on why these were important to them. There could be many reasons in the reluctance to name particular beliefs and values such as avoiding being perceived as judgemental, self-identification with values making them vulnerable to ridicule, being unable to describe what beliefs and values were important to them or not being ready to share their beliefs and values with the interviewer. The perception that self-identity can be strengthened by reflecting and identifying beliefs and values is an important finding. This self-reflective identification brings a sense of understanding towards what is right and wrong and can guide adolescents' choices.

Relations with Others. Participants perceived that their relationships with others influenced and guided their self-identity. Participants stated:

“[Self-identity can be improved by] the people around you. They are going to help you [to] go through more experiences and situations that will help you to reflect and discover things about yourself that you might not have known about yourself” (Year 10 student).

“People pick up on traits you didn't know and that helps your self-identity” (Year 10 student).

The views of others and external feedback assisted the participants in the exploration and development of their self-identity. Some participants showed resistance to peer pressure in changing their individuality as it was important to them to be who themselves.

Participants were aware of the people with whom they associated, could influence their self-identity. Participants stated:

“If you get good compliments and you have a growth mindset... then you will have a better self-identity of yourself and you will be more positive” (Year 10 student).

“I feel that you change who you are depending on who you are with, so you might gain strengths from these people or you might get their weaknesses” (Year 9 student).

“Not surrounding yourself with negative people, because that will then make you negative and that might be hard to get out of that situation. So try to always be positive and be surrounded by positive things and people” (Year 9 student).

Constructive and encouraging behaviour by peers played a positive role in improving self-identity. These findings suggest that positive peer relationships assisted in the discovery of new traits and characteristics that played a role in the evolution of self-identity.

Peer pressure that did not align with their beliefs and values, consequently influenced their thought process, and behavioural choices. This led to creating self-doubt and conflicting thoughts. Participants in Year 10 stated:

“You kind of persuade yourself to believe in something because you want to fit in; that’s a really big thing for us as adolescents” (Year 10 student).

“I feel that, especially at this age, we are really pressured to fit in, so you would agree to do something even if you didn’t think it was right because you wanted to fit in” (Year 10 student).

“[Thoughts that occur when I am thinking about peer pressure are:] I don’t know what I am doing; I don’t want to be here; I don’t want to do this; I should have slept in; I shouldn’t have gone – just doubting myself” (Year 10 student).

The need to fit in amongst their peers disrupted the participants’ self-identity and impacted on their own beliefs and values. These statements indicated that the participants were aware that peer pressure could instil a negative influence, however,

were not always able to avoid it. The pressure to fit in amongst their peers and the fear of not fitting in, negatively influenced the development of their self-identity.

How One Fits into the World Around One. The findings revealed the participating adolescents' perceptions of how they fitted into the world around them, were linked to their perceptions of self. This influenced their interpretations of their world and how they formed choices. When asked to define self-identity, participants stated:

“If you don't think of yourself as your own person, then you will think that you don't have a reason for being” (Year 9 student).

“[Self-identity is] how you interpret some things” (Year 9 student).

“...how you see yourself; self-identity is more about how you perceive yourself to be” (Year 10 Student).

How adolescents fitted into the world around them influenced their cognisance of their individual self within the wider world. The participants decisions of their self-identity were based on their life experiences. One student emphasised there was limited understanding in youth of who they were and how they functioned best by commenting:

“It's knowing who you are on the inside out, not [thinking], ‘Am I this or am I that?’. It's just knowing I am this person and this is how I work. I don't feel that a lot of people know that; I don't even know that yet about myself. I think it comes with time and learning about what you do and what you're good at” (Year 9 student).

This finding indicates that adolescents require guidance in enhancing their higher cognitive thinking skills for self-discovery as these perceptions were related to their cognitive thinking and learning behaviour that ultimately influenced their self-identity.

2.2.2. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

The dimensions of personal responsibility were based on the four components the define the concept. Mergler & Patton (2007) identified the four components as, “an awareness of, and control over, one's thoughts and feelings, an awareness of, and

control over, behaviour choices, a willingness to hold oneself accountable for one's behaviour and its outcome (consequences), and an awareness of, and concern for, the impact of one's behaviour upon others". For the purpose of the study the dimensions that were used in coded in the data analysis was based on the definition from Mergler & Patton (2007). The dimensions are: an awareness of, and control over, one's thoughts and feelings; accountability for one's behaviour and its outcomes (consequences); behavioural choices; and an awareness of, and concern for, the impact of one's behaviour upon others.

An awareness of, and control over, one's thoughts and feelings. The participants showed a mixed understanding of their awareness of, and control over, their thoughts and feelings. Some were aware of how their feelings and actions could have consequences related to their choice of action, indicating their ability in doing cost benefit analysis of the consequences of their actions. Others were more prone to acting before thinking. Participants commented:

"Usually, when I do something, I'll make sure that it's not going to have consequences, or that nothing bad will happen, or I try to think about all the things that will happen" (Year 9 student).

"...I like to think before I act. [For example], you think about if this is going to benefit you or what are the consequences of doing something before you do it" (Year 10 student).

Other participants stated that they acted impulsively without thinking first. In this instance the thought process towards behavioural choices and consequences did not occur until after the action. The participants stated:

"You don't always think things through completely before you actually do something" (Year 9 student).

"You might have done something stupid that you thought was funny and then later you're sitting in bed thinking, 'I shouldn't have done that'" (Year 9 student).

“Sometimes you make rash decisions and think, ‘This will be fine and won’t impact [on] anyone or anything’, then you reflect back on it or you get called out on it, and you realised it was not the best idea” (Year 9 student).

These insights indicated that students had the realisation that their impulsive behaviour could yield undesired consequences. Some participants did not have control over their thoughts and feelings when making decisions. However, they were aware of this weakness in themselves. Participants also recognised that their predisposition to fail to distinguish between right and wrong influenced their actions. For example, a student commented:

“I guess a lot of the time we do have good intentions to do something good, but sometimes we were wrong about that. So it wasn’t a good thing to do” (Year 9 student).

These results showed that the participating adolescents’ thought processes and decision-making propensity played a key role in influencing their behaviour and actions. The ability to self-reflect could increase their control over their thoughts and feelings and enhances their personal responsibility.

Accountability for one’s behaviour and its outcomes (consequences); behavioural choices. The Year 9 participants’ definition of personal responsibility was closely linked with “accountability for one’s behaviour and its outcomes (consequences); behavioural choices”. They defined personal responsibility as: i) not blaming others for one’s actions; ii) taking responsibility for actions/behaviour; iii) looking after your things; and iv) taking ownership of your actions. Although the Year 9 participants linked personal responsibility with accountability, they showed a tendency to react impulsively without thinking of the consequences or blaming others instead of owning responsibility for their actions. These participants stated:

“Well, I guess you try to blame it on someone else sometimes. My instinct is to say, ‘I didn’t do that at all’, when I actually did. So, I should be taking responsibility for my own action but sometimes I blame it on somebody else” (Year 9 student).

“If you have an argument, you’re just saying everything that is first coming to your head, and it may or may not make sense. Then after you think about it

more and think how you could have said something different” (Year 9 student).

These comments indicate that when adolescents were experiencing a charged situation, they were susceptible to reacting emotionally without considering the outcomes of such rash choices. They reflected on the situation later and then comprehended their impulsive behaviour. In the midst of experiencing heightened emotions their propensity to engage in a thought process and to think about consequences before they acted was restricted.

The Year 10 participants related personal responsibility to; taking care of oneself and one’s health; doing what’s best; and having the ability to take responsibility for one’s behaviour and actions. Unlike the Year 9 students, the Year 10 students’ responses indicated they understood their behaviour could have consequences. They thoughtfully considered or weighed consequences associated with their decisions. Participants stated:

“Every decision I think about, I think about the consequences” (Year 10 student).

“...Before I do something, I’m always like, ‘What is this going to lead to in my future, what does this mean if I do this?’ So, I’m always thinking, ‘What is the consequence of doing this?’” (Year 10 student).

They were more inclined to think about their choices and actions because they were concerned about the consequences of their actions for others. They showed a sense of concern about the impact for their actions and behaviours, on others. For example:

“It’s like, if you had something going on at home, you wouldn’t take that out on someone who has no idea, because that’s not their fault; it’s not fair on them” (Year 10 student).

This comment indicates responsible behaviour representing a high level of accountability for behavioural outcomes. Sense of personal responsibility was seen to develop control over behavioural choices and accountability for consequences among adolescents.

An awareness of, and concern for, the impact of one's behaviour upon others.

Participants linked personal responsibility with “An awareness of, and concern for, the impact of one's behaviour upon others”. They were cognisant of the impact that their behaviour could have on others. This was illustrated by the following comments:

“Make sure you think before you do something because it could have a negative impact, or it could also have a positive impact, on people around you” (Year 9 Student).

“Yeah definitely, because, if I say something negative, I tried to think about how the people around me will react, and if it's going to negatively impact [on] them as well. I don't want to put someone down because I'm feeling bad about myself” (Year 10 student).

Participants showed a consideration for others and demonstrated an understanding that their actions impacted on others. They felt that it was important for them to become positive role models and to lead by example to demonstrate positive behaviour to others. A student commented:

“If you're babysitting someone, you want to be a role model and show them the right way to behave” (Year 10 student).

Participants had considerable self-awareness and understanding how their behaviour and emotions influenced others either positively or negatively. The participants stated:

“You could take your anger out on others and make them upset and angry as well” (Year 9 student).

“Positivity and negativity really affect other people. If you're being negative one day and you say something to someone else, that will impact [on] them and you will make them have a negative attitude, but if you're positive that will encourage other people to act positive” (Year 10 student).

Participants perceived their notion of personal responsibility was shaped by their personal thoughts, feelings, and behaviour, which correspondingly influenced their peers' notions of personal responsibility. They perceived that empathy for others and the ability to relate to others strengthened personal responsibility. A student stated:

“I think we need to build each other up more and try to make others happier”
(Year 10 student).

The results indicated that awareness of, and concern for, the impact of one's behaviour upon others among adolescents developed personal responsibility. Adolescents had social awareness about how their thoughts, feelings and behaviour affected people with whom they associated with.

2.2.3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-IDENTITY AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

The key premise of the study was that self-identity is related to personal responsibility during adolescence. The results confirmed that though self-identity influenced personal responsibility, the relationship was reciprocal. In other words, personal responsibility was also perceived as influencing self-identity. Confirming a complex and noteworthy relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility.

Participants' defined self-identity as 'their mindset' that influences their behavioural choices. They perceived that self-identity, particularly their characteristics and abilities, influenced the personal responsibility dimensions related to thoughts, behavioural choices and the impact on others. Participants felt that their self-perception was either positive or negative, which affected their emotional state and behaviour, subsequently impacting on others. Participants stated:

“Because if you're aggressive you might just say things and not have a filter and not realise that's impacting [on] someone, but if you're passive you might be thinking something but not saying it because you're too scared”
(Year 10 student).

“I feel that the growth mindset thing, if you are really down on yourself, ...say if you thought you weren't smart then you might not put as much effort

in because you already think you're not smart so why should I try to be better" (Year 10 student).

Participants connected their actions with their perceptions of self, indicating the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility. Some of the key characteristics that influenced their actions linked to personal responsibility were adopting a passive or aggressive nature, stubbornness, and positivity or pessimism.

Self-identity created by negative self-image generated behaviour which had negative impacts on others. Participants exhibited an awareness of and concern for the impact of their behaviour on others and the impact of behaviour they associated affected their own behaviour. Students stated:

"If you think negative things about yourself and how you look, then your behaviour and emotions are going to be really doubtful and negative, and that's going to impact [on] everyone around you" (Year 10 student).

"Thinking down on yourself can have side effects that affect everyone around you" (Year 10 student).

Participants were concerned about the impact their actions had on others. These results confirmed that self-identity impacted on their personal responsibility, shaping their thoughts and behavioural control with distinctive impacts on others.

Self-identity, especially in terms of beliefs and values were perceived to play a critical role in determining participants' personal responsibility in terms of their behavioural choices. The participants were aware that their beliefs and values apart from their self-identity, also guided their perceptions of the distinction between right and wrong. They perceived that their choices were dependent on what they identified as important in life. This suggests that their self-identity influenced their self-identity. Participants commented:

"Most of the things I do is based on what I want" (Year 10 student).

"If someone offered me drugs..., I would not take them because it's a moral of mine and I don't want that" (Year 10 student).

These results indicate that self-identity is a more cognitively derived concept that is shaped by beliefs and values and is mutually reinforced by the extent to which personal responsibility is exercised. This insight suggests that cognitive conceptions of self-identity are translated into the practice of personal responsibility with the practice reflecting back on to the said value or belief upon which it is based.

Further supporting the notion that the relationship is reciprocal was the view that consequences of actions and decisions were perceived as ‘lessons’ and enabled a learning process to take place. A student commented:

“Consequences are what help you learn to do the right thing if you have done something wrong” (Year 9 student).

The process of learning from consequences of their actions was linked with the further development of values. Identifying values and developing an understanding between right and wrong based on understanding consequences of actions were seen to impact the development of self-identity.

Self-identity dictated their actions. Some participants perceived that an overestimation of self, blurred their sense of right and wrong and influenced their thought processes. They expressed:

“If you think of yourself highly, then you may think that you don’t deserve that consequence” (Year 10 student).

“You...think you can get away with everything if you think you’re better than everyone” (Year 9 student).

These results show that an inflated self-image can lead to a superiority complex, selfish attitudes, and disregard for others.

Peer relationships were perceived to impact adolescents’ notions of self-identity and influence their behavioural choices. Participants from Year 9 perceived that peer pressure could influence their self-identity and behaviour. They commented:

“It depends if it’s a good thing, like with the swimming carnival I don’t really want to swim but my friends are always like, ‘Come on, you can do it’. So, it

depends on what it is for, like if it's a positive or [a] negative situation" (Year 9 student).

"I have a friend that wants to do well with her subjects, so that has influenced me. If everyone around you is studying and doing their homework then you're more likely to go in that direction" (Year 9 student).

The above results illustrate that positive peer pressure influenced adolescents to embrace new opportunities when they were lacking confidence or a positive sense of self. It developed their self-identity's characteristics and abilities and in turn influenced their personal responsibility with positive behaviour.

The results suggest that in a regional high school context, female adolescents recognized that self-identity and personal responsibility were related. They attributed positive and negative behavioural choices to their sense of self, their values, and beliefs. They also acknowledged the positive and negative effects of peer pressure on their self-identity and their personal responsibility in terms of the choices they make. It was deduced from the responses that self-identity and personal responsibility have a reciprocal relationship.

2.3. EMERGENT THEMES

The researcher extensively examined the data by using thematic analysis. By using this technique, valuable emergent themes were extracted. The findings confirmed the definitional dimensions of the concepts of self-identity (Arnett, 2014) and personal responsibility (Mergler, 2007) were valuable towards female adolescent personal development within a regional all-girls private secondary school setting. Confirming the participating adolescents' self-identity and personal responsibility share a complex relationship that dictates the choices they make. Although the study was investigating whether self-identity influenced personal responsibility, further emerging themes were identified and valuable toward the female personal development.

The study identified the following emergent themes:

- i) Self-identity and personal responsibility have important distinct yet related roles within adolescent development.

- ii) Self-identity influences personal responsibility.
 - iii) Self-identity and personal responsibility influence each other, confirming a bidirectional relationship.
 - iv) Self-identity attributes and characteristic have cognitive bearing whereas personal responsibility dimensions are practice oriented.
- Peer relations significantly influence the nature of self-identity and personal responsibility as well as the relationship between them.

These emergent themes provided further insights into the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility. The original conceptual model was based on the premise that self-identity influenced personal responsibility as a one-way relationship. Whereas, the research findings provided further insights into this relationship. The insights and modified conceptual model are presented in Figure 4.

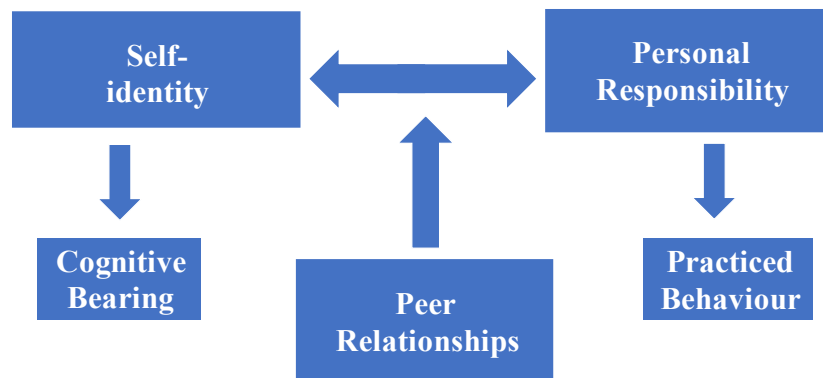


Figure 4. Modified Model based on the themes from the research findings.

2.4. PUBLICATION SUBMISSION

Based on the findings, an article titled, “Personal responsibility and the role of self-identity in adolescents: A female regional Queensland perspective”, was submitted to the Journal of Adolescence on 1 June 2021 (submission number JOA21-438). The article is under review (confirmation email in Appendix C). The University of Southern Queensland policy for Thesis by Publication includes the provision that “papers will have been published, accepted, submitted or prepared for publication

during the period of candidature”. The paper included in this thesis meets this requirement and has been submitted during the period of candidature.

The Journal of Adolescence is an international Q1 Journal, based in the United States of America is self-described as:

The Journal of Adolescence (<https://journals.elsevier.com/journal-of-adolescence>) is an international, broad based, cross-disciplinary journal that addresses issues of professional and academic importance concerning development between puberty and the attainment of adult status within society. Our focus is specifically on adolescent development: change over time or negotiating age specific issues and life transitions. The aim of the journal is to encourage research and foster good practice through publishing empirical studies, integrative reviews and theoretical and methodological advances. The Journal of Adolescence is essential reading for adolescent researchers, social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and youth workers in practice, and for university and college faculty in the fields of psychology, sociology, education, criminal justice, and social work.

The researcher collaborated with her supervisors, Associate Professor Luke Van Der Laan and Dr Sophia Imran to develop the article. Their input is acknowledged and appreciated. The researcher and supervisors confirm that the researchers’ contribution was significantly more than 50%. The research student conceived of the study, participated in its design and coordination, measurement interpretation of the data and drafted the manuscript; Associate Professor Luke Van Der Laan participated in the design, interpretation of the data and coordination; and Dr Sophia Imran participated in the data collection and measurement interpretation of the data. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Based on the previously published work by Amanda Mergler in the Journal of Adolescence. This study sought to build on her findings associated with the concept of personal responsibility by extending study population to a regional Queensland context among female adolescents. Mergler suggests future research of the concept of personal responsibility that investigates “one's commitment to being personally responsible [which] would indicate the range of factors that may undermine or enhance the likelihood of choosing personally responsible behaviour” (Mergler & Shield, 2016, p.56).

The publication submitted reports on an exploratory study that investigates the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility to provide insights and knowledge to professional practice. It is proposed that the study contributes to the discourse associated with adolescent perceptions of self-identity and personal responsibility, and how this may influence and support healthy social and emotional development in young females in regional communities.

Section 2.5 presents the pdf of the submission.

2.5. COPY OF SUBMISSION

Personal Responsibility and the role of Self-Identity in adolescents: A female regional Australian perspective.

First Author: Krystal Watson

University of Southern Queensland
West Street
Toowoomba, 4350
Queensland, Australia
Telephone: +61 413 785 151
Email: Krystal.Watson@usq.edu.au

Second Author: Associate Professor Luke van der Laan (Corresponding Author)

University of Southern Queensland
West Street
Toowoomba, 4350
Queensland, Australia
Telephone: +61 7 46315508
Email: Luke.VanDerLaan@usq.edu.au
ORCID: 0000-0003-2275-8974

Third Author: Dr Sophia Imran

University of Southern Queensland
West Street
Toowoomba, 4350
Queensland, Australia
Telephone: +61 7 46311090
Email: Sophia.Imran@usq.edu.au
ORCID: 0000-0001-8749-6552

Abstract

Introduction

Adolescence and the transition into adulthood present numerous challenges for the individual experiencing it, their peers, and society generally. Personal responsibility has been established as an important consideration of adolescent development as it equips youth to gain greater control over their behaviour, emotions and thinking. In particular, the development of personal responsibility during adolescence remains an important area

of research in the fields of psychology and education. What is less known is the relationship between female adolescents' self-identity and their personal responsibility in a regional setting.

Method

This paper presents the findings of an exploratory qualitative study investigating female adolescent perspectives of self-identity, personal responsibility and the possible relationship between them in a regional Australian context. Primary data was collected using focus group discussions with female secondary school students in early to middle adolescence.

Results

The results confirmed the definitional dimensions of the constructs of self-identity and personal responsibility as reported in the literature and within an Australian regional context. Key findings concur with the research propositions that self-identity is positively related to and influences personal responsibility.

Conclusion

The relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility is more complex and reciprocal than first proposed. The results suggest that rather than a unidirectional relationship between the constructs, each construct influences the other. Peer relations were found to have a notable influence on the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility.

Key Words

Adolescent perspectives, behavioural choices, peer relations, personal responsibility, self-identity

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or non-for-profit.

Declaration of Interests: None

Title: Personal Responsibility and the role of Self-Identity in adolescents: A female regional Australian perspective.

Introduction

In an ever-changing society and fast paced lifestyles, adolescents can miss the guidance and support required to build the identities and skills in contributing positively to behavioural choices. How we navigate the adolescent years and positively inspire their development, has a direct impact on how they will live the rest of their lives (Siegel, 2015). During adolescence, young people are experiencing physical change, rapid cognitive development, and are required to make more choices while developing an understanding of their role in society. Adolescence is a perplexing time of life, as it is a crucial transition period for young people and the precursor to adulthood (Siegel, 2015). These are the years when youth are laying the foundations of adult health and well-being (Reavley et al., 2017). More importantly, it is the development of and the search for self that represents this crucial transition period for young people (Siegel, 2015). One of the most distinctive features of adolescence is that it is a time of thinking about individuality and the future (Arnett, 2014). Adolescence is the stage of life when young people are preparing to take on the roles and responsibilities of adulthood (Arnett, 2014).

Adolescence is a critical period of cognitive, emotional, physical and sexual development with consequences across the life course of the individual and a strong influence on whether the next generation has a healthy start to life (Reavley et al., 2017). In particular, the development of personal responsibility during adolescence remains an important area of research in the fields of psychology and education (Mergler & Shield, 2016). If adolescents build the capacity to self-regulate their thoughts and develop their personal responsibility, they can make positive life choices (Mergler & Spooner-Lane, 2008). The study examined whether the development of personal responsibility is related to female adolescents' self-identity as perceived by the adolescents. The identification of the underlying factors of personal responsibility has allowed researchers to understand the concept further, and to conduct research that explores its impact on the life choices and education of young people (Mergler & Shield, 2016). However, studies on personal responsibility and its relationship with self-identity are rare especially in regional communities. As such, the study responded to the need for future research in self-identity as it related to personal responsibility amongst a group of regional adolescent females.

Research shows that regional Queensland experiences higher mental ill health rates than other areas in metropolitan areas (McAllister et al., 2018). Adding an extra layer of complexity to how females in regional Queensland experience their adolescent years. A focus on adolescent development in regional Queensland, Australia becomes more prominent as researchers agree that unique stressors related to regional areas, such as isolation could adversely impact health outcomes, particularly mental health outcomes (McAllister et al., 2018). This paper reports on an exploratory study representing the perceptions of female regional adolescents which is an understudied yet vulnerable population. In particular, the study is concerned with early adolescence

amongst females between the ages of 13 and 15 years. This paper responds to the need to better understand adolescence in a regional Queensland context. Adolescents represent the next generational input into the social fabric of societies and that the values and relative success of their development are critical factors within community capacity building (van der Laan, 2014).

Adolescent perspectives provide a valuable source of information to understand the importance of self-identity and personal responsibility in their self-development. Understanding this relationship from the perspective of the adolescents can further inform research and educational practice. Building on the assumption that self-identity is related to the development of personal responsibility, it is proposed that greater appreciation of one's identity influences the likelihood of an adolescent to be self-responsible. Youth seek personal independence and control to make their own decisions regarding their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour choices. They are pursuing autonomy from their parents as they begin the process of exploring and committing to their identity and making connection to their peers (Pfeifer & Berkman, 2018).

Therefore, the concept of personal responsibility is seen to play a key role in adolescent development. Increasing personal responsibility can equip adolescents with the skills and knowledge required in making better and more valuable choices (Mergler, 2007). If adolescents fail to recognise that they can control their thoughts and their behavioural choices, they may experience negative cognition which hinders their personal growth (Mergler, 2007). In order to achieve this, it is suggested that they would draw on their perspective of self. This exploratory study seeks to understand if there is a relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility during adolescent development.

Self-identity

During the life span of personal development there are no periods more important than the development of self during adolescence (Sigelman & Rider, 2014). This phase of life for young people brings new challenges and ambiguities, demanding more autonomy and a new meaning to self (Onetti, Fernandez-Garcia & Castillo-Rodriguez, 2019). Adolescents' self-identity becomes more complicated, especially during the transition through adolescence (Arnett, 2014). Self-identity can influence motivation, thought processes, actions, and the control to regulate feelings (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012). Adolescents are testing their boundaries with a passion of exploring the unknown, this sets the stage for the development of core characteristics and enabling a sense of purpose (Siegel, 2015). This developmental process of building a coherent understanding of self-identity is significant for adolescents as it creates the elements of and the foundations for their future. Self-identity begins the journey of discovering individual thoughts, feelings and behaviours, creating worldviews and developing character and values. One of the most distinctive features of adolescence is that it is a time of thinking about who you are, where your life is going, what you believe in and how your life fits into the world (Arnett, 2014).

Self-identity is “an individuals’ perceptions of their characteristics and abilities, their beliefs and values, their relations with others, and how their lives fit into the world around them” (Arnett, 2014, p. 170) For young people to be confident in making positive and certain personal and ideological choices, a level of self-identity is required (Arnett, 2014). The development of a positive self-identity enables a path for adolescence to integrate into society. An understanding of the ‘self’ influences adolescent experiences and how they internalise the experiences as a measure of ability and self-worth (Benninger & Savahl, 2017). Constructing the meaning of ‘self’ promotes healthy development, behaviour and well-being (Benninger & Savahl, 2017), and assists in being a crucial guide towards exploration and seeking independence (Sigelman & Rider, 2014). How young people assign meaning to their self-identity plays a role towards their choices and behaviour. While going through adolescence young people develop their identities in distinctive ways and can discard values they think do not align with a picture of their future (Dembo & Eaton, 2000). These values are malleable in terms of how they create their future self. Adolescents actively explore their identities and place in the world (Berzonsky, 2000), however, still require guidance creating a positive and realistic self-identity. Establishing self-identity within adolescence, supports commitment in adult life and sets a foundation for later stages of development as they transition into adulthood (Arnett, 2014).

Through the transition to adulthood, it is important to encourage adolescent to consider their choices, the power they hold in making those choices, the impact their choices can have, and being willing to embrace accountability on how their choices inform the direction from their life (Mergler, 2007). Life is complex and presents itself with big options, requiring decisions and choices. Adolescents’ cognitive perceptions of who they are and how they want others to perceive them is crucial in their individual development and their decision-making. Adolescents without a fully informed sense of self-identity may be limited in knowing which choices should be considered. It is proposed that establishing a sense of identity allows adolescents to understand who they are as functioning individuals in society. An informed sense of self-identity enables adolescents to make identity-informed choices which guides their behaviour.

Adolescents who are able to ask serious questions about themselves and to achieve an understanding of their identity are likely to be better off (Sigelman & Rider, 2014). Adolescents who are searching for the meaning of life without a developed self-identity can experience a crisis of identity, vulnerability to peer pressure, and a lack of direction and purpose (Siegel, 2015). Adolescents who demonstrate low self-esteem, feel worthless or incompetent can display low personal responsibility and shy away from accepting responsibility for behavioural choices (Mergler, 2007). The study proposes that developing a strong sense of self-identity can promote positive outcomes and becomes a guide for behavioural choices to further develop levels of personal responsibility in adolescents.

Personal Responsibility

An important consideration in adolescent development is equipping youth to gain greater control over their behaviours, emotions and thinking. During this period of development, it is critical to explore personal responsibility, as young people can make choices that may have implications for themselves and for others (Mergler & Shield, 2016). These choices are informed by the level of responsibility, self-identity and situational awareness of the adolescent. From age 11, a cognitive stage is experienced in which young people start to think systemically about possibilities and hypotheses, known as formal operations (Arnett, 2014). The formal operations stage allows adolescence to experience abstract and complex thinking. To provide young people, the opportunities to consider their choices, consequences and how their choices and actions impact on their lives and on others is important (Mergler, 2007).

Adolescents also develop metacognition, the capacity to think about their thoughts (Arnett, 2014). Metacognition enables adolescents the ability to consider the control they have over how they think and what they think about (Mergler, 2007). If mastered correctly adolescents have the ability to reason about their thought processes creating positive choices (Arnett, 2014). As such, the development of formal operations and metacognition gives adolescents ownership towards their thoughts and behaviour. Adolescents begin to make important independent choices that they become accountable for and it is important they have the ability to understand and implement personal responsibility. As adolescents evolve into independent young adults they are faced with life-changing choices and have the power to choose how they feel and how they react (Mergler & Patton, 2007). Establishing personal responsibility during this process is valuable for adolescents (Mergler & Patton, 2007).

Personal responsibility is defined as “the ability to regulate one's own thoughts, feelings and behaviour, along with a willingness to hold oneself accountable for the choices made and the social and personal outcomes” (Mergler, 2007 p.66). Personal responsibility in adolescents involves behavioural, emotional and cognitive control, and a willingness to hold oneself accountable for one's choices (Mergler & Shield, 2016). Adolescents who demonstrate self-control, and social and personal responsibility are more resilient in their transition into adulthood (Mergler & Shield, 2016). It is therefore suggested that the notion of personal responsibility can influence the ability of the adolescents to take responsibility for their behaviour choices, positively handle emotional situations, and understand that relationships with others can influence choices and actions.

Mergler & Patton (2007) identified that personal responsibility in adolescents has four components. These are:

An awareness of, and control over, one's thoughts and feelings.

An awareness of, and control over, behaviour choices.

A willingness to hold oneself accountable for one's behaviour and its outcome (consequences).

An awareness of, and concern for, the impact of one's behaviour upon others.

Accountability is the key aspect of personal responsibility, acknowledging that the choices that one makes must be owned (Mergler et al., 2007). Personal responsibility is an important concept that enables an individual to hold themselves accountable and to make informed choices.

The current study

Personal responsibility does not function in isolation. It is linked with other constructs such as locus of control, personal agency and self-efficacy, self-concept and self-esteem, self-regulation and emotional intelligence (Mergler et al., 2007). A key premise of the study is that Mergler's notion of self-concept and self-esteem being related to personal responsibility, reflects the definition of self-identity. This illustrates that understanding female adolescent development is complex but for the purpose of this research, personal responsibility will be investigated as it relates to self-identity. What is less known is the nature of the relationship between personal responsibility and self-identity. The study seeks to explore this relationship from the perceptions of female high school students in regional Australia. Research is needed not only to increase our understanding of adolescent health and well-being and its determinants, but to find effective ways to improve it (Reavley et al., 2017).

The study explored adolescents' perspectives related to their understanding of self-identity and personal responsibility to gain insight into the context of their lived experiences. Focus groups were used to identify the lived experiences of 12 female participants from Year 9 and Year 10 and investigate the relationship, if any, between self-identity and personal responsibility. Figure 1 presents the conceptual model underpinning the study which suggests that self-identity is positively related to and influences personal responsibility. The study explored: i) whether a positive relationship between the concepts is evident, and ii) what the nature of the relationship is.

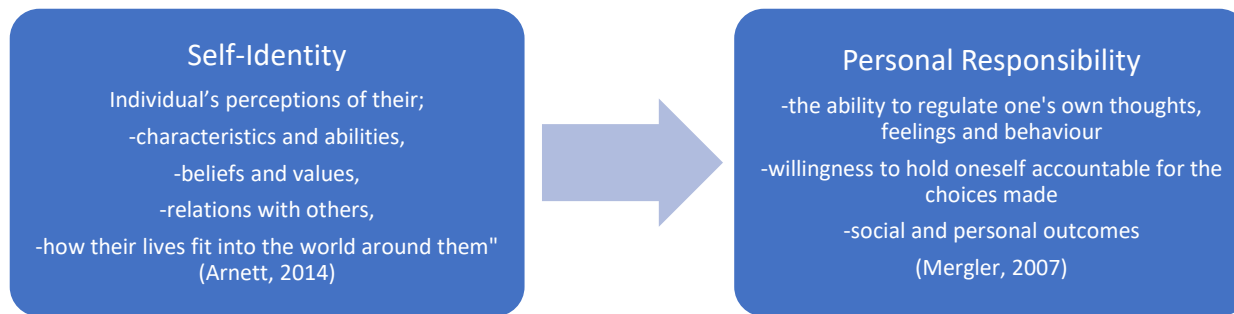


Figure 5: Conceptual model of the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility during early adolescence.

To understand the nature of this relationship, the study answered the following research questions:

What are female regional Australian adolescents' perceptions of self-identity?

What are female regional Australian adolescents' perceptions of personal responsibility?

What are female regional Australian adolescents' perceptions of the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility?

Method

Participants The study was exploratory and applied a qualitative approach to record the perceptions of twelve female high school students from Year 9 and Year 10 in a private girls' secondary school located in regional Queensland, Australia.

Procedure Ethical approval was obtained from the university ethics committee, and students were approached through the Executive Assistant to the Principal with an invitation to participate voluntarily in a 30-minute focus group interview during a designated time arranged by the school. University ethics approval and the informed consent of participants was obtained before participation in the focus groups was initiated.

Focus Group Interviews Semi-structured questions were formulated with targeted questions relating to self-identity and personal responsibility. The principal questions developed to generate discussion on self-identity were: “What do you think we mean by the term ‘self-identity?’” and “What do you think is needed to improve self-identity?”. Questions related more specifically to personal responsibility were: “What do you think we mean by the term ‘personal responsibility?’”; “In terms of your actions, do you think about: a) Your consequences?; b) How your behaviour impacts on others?; c) Has peer pressure influenced your actions?”; and “How does the way you think about yourself affect how responsible are you to: a) Your consequences; b) Your behavioural and emotional control; c) Your cognitive control?”. Three focus groups were divided into year groups (two Year 9 groups and one Year 10 group) from a regionally based all-girls private secondary school.

Data Analysis The qualitative data from the focus groups were analysed using “thematic analysis”. Thematic analysis systematically identified, organised and offered insight into themes that emerged from the data to comprehend participants’ experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Each focus group interview was audiotaped, transcribed and analysed. The results of the focus group interviews were structured around dimensions relating to both self-identity and personal responsibility. The main themes identified from the participants were colour coded and categorised according to the underlying dimensions of the concepts of self-identity, personal responsibility. Thereafter the themes associated with the relationship between the concepts were identified. Within the conceptual dimensions, similarities were established and grouped, with each theme being assigned a name. Common themes were noted for personal responsibility, self-identity and the relationship between them.

Results and Discussion

After examining the data from each of the focus group interviews, the study identified emergent themes. The themes and representative participant quotations were summarized and tabularized (see Appendix A & B). These themes included: i) self-identity and personal responsibility have important distinct yet related roles within adolescent development, ii) self-identity influences personal responsibility; iii) self-identity and personal responsibility influence each other, confirming a bidirectional relationship; iv) self-identity attributes and characteristic have cognitive bearing whereas personal responsibility dimensions are practice oriented; and v) peer relations significantly influence the nature of self-identity and personal responsibility as well as the relationship between them. The study thus, confirmed that adolescents’ self-identity and personal responsibility share a positive and complex relationship that dictates the choices they make.

Theme 1: Self-identity and personal responsibility have important distinct yet related roles within adolescent development. The findings of the research indicated that participants from both Year 9 and Year 10, had the ability to identify characteristics and link them with their understanding of self-identity. The participants identified characteristics such as their personality, self-perceptions and identification and linked them with their understanding of self-identity. Participants showed an understanding that their perceptions of self-image were important in their development of self-identity. However, the finding also showed adolescents require guidance in enhancing their higher cognitive thinking skills for self-discovery as these perceptions were related to their cognitive thinking and learning behaviour that ultimately influenced their self-identity.

The participants' responses revealed that their values and beliefs influenced their self-identity. They linked values such as morals and being true to oneself and belief in one's individuality with important aspects of their self-identity. The participants did not refer to specific beliefs and values, or comment on why these were important to them. There could be many reasons in the reluctance to name particular values and beliefs such as; avoiding being perceived as judgemental, self-identification with values making them vulnerable to ridicule, being unable to describe what beliefs and values were important to them or not being ready to share their beliefs and values with the interviewer.

The Year 9 participants defined personal responsibility as: i) not blaming others for one's actions; ii) taking responsibility for actions/behaviour; iii) looking after your things; and iv) taking ownership of your actions. Although the Year 9 participants linked personal responsibility with accountability, they showed a tendency to react impulsively without thinking of the consequences or blaming others instead of owning responsibility for their actions. The Year 10 participants related personal responsibility to; taking care of oneself and one's health; doing what's best; and having the ability to take responsibility for one's behaviour and actions. Unlike the Year 9 students, the Year 10 students' responses indicated they understood their behaviour could have consequences. They thoughtfully considered or weighed consequences associated with their decisions.

A sense of personal responsibility was seen to develop control over behavioral choices and accountability for consequences among adolescents. Participant's insights indicated that students had the realisation that their impulsive behaviour could yield undesired consequences. Some of the participants were aware of how their feelings and actions could have consequences related to their choice of action, indicating their ability in doing cost benefit analysis of the consequences of their actions. Others were more prone to acting before thinking. Other participants stated that they acted impulsively without thinking first and the thought process towards behavioural choices and consequences did not occur until after the action.

Theme 2: Self-identity influences personal responsibility. The results suggest that the participants recognized that self-identity and personal responsibility were related. They attributed positive and negative behavioural choices to their sense of self, their values and beliefs. Self-identity, especially in terms of beliefs and values were perceived to play a critical role in determining participants' personal responsibility in terms of their behavioural choices. The participants were aware that their beliefs and values were a part of their self-identity, guiding their perceptions of the distinction between right and wrong.

They perceived that their choices were dependent on what they identified as important in life. This suggests that their self-identity influenced their self-identity.

Participants' defined self-identity as 'their mindset' that influences their behavioural choices. They perceived that self-identity, particularly their characteristics and abilities, influenced the personal responsibility dimensions related to thoughts, behavioural choices and the impact on others. Furthermore, some participants perceived that an overestimation of self, blurred their sense of right and wrong and influenced their thought processes. The participants' self-identity had the ability to dictate their actions.

Theme 3: Self-identity and personal responsibility influence each other, confirming a bidirectional relationship. The results confirmed that though self-identity influenced personal responsibility, the relationship was reciprocal. Personal responsibility was also perceived as influencing self-identity. Confirming a complex and noteworthy relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility. Participants connected their actions with their perceptions of self, indicating the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility. Some of the key characteristics that influenced their actions linked to personal responsibility were: adopting a passive or aggressive nature; stubbornness, and positivity or pessimism. This supported the notion that the relationship is reciprocal was the view that consequences of actions and decisions were perceived as 'lessons' and enabled a learning process to take place.

Participants felt that their self-perception was either positive or negative, which affected their emotional state and behaviour, subsequently impacting on others. Self-identity created by negative self-image generated behaviour which had negative impacts on others. Participants perceived that their relationships with others influenced and guided their self-identity. The views of others and external feedback assisted the participants in the exploration and development of their self-identity. Participants were aware of the people with whom they associated, could influence their self-identity.

Positive peer pressure influenced adolescents to embrace new opportunities when they were lacking confidence or a positive sense of self. It developed their self-identity's characteristics and abilities and in turn influenced their personal responsibility with positive behaviour. Constructive and encouraging behaviour by peers played a positive role in improving self-identity. These findings suggest that positive peer relationships assisted in the discovery of new traits and characteristics that played a role in the evolution of self-identity.

Theme 4: Self-identity attributes and characteristics have cognitive bearing whereas personal responsibility are practice oriented. Results indicated that self-identity is a more cognitively derived concept that is shaped by beliefs and values, and is mutually reinforced by the extent to which personal responsibility is exercised. This insight suggests that cognitive conceptions of self-identity are actually translated into the practice of personal responsibility with the practice reflecting back on to the said value or belief upon which it is based.

The process of learning from consequences of their actions was linked with the further development of values. Identifying values and developing an understanding between right and wrong based on understanding consequences of actions were seen to impact the development of self-identity. Some participants did not have control over their thoughts and feelings when making decisions but were aware of this weakness in themselves. Participants also recognised that their predisposition to fail to distinguish between right and wrong influenced their actions.

Theme 5: Peer relations significantly influence the nature of self-identity and personal responsibility as well as the relationship between them. Participants had considerable self-awareness and understanding how their behaviour and emotions influenced others either positively or negatively. Participants perceived their notion of personal responsibility was shaped by their personal thoughts, feelings and behaviour, which correspondingly influenced their peers' notions of personal responsibility. They perceived that empathy for others and the ability to relate to others strengthened personal responsibility. Adolescents had social awareness about how their thoughts, feelings and behaviour affected people with whom they associated with. Participants showed a consideration for others and demonstrated an understanding that their actions impacted on others. They felt that it was important for them to become positive role models and to lead by example to demonstrate positive behaviour to others.

The need to fit in amongst their peers disrupted the participants' self-identity and impacted on their own beliefs and values. These statements indicated that these adolescents were aware that peer pressure could instill negative influence. However, they were not always able to avoid it for fear of not fitting in. This pressure to fit in with peers was negatively influencing the development of self-identity in adolescents. Peer relationships were perceived to impact the participants' notions of self-identity and influence their behavioural choices. Participants from Year 9 perceived that peer pressure could influence their self-identity and behaviour. Peer pressure that did not align with their beliefs and values, consequently influenced their thought process and behavioural choices, creating self-doubt while developing conflicting thoughts.

A strong sense of self-identity could limit the influence of peer pressure and instill a sense of confidence when making choices based more on their values and beliefs. Participants felt that recognising and rectifying their weaknesses and accepting who they were, improved their self-identity. Some participants showed resistance to peer pressure in changing their individuality as it was important to them to be who they were. Participants from Year 10 perceived that their personal characteristics such as their assertiveness and stubbornness assisted in recognising and resisting peer pressure and reduced their vulnerability to peer pressure.

Conclusion

This paper presented insights into adolescents' perceptions of self-identity and personal responsibility. The findings contributed to the area of adolescent development and derived a deeper understanding of the concepts and their relationships. The study addresses the gap in literature linked to the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility. The findings confirmed the definitional dimensions of the constructs of self-identity (Arnett,

2014) and personal responsibility (Mergler & Patton, 2007) in the Australian regional context. The research focused on whether there was a positive relationship where self-identity influenced personal responsibility. The findings, while confirming the positive relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility, also suggested that the relationship is reciprocal. Self-identity was found to be positively influenced by the practice of personal responsibility. Therefore, the experiences related to practicing personal responsibility also informs the development of self-identity.

The notion of building adolescents' sense of personal responsibility through strengthening self-identity was found to be associated with positive adolescent personal development. The research suggests that understanding of their self-identity and personal responsibility promotes healthy behaviour choices and enhances the understanding of self among adolescents. The results indicated that social awareness is linked to personal responsibility and is an important skill that needs to be enhanced among adolescents for developing higher levels of cognition and healthy relationships. Adolescents require the ability to develop a level of social awareness, and to understand how their own thoughts, feelings and behaviour affect how the people with whom they associate choose to act, feel or behave. The study findings suggest that gaining a consistent sense of self through self-reflection, active thinking and reasoning fosters a strong and positive self-identity and informs the practice of personal responsibility among adolescents. The study was exploratory, and its findings limited by a) the size of the sample and b) the unique characteristics of an all-girls private school. The findings are therefore not generalisable to the broader population of the regional female adolescents. However, the study does provide evidence of the reciprocal relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility upon which further research can be based. Specifically, future studies could focus on a broader sample to further investigate this relationship.

References

- Arnett, J. J. (2014). *Adolescence and emerging adulthood*. Essex, England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Bardi, A., & Schwartz, S. H. (2003). Values and behavior: Strength and structure of relations. *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, 29(10), 1207-1220.
<http://doi.org/10.1177.0146167203254602>
- Benninger, E., & Savahl, S. (2017). A systematic review of children's construction of the self: Implications for children's subjective well-being. *Child Indicators Research*, 10(2), 545-569. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-016-9382-2>
- Berzonsky, M. D. (2000). Theories of adolescence. In G.R. Adams (Ed.), *Adolescent development: The essential readings*, 11-28. Oxford, MA: Blackwell.
- Dembo, M. H., & Eaton, M. J. (2000). Self-regulation of academic learning in middle-level schools. *The Elementary School Journal*, 100(5), 473-491.
- Glass, C. R. (2013). Strengthening and Deepening Education for Personal and Social Responsibility. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 164, 83-94.
- Mergler, A., & Patton, W.A. (2007). Adolescents talking about personal responsibility. *Journal of Student Wellbeing*, 1(1), 57-70.
<https://doi.org/10.21913/JSW/v1i1.113>.
- Mergler, A., & Shield, P. (2016). Development of the Personal Responsibility Scale for adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 51, 50-57.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2016.05.011>

- Mergler, A. G. (2007). Personal responsibility : the creation, implementation and evaluation of a school-based program. PhD thesis, Queensland University of Technology. Retrieved from <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/16382/>
- Mergler, A. G., Spencer, F. H., & Patton, W. A. (2007). Development of a measure of personal responsibility for adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 27.
- Mergler, A. G., & Spooner-Lane, R. (2008). Assessing the personal and emotional developmental outcomes of high-school students. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 25(2), 4-16.
- Onetti, W., Fernández García, J. C., & Castillo-Rodríguez, A. (2019). Transition to middle school: self-concept changes. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0212640>
- Oyserman, D., Elmore, K., & Smith, G. (2012). Self, self-concept, and identity. In M.R. Leary & J.P Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (69-104). The Guilford Press.
- Quine, S., Bernard, D., Booth, M., Kang, M., Usherwood, T., Alperstein, G., & Bennett, D. (2003). Health and access issues among Australian adolescents: a rural-urban comparison. *Rural and Remote Health*, 245, 1-10.
- Reavley, N. J., Sawyer, S. M., & Unicef. (2017). Improving the Methodological Quality of Research in Adolescent Well-being, Innocenti Research Briefs, UNICEF. Innocenti, Florence.
- Ruyter, D. d. (2002). The Virtue of Taking Responsibility. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 34(1), 25-35. <https://doi:10.1111/j.1469-5812.2002.tb00283.x>
- Siegel, D. J. (2015). *Brainstorm: The power and purpose of the teenage brain*: New York, NY: Penguin Putnam.
- Sigelman, C. K., & Rider, E. A. (2014). *Life-span human development*. Nelson Education.
- Smith, D. G., Xiao, L., & Bechara, A. (2012). Decision making in children and adolescents: Impaired Iowa gambling task performance in early adolescence. *Developmental psychology*, 48(4), 1180-1187. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026342>
- Steinberg, L., & Morris, A. S. (2001). Adolescent development. *Annual review of psychology*, 52(1), 83-110. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.83>
- Steinberg, M. A., & McCray, E. D. (2012). Listening to their voices: middle schoolers' perspectives of life in middle school. *Qualitative Report*, 17, (Art. 68) 1-14.
- van der Laan, L. (2014). Community capacity building: the question of sustainability? in GD Postle, et al. (Eds), *Community capacity building: lessons from adult learning in Australia*, NIACE.

Appendix A: Results for Self-Identity

	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5
	Self-identity and personal responsibility have important distinct yet related roles within adolescent development.	Self-identity influences personal responsibility.	Self-identity and personal responsibility influence each other, confirming a bidirectional relationship.	Self-identity attributes and characteristic have cognitive bearing whereas personal responsibility dimensions are practice oriented.	Peer relations significantly influence the nature of self-identity and personal responsibility as well as the relationship between them.
Characteristics & Abilities	<p>"[Self-identity]...means your character and who you are, your personality and what you think of yourself" (Year 9 student).</p> <p>"[Self-identity is] how you define yourself or what your personality is and what you do" (Year 9 student).</p> <p>"[Self-identity is] basically, just what you think of yourself" (Year 10 student).</p>	<p>"If you think positively about yourself then you're going to be happy and more enjoyable to be around, whereas if you're negative, you're going to be sad and not everyone will want to hang around you" (Year 10 student).</p> <p>"Personally, I am really stubborn so, usually if I don't agree with something, I won't do it" (Year 10 student).</p> <p>"I feel that the growth mindset thing, if you are really down on yourself, ...say if you thought you weren't smart then you might not put as much effort in because you already think you're not smart so why should I try to be better" (Year 10 student).</p>	<p>"If you think negative things about yourself and how you look, then your behaviour and emotions are going to be really doubtful and negative, and that's going to impact [on] everyone around you" (Year 10 student).</p>		<p>"Thinking down on yourself can have side effects that affect everyone around you" (Year 10 student).</p>
Beliefs & Values	<p>"[Self-identity is] being true to yourself and knowing who you really are" (Year 9 student).</p>	<p>"If someone offered me drugs..., I would not take them because it's a moral of mine and I don't want that" (Year 10 student).</p>	<p>"Most of the things I do is based on what I want" (Year 10 student).</p>	<p>"Identifying your morals and what you think is right and wrong and living by those" (Year 10 student).</p>	

<p>Relations to Others</p>	<p>"I feel that you change who you are depending on who you are with, so you might gain strengths from these people or you might get their weaknesses" (Year 9 student).</p>	<p>"I have a friend that wants to do well with her subjects, so that has influenced me. If everyone around you is studying and doing their homework then you're more likely to go in that direction" (Year 9 student).</p>	<p>"Not surrounding yourself with negative people, because that will then make you negative and that might be hard to get out of that situation. So try to always be positive and be surrounded by positive things and people" (Year 9 student).</p> <p>"I feel that, especially at this age, we are really pressured to fit in, so you would agree to do something even if you didn't think it was right because you wanted to fit in" (Year 10 student).</p>		<p>"[Self-identity can be improved by] the people around you. They are going to help you [to] go through more experiences and situations that will help you to reflect and discover things about yourself that you might not have known about yourself" (Year 10 student).</p> <p>"People pick up on traits you didn't know and that helps your self-identity" (Year 10 student).</p> <p>"If you get good compliments and you have a growth mindset... then you will have a better self-identity of yourself and you will be more positive" (Year 10 student).</p>
<p>How One Fits into the World Around Them</p>	<p>"...Self-identity is more about how you perceive yourself to be" (Year 10 Student).</p> <p>"[Self-identity is] how you interpret some things" (Year 9 student).</p> <p>"It's knowing who you are on the inside out, not [thinking], 'Am I this or am I that?'. It's just knowing I am this person and this is how I work. I don't feel that a lot of people know that; I don't even know that yet about myself. I think it comes with time and learning about what you do and what you're good at" (Year 9 student).</p>			<p>"If you don't think of yourself as your own person, then you will think that you don't have a reason for being" (Year 9 student).</p>	

Appendix B: Results for Personal Responsibility

	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5
	Self-identity and personal responsibility have important distinct yet related roles within adolescent development.	Self-identity influences personal responsibility.	Self-identity and personal responsibility influence each other, confirming a bidirectional relationship.	Self-identity attributes and characteristic have cognitive bearing whereas personal responsibility dimensions are practice oriented.	Peer relations significantly influence the nature of self-identity and personal responsibility as well as the relationship between them.
An awareness of, and control over, one's thoughts and feelings	<p>"You don't always think things through completely before you actually do something" (Year 9 student).</p> <p>"You might have done something stupid that you thought was funny and then later you're sitting in bed thinking, 'I shouldn't have done that'" (Year 9 student).</p> <p>"Sometimes you make rash decisions and think, 'This will be fine and won't impact [on] anyone or anything', then you reflect back on it or you get called out on it, and you realised it was not the best idea" (Year 9 student).</p>			<p>"Usually, when I do something, I'll make sure that it's not going to have consequences, or that nothing bad will happen, or I try to think about all the things that will happen" (Year 9 student).</p> <p>"...I like to think before I act. [For example], you think about if this is going to benefit you or what are the consequences of doing something before you do it" (Year 10 student).</p>	

<p>Accountability for one's behaviour and its outcomes (consequences); behavioural choices</p>	<p>"...Before I do something, I'm always like, 'What is this going to lead to in my future, what does this mean if I do this?' So I'm always thinking, 'What is the consequence of doing this?'" (Year 10 student).</p> <p>"Consequences are what help you learn to do the right thing if you have done something wrong" (Year 9 student).</p>	<p>"If you think of yourself highly, then you may think that you don't deserve that consequence" (Year 10 student).</p> <p>"You...think you can get away with everything if you think you're better than everyone" (Year 9 student).</p>		<p>"If you have an argument, you're just saying everything that is coming to your head first, and it may or may not make sense. Then after you think about it more and think how you could have said something different" (Year 9 student).</p>	<p>"Well, I guess you try to blame it on someone else sometimes. My instinct is to say, 'I didn't do that at all', when I actually did. So I should be taking responsibility for my own action but sometimes I blame it on somebody else" (Year 9 student).</p>
<p>An awareness of, and concern for, the impact of one's behaviour upon others</p>			<p>"I think we need to build each other up more and try to make others happier" (Year 10 student).</p> <p>"Make sure you think before you do something because it could have a negative impact, or it could also have a positive impact, on people around you" (Year 9 Student).</p>	<p>"Yeah, I like to think before I act. You think about if this is going to benefit you or what are the consequences of doing something before you do it" (Year 10 student).</p>	<p>"Yeah, definitely, because, if I say something negative, I tried to think about how the people around me will react, and if it's going to negatively impact [on] them as well. I don't want to put someone down because I'm feeling bad about myself" (Year 10 student).</p> <p>"Positivity and negativity really affect other people. If you're being negative one day and you say something to someone else, that will impact [on] them and you will make them have a negative attitude, but if you're positive that will encourage other people to act positive" (Year 10 student).</p> <p>"It depends if it's a good thing, like with the swimming carnival I don't really want to swim but my friends are always like, 'Come on, you can do it'. So it depends on what it is for, like if it's a positive or [a] negative situation" (Year 9 student).</p>

2.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter of the thesis started by presenting the results of the analysis of qualitative data, collected using focus group discussions. The data was analysed using Braun and Clark's approach to thematic analysis. From the results, emerging themes were identified and presented. Thereafter the thesis publication submission was described and presented. The results that were collated from the focus group discussions confirmed the proposition that self-identity assisted in shaping choices and in guiding behaviour. It was also revealed that self-identity and personal responsibility have a reciprocal relationship that can guide personal development.

Chapter Three presents the research findings (section 3.2) and limitations of the study (section 3.3), more broadly as they relate to the research questions. Although there are limitations in the study, the findings still provided productive knowledge to the researchers' professional practice. Section 3.4 discusses the contributions of the study and explores how the research can enhance professional practice, scholarship and to the researcher.

CHAPTER 3. CONCLUSION

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescent behaviour occurs due to normative developmental changes, especially within a social context, however, it is important to consider that the self evolves and can also motivate behaviour (Pfeifer & Berkman, 2018). Positive behaviours influenced by the values of self-identity assist adolescents with the challenges of everyday life that are amplified during adolescence. Therefore, this exploratory qualitative research studied the importance of self-identity and personal responsibility within female adolescent development, in a regional Queensland all-girls private secondary school context. The study investigated the relationship between the two concepts.

This Chapter outlines the important research findings (section 3.2) related to the participants' perspective of self-identity and personal responsibility. The findings provided evidence that a relationship existed between the two concepts and highlights the emerging themes from the research findings. In section 3.3 the limitations of study will be explained, as well as the contributions (sections 3.4) to professional practice, scholarship and self. Section 3.5 of this study provides a scope for future research. The study provides a foundation for future research to be conducted to further strengthen professional practice.

3.2. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study based on exploring the nature of the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility, by understanding the perspectives of female adolescents towards both concepts. These perceptions provided insight into whether a relationship existed and to what extent. In order to explore the extent of the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility the following research questions need to be addressed and will guide the study:

RQ1: What are female adolescents' perceptions of self-identity of adolescent females in regional Queensland

RQ2: What are female adolescents' perceptions of personal responsibility of adolescent females in regional Queensland?

RQ3. What is the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility in a regional Queensland all-girls private secondary school setting?

The study combined an exploratory qualitative approach to gain the perspectives of the participants. Participant perspectives presented emerging themes that provided a deeper understanding into the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility. The study was based on the proposition that self-identity influences personal responsibility, therefore, the research explored this relationship.

3.2.1. RQ1: WHAT ARE FEMALE ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SELF-IDENTITY IN A REGIONAL QUEENSLAND ALL-GIRLS PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOL SETTING?

This first research question relates to the participants' perceptions of their understanding of self-identity. Specific questions assisted the researcher in developing a deeper understanding of how female adolescents comprehend self-identity. To comprehend the participant's perceptions of self-identity, the researcher asked the following interview questions:

1. What do you think we mean by the term self-identity?
2. What do you think is needed to improve self-identity?

The findings presented that the participants had an understanding that their self-identity was important in their development of self. For example, self-identity was defined as: i) defining yourself and your character, ii) your personality, iii) how you think of yourself, and iv) learning about what your good, including strengths and weaknesses. The characteristics that appeared to influence the participants' self-identity the most were: their passive or aggressive nature; their stubbornness; their positivity or pessimism; and their ability to recognise weaknesses in their characteristics. Some participants perceived weak characteristics, such as passiveness or negative self-image, especially physical appearance, made them more vulnerable to peer pressure.

Further findings showed that perceptions of self-identity can dictate behaviour. Self-identity, especially in terms of one's values are often related to corresponding behaviour (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). The participants' self-identity related to their relationships with others, proved to influence their choices and behaviour, especially, in relation to peer pressure. The participants expressed that peer pressure negatively

impacted their behaviour, and choices were based on fear instead of values, leading to negative consequences. However, participants also stated that having a sense of who you are allowed them to make positive choices confidently, despite peer pressure.

3.2.2. RQ2: WHAT ARE FEMALE ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A REGIONAL QUEENSLAND ALL-GIRLS PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOL SETTING?

The second research question addressed the participants perceptions towards personal responsibility. The interview questions specifically related to gaining insight into the participants' understanding of personal responsibility involved:

1. What do you think we mean by the term personal responsibility?
2. In terms of your actions, do you think about:
 - a) Your consequences?
 - b) How your behaviour impacts on others?
 - c) Has peer pressure influenced your actions?
3. How does the way you think about yourself affect how responsible are you to:
 - a) Your consequences?
 - b) Your behavioural and emotional control?
 - c) Your cognitive control?

Personal responsibility was defined by the participants as: i) not blaming others for one's actions; ii) taking responsibility for actions/behaviour; iii) looking after your things and taking care of yourself; and iv) taking ownership of your actions.

The participants understood that consequences were linked to their actions. Some of the participants had the ability to think about consequences before they acted. They were aware their actions can influence and impact others. In other circumstances, participants acted impulsively and emotional without any thought process first. Some participants acted according to their frustration and despite considering consequences. This impacted on others as the participants took their frustration out of others without considering how this would make the person feel.

The research findings also showed, positive or negative peer pressure can have a corresponding influence on the participants actions. Peer pressure and the fear of not fitting in, influenced the participants to act in ways that didn't feel right. In other instances, peer relations had a positive impact on cognitive process and behavioural practice. For example, participants who were encouraged positively to perform in school activities found the confidence to participants.

There was an awareness from some of the participants, that consequences are related to the concern of how one will be perceived by others. Another finding showed that the perceptions of participants reflected that an overestimation of self dictated what consequences that they thought were deserved. This may indicate that the evaluation of self from a bounded and subjective point of view could lead youth to engage in negative behaviour oblivious of the consequences. The findings showed, the way one perceives oneself than creates a perception of how one should receive consequences for their behaviour.

The focus group discussions presented that positive or negative feelings on oneself influenced the participants' behaviour and emotional control in either a positive or negative way. It was also found that participants' self-talk if negative, influenced their cognitive control which hindered behavioural choices. Also, if participants had an argument, they acted emotionally and weren't able to process their wrong behaviour and consequences until after the act when they stopped to reflect on the situation.

3.2.3. RQ3: WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-IDENTITY AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A REGIONAL QUEENSLAND ALL-GIRLS PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOL SETTING?

The third research question allowed the researcher to take the answers from the participants understanding of self-identity and personal responsibility and formulate the relationship between the concepts. The findings, while confirming that self-identity influenced personal responsibility, also confirmed that the relationship was reciprocal. Participants had the cognitive maturity to connect their actions with their characteristic traits, representing a link between self-identity and personal responsibility.

Participants' defined self-identity as 'their mindset' that influences their behavioural choices. Participants' self-identity, predominantly their characteristics, influenced their choices of decisions and behaviour. Values led to value-based decision-making, enabling them to formulate decisions based on their self-identity. Value-based decision making enabled the participants to avoid being peer pressured and instead able to feel confident in the decisions they made. Participants' characteristics and abilities also influenced personal responsibility dimensions related to thoughts, behavioural choices, and the impact on others. Participants felt that their self-perception was either positive or negative, which affected their emotional state and behaviour, subsequently impacting on others.

The results indicated that self-identity has a more cognitive focus relating to beliefs and values, whereas personal responsibility has a practical focus whereby beliefs and values are practised. This highlighted a distinction between how self-identity and personal responsibility can be defined as they relate to each other. The results suggest that in a regional high school context, female adolescents recognized that self-identity and personal responsibility were related. They attributed positive and negative behavioural choices to their sense of self, their values, and beliefs. They also acknowledged the positive and negative effects of peer pressure on their self-identity and their personal responsibility in terms of the choices they make.

3.3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The aim of the practice-based research study was to conduct an exploratory qualitative study to investigate the importance of self-identity and personal responsibility towards female adolescent development. The study also explored the relationship between the two concepts. The outcome of the exploratory study was underpinned by a qualitative research design to establish new knowledge to professional practice. Based on the data collected, the study provided valuable insights into the relationship of self-identity and personal responsibility. However, the results must be interpreted with caution as a number of limitations should be considered.

The limitations of the study include, the contribution of the theory, how the data was collected, the sample size of the study, and any biases towards the research from the

researcher. These limitations underline the difficulty of collecting data, however, it also opens pathways for future research.

Contribution to Theory. The study filled the gap in literature by informing the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility. Also providing new knowledge to professional practice by demonstrating how the significance of this relationship can support the practitioners when developing resources related to the two constructs for adolescents. The study aims sought to a) tentatively explore the possible relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility. The study found that while not conclusive so as to contribute to theory, there was sufficient basis to continue with the study's line of enquiry calling for further confirmatory studies and b) establish grounds for the development of an adolescent reflective practice tool that includes the self-identity and personal responsibility dimensions in order to be used in practice. As such, while contributions to theory and practice were limited by the scope of the study, the findings sufficiently inform further steps to make these contributions as part of a further study.

Collection of Data. How data is collected can show limits within the study. For this study, this is due to the vulnerable age of early adolescents and topics that may be sensitive, could receive a different response from the participants. Especially, if the questions being asked are in a group setting or even face-to-face with the interviewer. Female adolescents may be more comfortable or provide further insight if sensitive questions are asked in a survey instead of a face-to-face focus group. Although focus group interviews can provide participants with a less intimidating environmental opposed to one-on-one interviews, it can also limit the study due to participants unwillingness to cover sensitive information (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

Sample Size. While the study sample size and limited scope does not demonstrate the relationship between SI and PR, the study did provide evidence that this line of enquiry is justified and that further studies are necessary to establish the nature of the possible relationship between SI and PR. This has been addressed in the aims of the study, the methodology, findings and limitations sections of the thesis. The study was also limited by the number of students that participated. Due to the small sample

size of the study, the results cannot be generalised for all adolescents and are related specifically to the population from which the sample was drawn.

Bias. As the researcher is deemed an insider researcher this can provide a limitation within the study. However, it can also offer valuable benefits to the research such as having a deeper understanding of the population being studied. The limitation linked to the researcher being an insider researcher can be seen as bias and the researcher could have biased views. Section 1.8.5 shows that experienced outside researchers conducted the focus group interviews to enable no cohesion to the participants in relation to the interview questions.

Despite limitations the study contributes to the knowledge of adolescent development in a way which is productive. This study builds a foundation to be able to continue building on the same topic. For example, the study not only brings a new facet to self-identity and personal responsibility, it also leads to future research.

3.4. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to discover a deeper understanding of the importance of developing personal responsibility in adolescence and the extent to which self-identity can be an influencer. The identification of the underlying factors of personal responsibility allows researchers to advance understanding of personal responsibility and conduct research that explores its impact on the life choices and education of young people (A. Mergler & Shield, 2016).

The findings contributed to the area of female adolescent development and derived a deeper understanding of self-identity and personal responsibility and the relationship that exist between the two concepts. The study has developed an understanding of the relationship between the two concepts and provides new knowledge and insights, providing contributions to the literature gap. This study was designed to contribute knowledge associated with female adolescents and seeks to reach out as a holistic and empathetic initiative aimed at enhancing personal development.

It is anticipated that through the practice-based project from the Master of Professional Studies (Research) program a range of benefits will be established.

Benefits will contribute to, the organisation and/or population being studied, to the profession and theory, and to the individual researcher, known as a triple dividend.

The ‘triple dividend’ represents the relevant contributions to individual development (personal and professional), the organisation and their profession (academic knowledge) from the research (Garnett, 2000). This work-based research is presented as not only charting the development of evidence-based research and future research but also to achieve measurable contributions to female personal development.

3.4.1. PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

The researcher has developed deep insights related to the study phenomenon. As such the researcher has investigated the perceptions, worldview, and decisions of the all-girls secondary school students. The participants’ feedback from the focus group interviews contributed to the professional practice and the gap in the literature.

Adolescents’ capabilities are enhanced by having access to the required resources to develop opportunities to participate in activities that will enhance personal development (Reavley et al., 2017). This study provides valuable contributions to the professional practice in female adolescent development, especially to practitioners such as teachers and psychologists as it provides new insights into the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility. This new knowledge opens new avenues for further research on which can further add to the body of knowledge. The emerging knowledge from this research not only adds to the theory of female adolescent development.

The findings of this research can inform the practitioners to develop more effective resources and strategies based on the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility that emerged from this research for adolescents’ personal development and incorporate these strategies into their practice.

3.4.2. SCHOLARSHIP

The tentative findings support the proposition that a reciprocal relationship exists between the concepts of self-identity and personal responsibility. While these findings are limited by the nature of the data (qualitative) and size of the sample,

support for the study's proposition was found. The study's preliminary findings justify further research seeking to confirm the conceptual relationship presented in Figure 4.

3.4.3. SELF

The Master of Professional Studies (Research) program and the chosen topic of research has allowed the researcher to gain valuable skills within conducting research and knowledge toward personal development for female adolescents in regional Queensland. This acquisition of skills and knowledge has contributed to achieving the following learning objectives.

1. Developed expertise and knowledge on rigorous research approaches by designing, implementing, and reporting the results of a study that enhanced personal development for female adolescents.
2. Developed increased knowledge and insight into self-identity and personal responsibility of female adolescents within regional Queensland by interviewing students attending an all-girls secondary school.
3. Gained a profound understanding of practice-based methods and process logic to create an innovative educational personal development program, which will enable female adolescents the opportunity to reflect on oneself to enhance identity and strengthen personal responsibility.
4. Improved analytical skills and critical judgement by comparing research of previous reflective practice outcomes to make an analytical judgement to identify the most appropriate tools to develop a program that enables the best possible outcome for personal development within female adolescents.

The Master of Professional Studies has provided the researcher with an opportunity to develop creatively and initiatively, while engaging in issues related to her professional practice. The study contributed to the researchers self-directed learning and career development by developing new ideas. The researcher will have a deeper understander towards female adolescents and how they experience challenges while developing personally and responsibly.

The researchers' professional practice is in the all-girls private secondary school and after years of expertise surrounding youth, the researcher has developed a deep interest in the perceptions of adolescent girls. Especially the perceptions as they relate to self-identity and personal responsibility. The researcher has observed many female adolescents struggle with making positive choices and developing a deep understand of who they are as an individual. The researcher's passion to improve professional practice stemmed from the complexities in which she observed young females go through. The researcher strongly felt that in developing a sense of self-identity can improve their personal responsibility, more specifically to how they make choices.

3.5. FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of the research also identified further themes that deserve exploration. The findings of the research reflected that there are other venues that could be researched further. Future research can further investigate:

- i) The relationship concluded by the study and illustrated in Figure 4.
- ii) Expand the cohort and sample size of the population.
- iii) Use the personal responsibility scale from Mergler & Shield (2016) and an instrument measuring self-identity in a quantitative study.
- iv) Reflective practice as a moderating variable in the relationship concluded by study.

Based on the data collected from the study, indications showed that reflective practices supported the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility. Although reflective practices were not investigated in this study, preliminary findings were stated by the female adolescents who participated within the focus group interviews. The findings related to self-reflection and reflective practices included:

- i) Participants recognised self-reflection as a process.
- ii) Participants recognised self-reflection as something that should be written down.
- iii) Participants are aware what reflection is, however, were unsure how it connected to self-identity and personal responsibility.

Based on the findings of this study, there is a basis for future research to investigate how and to what extent reflective practices act as a moderating variable in the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility. Future research may be able to provide youth with self-administrated reflective tools that assist female adolescents in their individual search related to their personal development. Teaching youth how to self-reflect may create a space for a deeper thought process related to their self-identity and also when considering their actions and its consequences.

3.6. CONCLUSION

An underlying premise of this study was that self-identity is a key influencer in strengthening personal responsibility within adolescent development. The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship, if any, between self-identity and personal responsibility and the influence that these constructs have on the personal development of high school participants. The analysis of the data gained an insight into the themes that emerged from the perspectives of Year 9 and Year 10 students attending an all-girls private secondary school. The participants' lived experiences and understanding of self-identity and personal responsibility provided emerging themes that answered the research questions. The participants indicated there was a complex relationship between the two concepts.

This research has provided insights into how self-identity and personal responsibility contribute significantly to developing high levels of personal development for adolescents. The study found that, self-identity assisted in shaping choices and in guiding behaviour. Although self-identity and personal responsibility play important individual roles, the results also indicated that they influenced each other, creating a valuable relationship that is much needed within adolescent development. This finding led in turn to the proposition that, to strengthen personal responsibility effectively, adolescents need to develop a strong foundation for their self-identity.

Although the study had limitations, it contributed productively to female adolescent development. The limitations of the study and the contributions provide a basis that informs future research. This research has provided a contribution to the scholarly field of adolescent development and has constructed new knowledge to address the

gap in professional practice and the gap in the literature surrounding the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility.

REFERENCES

- Arnett, J. J. (2014). *Adolescence and emerging adulthood*. Essex, England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Benninger, E., & Savahl, S. (2017). A systematic review of children's construction of the self: Implications for children's subjective well-being. *Child Indicators Research, 10*(2), 545-569.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, P.M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA Handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological* (pp. 57-71). American Psychological Association.
- Castro, F. G., Kellison, J. G., Boyd, S. J., & Kopak, A. (2010). A methodology for conducting integrative mixed methods research and data analyses. *Journal of mixed methods research, 4*(4), 342-360.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Crocetti, E., Rubini, M., & Meeus, W. (2008). Capturing the dynamics of identity formation in various ethnic groups: Development and validation of a three-dimensional model. *Journal of adolescence, 31*(2), 207-222.
- Crocetti, E. (2017). Identity formation in adolescence: The dynamic of forming and consolidating identity commitments. *Child development perspectives, 11*(2), 145-150.
- Dahl, R. E., Allen, N. B., Wilbrecht, L., & Suleiman, A. B. (2018). Importance of investing in adolescence from a developmental science perspective. *Nature, 554*(7693), 441-450.
- Damesghi, S., & Kalantarkousheh, S. M. (2016). The relationship between identity crisis and responsibility of adolescents in Nazarabad. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology, 3*(2), 97-107.
- Dembo, M. H., & Eaton, M. J. (2000). Self-regulation of academic learning in middle-level schools. *The elementary school journal, 100*(5), 473-490.
- Flick, U. (2004). Design and process in qualitative research. *A companion to qualitative research, 146-152*.
- Garnett, J. (2000). "Organisational cultures and the role of learning agreements" in D Portwood & C Costley (Eds.). *Work Based Learning and the University: new*

- perspectives and practices*. Birmingham Staff & Educational Development Association (SEDA Paper 109).
- Glass, C. R. (2013). Strengthening and Deepening Education for Personal and Social Responsibility. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 164, 83-94.
- Jackson, S., & Goossens, L. (Eds.). (2020). *Handbook of adolescent development*. Hove, England: Psychology Press.
- Jacob, S. A., & Furgerson, S. P. (2012). Writing interview protocols and conducting interviews: tips for students new to the field of qualitative research. *Qualitative Report*, 17, 6.
- Karaś, D., & Ciecuch, J. (2018). The relationship between identity processes and well-being in various life domains. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 121, 111-119.
- Leary, M. R., & Tangney, J. P. (2011). *Handbook of self and identity*: Guilford Press.
- Lopez, V., & Whitehead, D. (2013). Sampling data and data collection in qualitative research. *Nursing & midwifery research: Methods and appraisal for evidence-based practice*, 123-140.
- McAllister, M., Knight, B. A., Hasking, P., Withyman, C., & Dawkins, J. (2018). Building resilience in regional youth: Impacts of a universal mental health promotion programme. *International journal of mental health nursing*, 27(3), 1044-1054.
- Mergler, A. (2017). Personal responsibility: An integrative review of conceptual and measurement issues of the construct. *Research Papers in Education*, 32(2), 254-267.
- Mergler, A., & Patton, W. (2007). Adolescents talking about personal responsibility. *The Journal of Student Wellbeing*, 1(1), 57-70. Retrieved from <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/10742/>
- Mergler, A., & Shield, P. (2016). Development of the Personal Responsibility Scale for adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 51, 50-57.
- Mergler, A. G. (2007). *Personal responsibility : the creation, implementation and evaluation of a school-based program*: PhD thesis. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology.
- Mergler, A. G., & Patton, W. A. (2007). Adolescents talking about personal responsibility. *Journal of Student Wellbeing*, 1(1), 57-70. Retrieved from <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/10742/>
- Mergler, A. G., Spencer, F. H., & Patton, W. A. (2007). Development of a measure of personal responsibility for adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 27.

- Mergler, A. G., & Spooner-Lane, R. (2008). Assessing the personal and emotional developmental outcomes of high-school students. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 25(2), 4-16.
- Nyumba, T., Wilson, K., Derrick, C. J., & Mukherjee, N. (2018). The use of focus group discussion methodology: Insights from two decades of application in conservation. *Methods in Ecology and evolution*, 9(1), 20-32.
- Onetti, W., Fernández-García, J. C., & Castillo-Rodríguez, A. (2019). Transition to middle school: Self-concept changes. *PloS one*, 14(2), e0212640.
- Oyserman, D., Elmore, K., & Smith, G. (2012). Self, self-concept, and identity. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 69–104). The Guilford Press.
- Pfeifer, J. H., & Berkman, E. T. (2018). The development of self and identity in adolescence: Neural evidence and implications for a value-based choice perspective on motivated behavior. *Child development perspectives*, 12(3), 158-164.
- Quine S, Bernard D, Booth M, Kang M, Usherwood T, Alperstein G, Bennett D. Health and access issues among Australian adolescents: a rural-urban comparison. *Rural and Remote Health* 2003; 3: 245.
- Reavley, N. J., Sawyer, S. M., & Unicef. (2017). Improving the methodological quality of research in adolescent well-being, *Innocenti Research Briefs*, UNICEF. Innocenti, Florence.
- Siegel, D. J. (2015). *Brainstorm: The power and purpose of the teenage brain*: New York, NY: Penguin Putnam.
- Sigelman, C. K., & Rider, E. A. (2014). *Life-span human development*. Nelson Education.
- Slater, A., & Tiggemann, M. (2015). Media exposure, extracurricular activities, and appearance-related comments as predictors of female adolescents' self-objectification. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 39(3), 375-389.
- Smithikrai, C., Longthong, N., & Peijsel, C. (2015). Effect of using movies to enhance personal responsibility of university students. *Asian Social Science*, 11(5), 1.
- van der Laan, L. (2014). Community capacity building: the question of sustainability? in *GD Postle, et al. (Eds)*, Community capacity building: lessons from adult learning in Australia, NIACE
- Verhoeven, M., Poorthuis, A. M., & Volman, M. (2019). The role of school in adolescents' identity development. A literature review. *Educational Psychology Review*, 31(1), 35-63.

Wei, X. (2020). The Development Characteristics of Adolescents' Responsibility and Educational Countermeasures. *In 5th International Conference on Contemporary Education, Social Sciences and Humanities-Philosophy of Being Human as the Core of Interdisciplinary Research (ICCESSH 2020)* (pp. 272-276). Atlantis Press.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM



University of Southern Queensland

Parental/Guardian Participant Information for USQ Research Project Focus Group

Project Details

Title of Project: **Personal responsibility and the role of self-identity in adolescents: a female regional Queensland perspective.**
Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H19REA041P

Research Team Contact Details

Principal Investigator Details

Ms Krystal Watson
Email: kwatson_11@hotmail.com

Description

This study has been driven by an underlying premise that developing self-identity through reflective practices is a key indicator of improving adolescent personal-responsibility.

Personal-Responsibility is someone's ability to regulate their thoughts, feelings and behaviour as well as take responsibility for the choices they have made.

Adolescence is a valuable time to explore the idea of personal responsibility, as it is during this time that young people desire greater independence and make decisions that may have far-reaching implications on themselves and the communities they function. What is unknown is the extent to which developing self-identity through reflective practices may positively influence personal-responsibility and improve adolescent decision-making and well-being.

The purpose of this study is to discover a deeper understanding of the importance of developing personal-responsibility in adolescence and the extent to which self-identity can be a positive way to achieve that. The focus of the study is to help provide necessary knowledge and tools to guide adolescents at such an important and vulnerable stage in life.

This research project is undertaken by a Master of Professional Studies research student from USQ.

The research team requests your assistance because we want to hear the thoughts of 14-15 year old children, who may be working through developing this characteristic themselves or can provide insight into what their peers may think.

Participation

Your child's participation will involve contributing their thoughts and ideas in a group discussion (focus group) that will take approximately 30 – 45 minutes of their time.

The focus group will take place at the Glennie School on the following days and times: Year 9s on Wednesday 4th March with Group 1 at 12:50-1:30pm and Group 2 at 1:35-2:15pm / Year 10s on Wednesday 1st April 2020 with Group 1 at 12:50-1:30pm and Group 2 at 1:35-2:15pm. The groups and an interview space will be determined by the Glennie School. Participants are able to bring their lunch to the focus group. The venue will be in publicly viewable, but not overheard location which is mutually safe and convenient to the researcher and focus group participants.

Questions will include:

1. What do you think we mean by the term Personal-responsibility?
2. In terms of your actions do you think about:
 - a) Your consequences?
 - b) How your behaviour impacts others?
 - c) Has peer pressure influenced your actions?
3. How does the way you think about yourself affect how responsible are you to:
 - a) Your consequences
 - b) Your behavioural and emotional control
 - c) Your cognitive control
4. What do you think we mean by the term self-identity?
5. What do you think is needed to improve self-identity?

There are no costs associated with participating in this research project, nor will you or your child be paid for participation.

Your child's participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish for the researcher to talk to your child you are not obliged to grant permission. Your child is not obliged to take part if they do not wish to. If your child decides to take part and later changes their mind, they are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. They may also request that any data collected about them be withdrawn and confidentially destroyed. If your child wishes to withdraw, they can contact the Research Team (contact details at the top of this form).

Expected Benefits

It is expected that this project will directly benefit your child in the following ways:

- They are able to learn about and participate in the research process;
- They have an opportunity to share their ideas with their peers, some of which may be revelatory and/or reassuring to them; and
- They have an opportunity have their voices and ideas heard and recorded.

Risks

There are minimal risks associated with your child's participation in this project. These include up to an hour of time inconvenience and it is anticipated that this would not impact on class or teaching time.

Sometimes thinking about the sorts of issues raised in the focus group can create some uncomfortable or distressing feelings. It is highly unlikely that this will occur due to the impersonal nature of the questions being asked. However, if your child needs to talk to someone about this immediately please contact Mrs. Jodi Blades (Dean of Students).

Privacy and Confidentiality

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law.

The focus group will be audio recorded for transcription purposes. The only people who will have access to the audio recording are the student researcher and the principal investigator (if required). It is anticipated that the results from this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. Any publication or presentation that may result from this research, your child's data will be published in a way that they cannot be identified.

Participant data will not be made available for future research purposes.

Participants may contact the principal investigator (contact details at the top of this document) if they would like a summary of the findings upon conclusion of the study.

Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely as per University of Southern Queensland's [Research Data Management policy](#).

Consent to contact your child

We would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your permission for the Research Team to make contact your child. There is also a form for your child to sign, giving their assent to be part of the study.

Please return your signed consent form to a member of the Research Team. If a signed consent form is not received by the Research Team from you, the Research Team will not approach your child.

Questions or Further Information about the Project

Please refer to the Research Team Contact Details at the top of the form to have any questions answered or to request further information about this project.

Concerns or Complaints Regarding the Conduct of the Project

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the University of Southern Queensland Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics on +61 7 4631 2214 or email researchintegrity@usq.edu.au. The Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an unbiased manner.

Thank you for taking the time to help with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM



University of Southern Queensland

Parental/Guardian Consent Form for USQ Research Project Focus Group

Project Details

Title of Project: **Personal responsibility and the role of self-identity in adolescents:
a female regional Queensland perspective.**
Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H19REA041

Research Team Contact Details

Principal Investigator Details

Miss Krystal Watson
Email: krystal.watson@usq.edu.au
Mobile: 0413 784 151
USQ Student Number: 0061064356

Supervisor Details

Mr Luke Van Der Laan
Email: luke.vanderlaan@usq.edu.au
Telephone: (07) 4631 5508

Ms Nicole Brownlie
Email: nicole.brownlie@usq.edu.au
Telephone: (07) 4631 2354

Declaration by parent/ guardian

I have read and understood the information document regarding my child's potential participation in this research project Yes / No

As parent or legal guardian, I give permission to the research team to approach my child

.....(name of child) and ask if he/she wishes to participate in your
research project.

Name

Signature

Date

Please return this sheet to a Research Team member.

APPENDIX C: CONFIRMATION EMAIL

kwatson_11@hotmail.com

From: em.yjado.0.73c986.a271f0df@editorialmanager.com on behalf of Journal of Adolescence <em@editorialmanager.com>
Sent: June 6, 2021 2:00 PM
To: Luke van der Laan
Subject: A manuscript number has been assigned JOA21-438

Journal of Adolescence

Ref: JOA21-438

Title: Personal Responsibility and the Role of Self-Identity in Adolescents: A Female Regional Australian Perspective.

Authors: Krystal Watson; Luke van der Laan, PhD; Sophia Imran, PhD Article Type: Article

Dear Associate Professor Luke van der Laan,

Your submission entitled "Personal Responsibility and the Role of Self-Identity in Adolescents: A Female Regional Australian Perspective." has been assigned the following manuscript number: JOA21-438.

You may check on the progress of your paper by logging on to Editorial Manager as an author. The URL is <https://www.editorialmanager.com/yjado/>.

Thank you for submitting your work to this journal. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Kind regards,

Journal of Adolescence

Email: joa@elsevier.com

<https://www.editorialmanager.com/yjado/>

<http://www.elsevier.com/locate/adolescence>

For further assistance, please visit our customer support site at

<https://service.elsevier.com/app/home/supporthub/publishing/>. Here you can search for solutions on a range of topics, find answers to frequently asked questions and learn more about EM via interactive tutorials. You will also find our 24/7 support contact details should you need any further assistance from one of our customer support representatives.

In compliance with data protection regulations, you may request that we remove your personal registration details at any time. (Use the following URL: <https://www.editorialmanager.com/yjado/login.asp?a=r>). Please contact the publication office if you have any questions.

APPENDIX D: THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF DATA

Interview Questions	Personal Responsibility			Self-Identity				Relationship between
	An awareness of, and control over, one's thoughts and feelings	Accountable for one's behaviour and its outcome (consequences); behaviour choices	An awareness of, and concern for, the impact of one's behaviour upon others	Characteristics and Abilities	Beliefs and Values	Relations with Others	How One Fits into the World Around Them	
Q1. What do you think we mean by the term Personal responsibility?								
Focus Group 1: Yr10		<p>X(Taking care of oneself, health, doing what's best for you, taking responsibility)</p> <p>"I think it's more about taking care of yourself and thinking about what is best for you and taking responsibility for your own actions"</p>						

Focus Group 2: Yr9		<p>X(Not blaming others, taking responsibility for the things you must do, ownership)</p> <p>“Not blaming others for the actions you have done.”</p> <p>“Taking ownership of things.”</p>						
Focus Group 3: Yr9		<p>X(Responsibility for actions, owning your actions, taking ownership of your belongings)</p> <p>“Taking responsibility for your own actions”</p> <p>"Owning up to anything you have done"</p> <p>"Looking after things that are yours."</p>						
<p>Q2. In terms of your actions do you think about:</p> <p>a) Your consequences?</p>								

<p>Focus Group 1: Yr10</p>	<p>X(An awareness to think before you act)</p> <p>"Yeah, I like to think before I act. You think about if this is going to benefit you or what are the consequences of doing something before you do it."</p> <p>"I'm always thinking what the consequence is of doing this." "I like to think before I act."</p>	<p>X(Awareness of consequences associated with decisions)</p> <p>"Every decision I think about I think about the consequences." "I always do personally – before I do something, I'm always like what is this going to lead too in my future, what does this mean if I do this. Especially, I get really guilty about random things, that I don't need to feel guilty about. So, I'm always thinking what the consequence is of doing this."</p>	<p>X(Being conscious of how your behaviour affects others)</p> <p>"Yeah definitely, because if I say something negative, I tried to think about how the people around me will react and if it's going to negatively impact them as well. I don't want to put someone down because I'm feeling bad about myself."</p>			<p>X(An awareness and concern of how one is perceived by others)</p> <p>"Yeah and I guess how people see me too. I think that's a big factor."</p>		<p>There is an awareness that consequences are related to the concern of how one will be perceived by others.</p>
<p>Focus Group 2: Yr9</p>		<p>X(Actions should have consequences, consequences help you learn to do the right thing, take responsibility for your actions and except the consequences)</p> <p>"Consequences are what help you learn to do the</p>						

		right thing if you have done something wrong.”						
Focus Group 3: Yr9		<p>X(Letting out frustration despite considering consequences)</p> <p>"When you're running amuck in the boarding house because your angry at something or someone and you want to get your rage out but you get in trouble."</p>						
<p>Q2. In terms of your actions do you think about:</p> <p>b) How your behaviour impacts others?</p>								
Focus Group 1: Yr10		<p>X(There is a responsibility on oneself when choosing how to behave/respond based on emotions.)</p> <p>"It's like if you had something going on at home you wouldn't take that out on someone who has no idea, because that's not their</p>	<p>X(Being a role model, role modelling the right behaviour)</p> <p>"If your babysitting someone you want to be a role model and show them the</p>			<p>X(Being positive or negative can affect others.)</p> <p>"Positivity and negativity really affect other people."</p> <p>"If your being negative one day and you say something to</p>		<p>There is an awareness that one's behaviour and actions can impact and/or influences others.</p>

		fault, it's not fair on them."	right way to behave."			someone else, that will impact them and you will make them have a negative attitude. But if your positive say in a sport or something than that will encourage other people to act positive"		
Focus Group 2: Yr9	<p>X(An awareness to think before you act)</p> <p>"Usually when I do something, I'll make sure that it's not going to have consequences or that nothing bad will happen. Or I try to think about all the things that will happen."</p>		<p>X(Not thinking before you act could impact others)</p> <p>"Make sure you think before you do something because it could have a negative impact or it could also have a positive impact on people around you."</p>					

<p>Focus Group 3: Yr9</p>	<p>X(Thought process of behaviour and consequences does not occur until after the action/behaviour)</p> <p>"Sometimes your actions, you think at the time were funny because you were friends but they actually got upset. You might have done something stupid that you thought was funny and then later you sitting in bed thinking, I shouldn't have done that."</p>	<p>X(Good intentions can be linked to bad behavioural choices)</p> <p>"I guess a lot of the time we do have good intentions to do something good, but sometimes we were wrong about that. So, it wasn't a good thing to do."</p>	<p>X(Positive behaviour of others can influence one's own behaviour, friendship doesn't excuse bad behavioural choices)</p> <p>"I have a positive example – I have a friend that wants to do well with her subjects, so that has influenced me. If everyone around you is studying and doing their homework then your more likely to go in that direction"</p>					
<p>Q2. In terms of your actions do you think about:</p> <p>c) The influence of peer pressure?</p>								

<p>Focus Group 1: Yr10</p>	<p>X (Peer pressure can make one feel inadequate and create self-doubt which influences actions)</p> <p>"With peer pressure I think that when I get peer pressured; I get really nervous. Like at touch training I get nervous because I feel undermined by everyone else, because they all know what they are doing and they are pressuring me to act like I know what I am doing but I really don't. Yeah it influences me quite a lot because I have to act like I know. Interviewer: "So what goes through your mind when you</p>	<p>X(Identity and values influence one's behaviour and actions when being influenced by peer pressure)</p> <p>"If someone offered me drugs as an explanation, I would not take them because it's just not a moral of mine and I don't want that."</p>		<p>X(Character influences how one is affected by peer pressure)</p> <p>"Personally, I am really stubborn so usually if I don't agree with something, I won't do it"</p>	<p>X(Moral and values are important and influence decisions. Morals and values seem to be a main theme.)</p> <p>"Most of the things I do is based on what I want."</p>	<p>X(Peer pressure/fear of missing out influences actions)</p> <p>"I feel that especially at this age we are really pressured to fit in and if you don't take up that opportunity than you feel that you may not have people (everyone agreed). So, you would agree to do something even if you didn't think it was right because you wanted to fit in (everyone agreed). Or start believing something just because everyone else does. You kind of persuade yourself to believe, even if you don't really believe because you just want to fit in. That's a</p>		<p>In context of peer pressure the link between values, self-identity and consequences of action and awareness of behaviour was clear.</p> <p>All students agreed that one's values influences how peer pressure can impact them.</p>
----------------------------	--	--	--	--	---	---	--	---

	<p>think about that?"</p> <p>I don't know what I am doing, I don't want to be here, I don't want to do this, I should have slept in, I shouldn't have gone – just doubting myself."</p>					<p>really big things for us as adolescents."</p>		
Focus Group 2: Yr9		<p>X(Make own decisions despite peer pressure)</p> <p>"I try to make decisions on my own - like fashion, people are saying wear clothes that don't cover something and I'm like no thanks."</p>				<p>X(Positive peer pressure can positively influence one's actions)</p> <p>"It depends if it's a good thing, like with the swimming carnival I don't really want to swim but my friends are always like "come on you can do it". So, it depends on what it is for, like if it's a positive or negative situation."</p>		<p>Actions are influenced when peer pressure is constructed in a positive manner. There is a clear relationship with the dimension of 'Relation to Others'.</p>

Focus Group 3: Yr9						<p>X(The need to fit in among peers influences one's actions)</p> <p>Sometimes you get peer pressured into doing something that your friends are doing or maybe that's popular that maybe you don't agree with. But to want to fit in so you do it.</p>		
<p>Q3. How does the way you think about yourself affect how responsible you are to:</p> <p>a) Your consequences?</p>								

Focus Group 1: Yr10		<p>X(Behaviour choices can be influenced by characteristics)</p> <p>"Because if your aggressive you might just say things and not have a filter and not realise that's impacting someone. But if your passive you might be thinking something but not saying it because your too scared."</p>		<p>X(Characteristic s can influence decision making, characteristics influence behaviour towards others)</p> <p>"Especially, I think it depends if your passive or not, or assertive or aggressive even that will change how you act and how that effects people."</p>				<p>In the context of consequences, the link between characteristics is clear and has an influence on decisions and behaviour.</p>
Focus Group 2: Yr9		<p>X (Behaviour and actions are influences by how one views oneself)</p> <p>"Like you kind of think you can get away with everything if you think your better than everyone."</p>		<p>X (The way you think of yourself dictates the consequences you think you deserve)</p> <p>"If you think of yourself highly than you may think that you don't deserve that consequence."</p>				<p>It is clear that the way one perceive oneself than creates a perception of how one should receive consequences for their behaviour.</p>

Focus Group 3: Yr9		<p>X (Avoidance of consequences, instinct is initially to blame others)</p> <p>"Well I guess you try to blame it on someone else sometimes. My instinct is to say I didn't do that at all, when I actually did. So, I should be taking responsibility for my own action because sometimes I blame it on somebody else."</p>						
<p>Q3. How does the way you think about yourself affect how responsible you are to:</p> <p>b) Your behavioural and emotional control?</p>								
Focus Group 1: Yr10		<p>X(Positive/negative emotions relating to oneself influences outcomes)</p> <p>"If you think positively about yourself then you are going to be happy and more enjoyable to be around. Whereas if</p>	<p>X(The way one perceives oneself affects behaviour and emotions which has an impact on others)</p> <p>"If you think negative things</p>	<p>X Positive or negative feelings on oneself influence behaviour and emotion which can also impact others around you)</p>		<p>X(the way one perceives oneself dictates one's behaviour and emotions which influences one's relationship with others, one's perception of self can influence</p>		<p>It was clear that that positivity or negativity towards oneself will impact others or influence relationships to others.</p> <p>There is a clear relationship</p>

		your negative you're going to be sad and not everyone will want to hang around you."	about yourself and how you look than your behaviour and emotions are going to be really doubtful and negative and that's going to impact everyone around you"	"your perspective on yourself is either positive or negative and that than causes your behaviour to be in an emotional state to be negative or positive and that impacts other people."		other people's perception of self) "Because they are going to start thinking, if she is sensitive and self-conscious about that then maybe I should be too."		between personal responsibility (accountable for outcomes and impact of one's behaviour on others) and self-identity (characteristics and abilities) relating to one's responsibility towards behaviour and emotional control.
Focus Group 2: Yr9			X (Negative thinking of oneself, can influence wrong behaviour towards others) "You could take your anger out on others and making them upset and angry as well and its like this whole place of anger - like you being negative would come off to your friends and then they think they	X (The way you think of yourself can influence your thoughts, feelings and behaviour) "Thinking down on yourself can have side effects that affect everyone around you." "Well if you think of yourself as pretty or good enough than you might get angry at		X (Positive or negative people can influence your behaviour) "Not surrounding yourself with negative people, because that will then make you negative and that might be hard to get out of that situation. So, try to always be positive and be surrounded by positive things and people."		It was clear that the way you feel about yourself can influence your behaviour. Also, who you surround yourself with and their behaviours can directly effect others.

			have done something wrong."	yourself for thinking that."				
Focus Group 3: Yr9	<p>X(Behaviour and emotions cannot be controlled during the state of an act or behaviour, realization of actions occurs after the behaviour occurs)</p> <p>"Yeah, like sometimes you make rash decisions and think this will be fine and won't impact anyone or anything, then you reflect back on it and you realise or you get called out on it and you realised it was not the best idea."</p>	<p>X(Actions are owned when questioned)</p> <p>"Maybe sometimes half way through it your like "I shouldn't be doing this" and stop. But you know you have done it. For example, if a teacher comes up and say why did you do that, you own it."</p>						

<p>Q3. How does the way you think about yourself affect how responsible you are to:</p> <p>c) Your cognitive control?</p>								
<p>Focus Group 1: Yr10</p>		<p>X(The way you feel about yourself influences your behaviour and choices)</p> <p>"I feel that the growth mindset thing, if you are really down on yourself, you usually have an idea of what, say if you thought your weren't smart than you might not put as much effort in because you already think you're not smart so why should I try to be better."</p>		<p>X(Perceived characteristics and abilities can influence behaviour and choices)</p>				<p>There is a clear relationship between characteristics and behaviour/actions. Perception of one's characteristics and abilities influence cognitive control, behaviour choices and outcomes.</p>
<p>Focus Group 2: Yr9</p>	<p>X(Negative self-talk can influence cognitive control)</p> <p>"It depends what you tell yourself in your mind. So, if you made a mistake one day</p>	<p>X(Negative thoughts about oneself can hinder behaviour and outcomes)</p> <p>"Well you wouldn't be living a good life because you don't think your good enough and</p>		<p>X(The way you think of yourself and your abilities can influence your actions and the outcome)</p> <p>"If you think</p>				<p>The way one sees oneself can have an impact on one's behaviour and choices.</p>

	and you go home saying I'm such an idiot than that will make it worse. But if you go home and say I made one mistake, it's ok - then that's different."	anything you do even if you do it the best you can, you won't think it's good enough."		you're not good enough you might think it's a moment you're going through, but if you keep telling yourself that than you're just going to think about it over and over again and it will just become a natural habit."				
Focus Group 3: Yr9	<p>X(Actions/behaviours occur first before considering a thought process, instinct is to act on emotion first before thinking)</p> <p>"You don't always think things through completely before you actually do something."</p>	<p>X(Consequences/wrong behaviour are considered once the action has been reflected on)</p> <p>"If you have an argument, you're just saying everything that is coming to your head first and it may or may not make sense. Then after you think about it more and think how you could have said something different."</p>				<p>X(Consequences/ thought of action are not considered when peers are doing the action)</p> <p>"When you're doing something that all your friends are all doing you think its fine."</p>		In the context of cognitive control the link between peer pressure and relations to others was clear. Peer pressure influences one's thought process of doing what is right and wrong.

<p>Q4. What do you think we mean by the term self-identity?</p>								
<p>Focus Group 1: Yr10</p>		<p>X(Self-identity is linked through the representation of behaviours)</p> <p>"Your behaviour and everything."</p>		<p>X(Self-identity is associated with; how you think of yourself, all the words that make you up as a whole, discovering new things about yourself)</p> <p>"Basically, just what you think of yourself."</p>	<p>X(Self-identity is linked to identifying morals, identifying what is right and wrong and living by your values)</p> <p>"Identifying your morals and what you think is right and wrong and living by those."</p>	<p>X(Others are able to identify new traits about oneself, identity is how others see you)</p> <p>"I guess self-identity can also be about how people see you as well."</p> <p>"People pick up on traits you didn't know and that helps your self-identity."</p>	<p>X(Self-discovery, how you perceive yourself to be, how you see yourself)</p> <p>"Its more about how you see yourself. Self-identity is more about how you perceive yourself to be."</p>	<p>In the context of self-identity, the link between behaviour was clear. Yes, Values is a strong dimension of this group.</p>
<p>Focus Group 2: Yr9</p>				<p>X(Defining yourself, personality, what you do, character)</p> <p>"How you define yourself or what your personality is</p>	<p>X(Knowing who you are, being true to yourself)</p> <p>"Like being true to yourself and knowing who you really are."</p>		<p>X(Perception)</p> <p>"How you interpret some things."</p>	

				and what you do."				
Focus Group 3: Yr9				<p>X(Character, who you are, personality, how you think of yourself, learning what your good at, strengths, weaknesses)</p> <p>"I think it means your character and who you are, your personality and what/how you think of yourself."</p>		<p>X(Self-identity is connected to relationships with others. Characteristics, attitude and behaviour are influenced by the people who they associate with)</p> <p>"I feel that you change who you are depending on who you are with. So, you might gain strengths from these people or you might get their weaknesses."</p>	<p>X(Knowing who you are, knowing how you function best)</p> <p>"It's knowing who you are on the inside out, not having "am I this? Or "am I that", its just knowing, I am this person and this is how I work. I don't feel that a lot of people know that, I don't even know that yet about myself. I think it comes with time and learning about what you do and what your good at."</p>	

<p>Q5. What do you think is needed to improve self-identity?</p>								
<p>Focus Group 1: Yr10</p>			<p>X(Building each other up to strengthen self-identity)</p> <p>“I think we need to build each other up more and try to make others happier.”</p>			<p>X(People you associate with assist with self-discovery, the association with others allows you to assess and make judgement on things you like or dislike, positivity)</p> <p>"I reckon it's the people around you. They are going to help you go through more experiences and situations that will help you reflect and discover things about yourself that you might not have known about yourself."</p> <p>"Positivity – because if you get good</p>		<p>It is clear that relations to others if in a positive manner can influence self-identity and positive behaviour. It is also clear that being positive to others and building each other up will have a positive effect.</p>

						<p>compliments and you have a growth mindset on yourself than you will have a better self-identity of your yourself and you will be more positive. Whereas if you got negative compliments on yourself than that will cause your self-identity to drop negatively"</p>		
Focus Group 2: Yr9						<p>X (Good friends improve one's self-identity, wanting to fit in affects one's ability to be who they want to be)</p> <p>"If you have a toxic relationship with your friends then your obviously not with a good friend group. If you're with a good friend group</p>	<p>X(be yourself instead of following)</p> <p>"And don't fall into peer pressure because you want to be different as well. Because if you fall into peer pressure and they say "wear this or do that", then you're just following the</p>	

						than you will be better person. So, your self-identity would be better."	leader and not being yourself."	
Focus Group 3: Yr9				<p>X (Recognising weaknesses and strengthening them)</p> <p>"Recognising your weaknesses and try to build on them and make them stronger."</p>	<p>X(Accepting who one is as an individual, being who you want to be)</p> <p>"Acceptance of who you are."</p>	<p>X(Be yourself, not who others want you to be)</p> <p>"Don't change who you are because other people want you to change."</p>		