

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

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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. This paper 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 Australian context. Primary data was collected using focus group discussions with female secondary school students in Year 9 and Year 10. The results confirmed the definitional dimensions of the constructs of self-identity and personal responsibility as reported in the literature. Key findings concur with the research propositions that self-identity is positively related to and influences personal responsibility. The relationship is more complex and reciprocal than first understood. The results suggest that rather than a unidirectional relationship between the constructs, each construct influences the other. Peer relations were also found to have a notable influence on the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility.

Key Words: Adolescent perspectives, behavioural choices, female, peer relations, personal responsibility, self-identity

1. 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. 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 relates to personal responsibility amongst a group of female adolescents in regional Queensland, Australia.

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 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 adolescents in a regional Queensland setting. This is an understudied yet vulnerable population. In particular, the study is concerned with early adolescence between the ages of 13 and 15 years. This paper responds to the need to better understand adolescents and the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility.

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. 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).

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 a high level of personal responsibility, it is suggested that adolescents 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.

1. 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. Young people develop their identities during adolescence, 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 in creating a positive and realistic self-identity. Establishing self-identity within youth, 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 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 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 develop levels of personal responsibility in adolescents.

2. 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. The formal operation stage provides young people the ability 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. As adolescents begin to become accountable for their choices, 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.

Personal responsibility is an important concept that enables an individual to hold themselves accountable and to make informed choices. Accountability is the key aspect of personal responsibility, acknowledging that the choices that one makes must be owned (Mergler et al., 2007). Developing personal responsibility can be an integral aspect of adolescent life, as it 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 individual's ability to reflect on outcomes and provide strategies for future decisions.

3. 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 attending Year 9 and Year 10 in regional Queensland, 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.

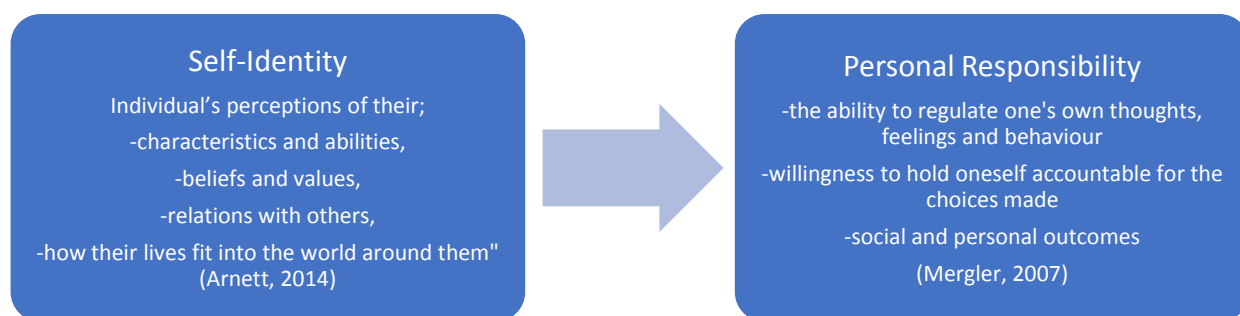


Figure 1: Conceptual model of the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility during early adolescence.

This model is based on the dimensions given under self-identity drawn from Arnetts' (2014) definition of self-identity. The dimensions of personal responsibility are taken from Merglers' (2007) definition of personal responsibility. 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?

By exploring the relationship between self-identity and personal responsibility, the researcher can develop a deeper understanding towards improving female adolescents' personal development.

4. 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 of Southern Queensland, 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. Consent was obtained from the participants' parents before their participation in the focus groups.

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.

5. Results and Discussion

After examining the data from each of the focus group interviews, the study identified emergent themes. 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 research findings 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 is 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 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 of 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 the participants were aware that peer pressure could instill negative influence, however, they were not always able to avoid it for fear of not fitting in. The pressure to fit in with peers negatively influenced the development of self-identity in adolescents and consequently impacted 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.

6. 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.

7. References

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Appendix A: Results for Self-Identity

	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5
	Self-identity and personalresponsibility have important distinct yet related roles within adolescent development.	Self-identity influences personalresponsibility.	Self-identity and personalresponsibility influence each other, confirming a bidirectional relationship.	Self-identity attributes and characteristic have cognitive bearing whereas personalresponsibility dimensions is practice oriented.	Peer relations significantly influence the nature of self-identity and personalresponsibility 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>	
Relations to Others	<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>
How One Fits into the World Around Them	<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 personalresponsibility have important distinct yet related roles within adolescent development.	Self-identity influences personalresponsibility.	Self-identity and personalresponsibility influence each other, confirming a bidirectional relationship.	Self-identity attributes and characteristic have cognitive bearing whereas personalresponsibility 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 feeling	<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>	
Accountability for one's behaviour and its outcomes (consequences); behavioural choices	<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>
An awareness of, and concern for, the impact of one's behaviour upon others			<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>