

## Exploring the Dimensions of Self-Concept in Adolescents from Marginalized Communities

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### Article Info

#### Article type:

Original Research

#### How to cite this article:

Turan, S., Rostami, M., Karstensen, V., & Arif, A. (2025). Exploring the Dimensions of Self-Concept in Adolescents from Marginalized Communities. *Journal of Assessment and Research in Applied Counseling*, 7(3), 1-9.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.61838/kman.jarac.7.3.19>



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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aimed to explore the multidimensional nature of self-concept among adolescents living in marginalized communities, focusing on personal, social, and coping dimensions that shape identity development.

**Methods and Materials:** A qualitative research design was employed using semi-structured interviews as the sole data collection method. Twenty-one adolescents aged 13 to 18 years from marginalized communities in Turkey were purposively selected to provide diverse perspectives. Interviews were conducted until theoretical saturation was reached, ensuring comprehensive exploration of emerging themes. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis with the aid of NVivo 14 software. Rigorous procedures, including iterative coding, peer debriefing, and continuous comparison, were applied to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

**Findings:** Three overarching categories of self-concept emerged: personal identity, social identity, and coping and resilience. Personal identity encompassed subthemes such as self-image, self-esteem, emotional awareness, autonomy, future aspirations, and self-reflection. Social identity included peer relationships, family roles, community belonging, cultural identity, social comparison, stigma and discrimination, and gender roles. Coping and resilience involved coping with marginalization, sources of support, coping strategies, resilience building, and identity negotiation. Participants described vulnerabilities including low self-esteem, stigma, and tension between traditional and modern cultural norms, alongside strengths such as supportive relationships, community pride, and resilience strategies. Illustrative quotations highlighted adolescents' lived experiences and strategies for negotiating complex identities.

**Conclusion:** The study underscores the multifaceted and context-dependent nature of adolescent self-concept, shaped by family, peers, community,

culture, and broader structural realities. Despite significant challenges, adolescents demonstrated resilience and agency in redefining self-worth and negotiating cultural boundaries. These findings highlight the need for supportive interventions in schools, families, and communities that address both vulnerabilities and strengths, empowering adolescents in marginalized settings to construct positive self-concepts.

**Keywords:** *Adolescents; Self-concept; Marginalized communities; Identity development*

## 1. Introduction

Adolescence is widely recognized as a critical developmental period in which individuals construct, negotiate, and consolidate their sense of self. The self-concept—defined as the set of beliefs, perceptions, and evaluations individuals hold about themselves—plays a central role in shaping adolescents' psychosocial development, influencing their academic performance, social relationships, and psychological well-being (Yim & McCann, 2024). During this stage, adolescents encounter a host of biological, cognitive, and social changes that require them to reexamine who they are, what they value, and how they relate to others. While the formation of self-concept is universal, the particular trajectories and dimensions of its development are strongly shaped by contextual and cultural factors (Ihsan & Sabarudin, 2023). For adolescents in marginalized communities, these dynamics are even more complex, as they must navigate challenges stemming from socioeconomic disadvantage, social stigma, and limited access to resources that support positive identity construction (Lbs & Ichsan, 2023).

The literature has consistently emphasized the family's role in shaping adolescents' self-concept. Parenting styles, parental involvement, and the quality of the parent-child relationship are among the most influential factors in self-concept development (Chen et al., 2020; Rao & Wang, 2023). Parental warmth, consistent guidance, and autonomy support have been associated with adolescents' positive self-perceptions and resilience, whereas neglect, authoritarian control, and inconsistent communication can undermine self-worth (Xing et al., 2024). Father involvement, in particular, has been highlighted as a protective factor, as research indicates that active paternal engagement supports adolescents' sense of competence, confidence, and self-assurance (Agustina & Auliya, 2024; Isnaini et al., 2021). These findings are critical in marginalized settings where fathers may face structural barriers, such as unemployment or social exclusion, that restrict their involvement in adolescents' daily lives.

Beyond the family, peer relationships serve as another significant context in which adolescents evaluate themselves and construct self-concept. Close friendships and peer attachment have been shown to foster social skills, self-esteem, and identity clarity (Levey et al., 2019; Zhang & Zhang, 2024). However, negative peer dynamics—such as bullying, social exclusion, and stigmatization—can erode adolescents' self-concept and heighten vulnerability to emotional distress (Tamaela et al., 2024; Wijayanto & Hidayati, 2021). Bullying experiences, in particular, have been strongly associated with distorted self-perceptions, feelings of inferiority, and heightened self-consciousness, effects that may persist into adulthood. These processes underscore the dual role of peers as both a source of affirmation and risk during self-concept formation.

Cultural and social factors also exert a substantial influence on adolescents' self-concept. In many societies, identity development is situated within intersecting frameworks of cultural traditions, social expectations, and religious values (Ihsan & Sabarudin, 2023). Adolescents in marginalized communities often face conflicting pressures between their cultural identity and mainstream societal norms. Media technologies further complicate these dynamics, as adolescents increasingly construct their self-concept through digital interactions, exposure to globalized cultural content, and social media engagement (Purnama & Fitriana, 2024; Qadaruddin et al., 2023). While social media can provide opportunities for self-expression, belonging, and identity exploration, it also exposes adolescents to harmful comparisons, unrealistic ideals, and distorted standards of self-worth (Ratnawati & Rahmadani, 2020). These risks are intensified for marginalized adolescents who may already struggle with feelings of exclusion and social disadvantage.

Psychological research demonstrates that self-concept is not a static construct but rather a dynamic system that evolves in reciprocal interaction with other aspects of well-being, including life satisfaction, self-esteem, and emotional regulation (Xing et al., 2024). Adolescents who perceive themselves positively in multiple domains—academic, social, physical, and emotional—are more likely to

experience higher life satisfaction and resilience in the face of challenges. Conversely, adolescents with fragmented or negative self-concepts often exhibit greater vulnerability to anxiety, depression, and maladaptive behaviors. This interaction highlights the importance of examining not only the formation of self-concept but also its broader implications for developmental outcomes.

Studies have also examined how broader educational and institutional contexts intersect with self-concept development. Access to quality schooling, positive teacher–student relationships, and supportive educational environments contribute to adolescents’ confidence and self-clarity (Dirlam & Merry, 2020). However, educational inequalities—often pronounced in marginalized communities—can undermine these processes. Adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds may internalize stereotypes of failure, develop lower academic self-concepts, and perceive fewer pathways to social mobility. These challenges demonstrate the interdependence of structural inequalities and individual self-perceptions.

Gender also emerges as an important lens in understanding adolescent self-concept. Research shows that gendered expectations and norms significantly shape how adolescents see themselves, with girls often experiencing greater pressure related to body image and social conformity, while boys may be encouraged to emphasize independence and assertiveness (Bubnova & Kerke, 2020). These differential expectations can compound the challenges faced by marginalized adolescents, who must negotiate traditional roles alongside modern cultural influences. In contexts where resources are scarce, such expectations may further limit adolescents’ opportunities for self-expression and exploration.

Social support has been identified as a critical buffer in mitigating the negative influences of marginalization on adolescent identity development. Support from family, peers, teachers, and community figures fosters self-efficacy, belonging, and identity clarity (Yim & McCann, 2024). This is particularly important for adolescents who encounter systemic barriers, as social support networks can provide them with resources, validation, and guidance. For example, adolescents who experience affirmation from peers and significant adults are better equipped to resist stigma and construct a more positive self-concept despite external challenges.

Despite the extensive research on adolescent self-concept, significant gaps remain in understanding the nuanced experiences of those from marginalized

communities. Much of the existing literature has focused on general populations, leaving questions about how socioeconomic disadvantage, cultural marginalization, and community stigma uniquely shape adolescents’ perceptions of themselves. While studies highlight the role of parental involvement (Agustina & Auliya, 2024; Isnaini et al., 2021), peer dynamics (Levey et al., 2019; Zhang & Zhang, 2024), and media exposure (Purnama & Fitriana, 2024; Ratnawati & Rahmadani, 2020), less attention has been given to how these factors intersect within marginalized settings. Moreover, structural barriers such as poverty, limited access to education, and experiences of discrimination remain underexplored in relation to self-concept.

Therefore, the present study aims to address these gaps by exploring the dimensions of self-concept in adolescents from marginalized communities in Turkey.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a qualitative research design with an exploratory orientation, as it sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the dimensions of self-concept among adolescents from marginalized communities. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select participants who could provide rich and diverse perspectives on the phenomenon under study. The research population consisted of adolescents aged 13 to 18 years residing in marginalized urban neighborhoods of Turkey, specifically those identified by local authorities and social welfare organizations as having limited access to educational, economic, and social resources. For the purposes of this study, “marginalized communities” were operationally defined as socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods characterized by lower average household income, reduced access to quality schooling and public services, and higher rates of social exclusion.

Participants were primarily recruited through public secondary schools, community youth centers, and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that provide support to adolescents in these areas. School counselors and community facilitators assisted in identifying eligible participants based on the inclusion criteria: adolescents currently residing in these neighborhoods for at least three consecutive years and willing to share their lived experiences. A total of 21 participants, both male and female, were recruited. Efforts were made to ensure diversity across gender, age, and social background; while gender

balance was intentionally pursued to capture both male and female perspectives, diversity in social background and age emerged naturally through the sampling process as recruitment progressed.

The sample size was determined by the principle of theoretical saturation. Data collection was continued until no new themes or concepts emerged, and additional interviews did not contribute novel insights to the coding framework. This approach allowed the study to remain flexible while ensuring sufficient depth and variation to reflect the complexity of self-concept formation within these marginalized adolescent populations

## 2.2. Measures

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary method of data collection. An interview guide was developed based on the research objectives, consisting of open-ended questions that allowed participants to express their experiences and perceptions of self-concept in their own words. Interviews were conducted in a safe and accessible setting chosen by the participants to ensure comfort and confidentiality. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim for analysis. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study, including obtaining informed consent from participants and, in the case of minors, from their parents or guardians. Participants were also assured of anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses.

## 2.3. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the collected data. After transcription, the data were imported into NVivo 14 software, which facilitated systematic coding and organization of the information. An inductive approach was used to allow themes and subthemes to emerge directly from the participants' narratives, avoiding the imposition of preconceived categories. Initial coding was carried out line by line, followed by the grouping of codes into broader categories and themes. The analysis was conducted iteratively, with continuous comparison between data and emerging codes to refine categories. Reliability and validity were enhanced through peer debriefing and continuous reflection during the coding process. The final themes represent the core dimensions of self-concept as experienced by adolescents from marginalized communities in Turkey.

## 3. Findings and Results

The study included 21 adolescents from marginalized communities in Turkey. Of these participants, 11 were female (52.4%) and 10 were male (47.6%). Their ages ranged from 13 to 18 years, with the largest proportion falling within the 15–16 age group ( $n = 9$ , 42.9%), followed by those aged 17–18 ( $n = 7$ , 33.3%), and 13–14 ( $n = 5$ , 23.8%). In terms of educational status, the majority were secondary school students ( $n = 12$ , 57.1%), while the remaining were high school students ( $n = 9$ , 42.9%). Most participants reported living with both parents ( $n = 16$ , 76.2%), while a smaller number lived in single-parent households ( $n = 5$ , 23.8%). This demographic distribution provided a diverse range of perspectives and allowed for meaningful variation in experiences related to self-concept.

**Table 1**

*Themes, Subthemes, and Concepts from Semi-Structured Interviews*

Category (Main Theme)	Subcategory	Concepts (Open Codes)
1. Personal Identity	Self-Image	physical appearance concerns; body satisfaction; dressing style; comparison with peers; desire for uniqueness
	Self-Esteem	feelings of worthlessness; pride in achievements; sensitivity to criticism; seeking recognition
	Emotional Awareness	naming emotions; confusion about inner feelings; emotional suppression; awareness of mood shifts
	Autonomy	making independent decisions; resisting parental control; experimenting with boundaries; asserting personal voice
	Future Aspirations	career goals; dreams of education; fear of failure; uncertainty about opportunities; hope for mobility
2. Social Identity	Self-Reflection	journaling; thinking about past mistakes; questioning personal values; imagining future self
	Peer Relationships	need for acceptance; fear of rejection; loyalty to friends; peer pressure; role models in peer group
	Family Role	sense of responsibility; parental expectations; sibling comparison; feeling misunderstood; emotional support from parents

3. Coping and Resilience	Community Belonging	participation in local activities; pride in neighborhood; sense of exclusion; stigma from outsiders
	Cultural Identity	valuing traditions; struggle with dual identity; religious practices; cultural pride; conflict with modern norms
	Social Comparison	comparing with wealthier peers; social media influence; jealousy; admiration of privileged lifestyles
	Stigma and Discrimination	being labeled as “poor”; stereotypes about community; unequal treatment in schools; internalized stigma
	Gender Roles	traditional expectations; restrictions on girls; freedom for boys; negotiating modern roles
	Coping with Marginalization	ignoring negative comments; humor as defense; avoiding confrontation; seeking safe spaces
	Sources of Support	reliance on friends; guidance from teachers; trust in parents; support from community leaders
	Coping Strategies	sports activities; artistic expression; reading and learning; involvement in youth groups; use of social media for expression
	Resilience Building	learning from hardship; persistence in school; positive self-talk; religious or spiritual coping
	Identity Negotiation	balancing traditional and modern values; code-switching between groups; managing stereotypes; redefining self-worth

### Personal Identity

**Self-Image.** Participants frequently referred to their physical appearance and how it influenced their self-concept. Many adolescents expressed concerns about body shape and comparison with peers, while others found pride in their clothing style and ability to stand out. One participant noted, *“Sometimes I feel different because I can’t buy the same clothes as my classmates, but I try to make my own style so I feel unique.”* Another added, *“I don’t like looking at myself in the mirror because I don’t look like the people on social media.”*

**Self-Esteem.** Feelings of self-worth were central in participants’ reflections. While some described pride in their achievements, others struggled with low confidence and a strong sensitivity to criticism. One adolescent shared, *“When teachers notice me, I feel important. But if they ignore me, I feel like I don’t exist.”* This tension highlighted how external validation shaped their self-esteem.

**Emotional Awareness.** Many participants struggled to articulate their emotions, often describing confusion or suppression. However, some reported an emerging awareness of their moods and feelings. As one adolescent put it, *“I sometimes can’t explain what I feel, it’s just a mix of sadness and anger.”* Another reflected, *“Now I write down my feelings, so I understand myself better.”*

**Autonomy.** The theme of independence emerged strongly. Adolescents often sought to assert themselves against parental control or community expectations. One participant explained, *“My parents decide everything for me, but I want to make my own choices.”* Others described experimenting with boundaries, such as staying out later or choosing friends without parental approval.

**Future Aspirations.** Dreams about education and career goals were common, often mixed with fear of limited

opportunities. For instance, one participant said, *“I want to be a doctor, but sometimes I think it’s impossible because of money.”* Conversely, others held onto hope, with one adolescent stating, *“Even if it’s difficult, I believe I can change my future.”*

**Self-Reflection.** Adolescents engaged in self-reflection, often evaluating past mistakes or imagining future selves. One participant remarked, *“At night, I think about what I did wrong during the day and how I can be better tomorrow.”* Another added, *“I ask myself what kind of person I want to be when I grow up.”*

### Social Identity

**Peer Relationships.** Relationships with friends were central to participants’ self-concept. Adolescents expressed both a strong need for acceptance and fear of rejection. One participant said, *“If my friends don’t invite me, I feel like I don’t matter.”* Peer loyalty and pressure also shaped behaviors, as another reflected, *“I sometimes do things I don’t like just to stay in the group.”*

**Family Role.** Family expectations and dynamics heavily influenced participants’ identities. Some described a sense of responsibility toward their families, while others felt misunderstood by parents. One adolescent explained, *“My parents expect me to help with everything at home, but they don’t see how tired I am from school.”* Another noted, *“My siblings are always compared with me; it makes me feel less valued.”*

**Community Belonging.** Feelings of belonging or exclusion within their local community were frequently discussed. One participant shared, *“I’m proud of my neighborhood because people support each other, but outsiders always look down on us.”* Others described stigma, with one stating, *“Sometimes I feel ashamed when I say where I live.”*

*Cultural Identity.* Participants highlighted struggles in balancing traditional values with modern influences. For example, one adolescent said, *"I love our traditions, but sometimes they don't fit with the world outside."* Another added, *"I wear the scarf because of my culture, but at school some people make fun of it."* These narratives revealed the negotiation of cultural pride and conflict.

*Social Comparison.* Adolescents often compared themselves to wealthier peers or social media figures. One participant explained, *"I see what other kids have, and I feel jealous because I can't have the same things."* At the same time, admiration also played a role: *"I look up to people who made it out of communities like mine."*

*Stigma and Discrimination.* Many participants reported experiences of stigma, particularly at school. One adolescent remarked, *"Teachers treat us differently because we come from this area."* Others internalized stereotypes, with one saying, *"Sometimes I feel like I'm already labeled as a failure."*

*Gender Roles.* The influence of gender norms was clear. Girls often described restrictions, while boys expressed more freedom. For instance, a female participant noted, *"I can't go out at night like my brother; it feels unfair."* Another explained, *"I want to choose my own path, not just what tradition says a girl should do."*

### Coping and Resilience

*Coping with Marginalization.* Adolescents described various strategies to cope with stigma and marginalization. Some ignored negative comments, while others used humor or avoided confrontations. One participant shared, *"I laugh it off when people insult me, but inside it hurts."* Another explained, *"I just stay quiet so I don't get into trouble."*

*Sources of Support.* Participants identified multiple sources of support, including friends, teachers, parents, and community leaders. One adolescent remarked, *"My teacher believes in me, and that keeps me going."* Another highlighted parental trust: *"Even if we don't have much, my parents always encourage me."*

*Coping Strategies.* Adolescents employed personal strategies such as engaging in sports, artistic activities, or online communities. For instance, one participant said, *"When I play football, I forget all my problems."* Another shared, *"Drawing helps me express feelings I can't say out loud."*

*Resilience Building.* Many participants demonstrated resilience through persistence in education and positive self-talk. One adolescent explained, *"Every challenge makes me stronger. I know I must continue school no matter what."*

Another noted, *"When I fail, I remind myself that I can try again tomorrow."*

*Identity Negotiation.* Adolescents actively navigated between traditional and modern values, often redefining their self-worth. For example, one participant said, *"With my family I follow traditions, but with friends I act differently."* Another explained, *"People may see me as poor, but I tell myself I'm more than that."*

## 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed three overarching dimensions of adolescent self-concept in marginalized communities: personal identity, social identity, and coping and resilience. Each dimension comprised multiple subthemes, reflecting the complex interplay of individual, familial, social, and cultural factors in shaping self-concept. Adolescents articulated both vulnerabilities—such as low self-esteem, experiences of stigma, and the struggle to balance cultural traditions with modern expectations—and sources of strength, including supportive relationships, community belonging, and resilience strategies. These insights demonstrate that self-concept formation is highly contextualized, influenced by both micro-level interpersonal experiences and macro-level structural realities.

*Personal identity.* Participants frequently described challenges related to self-image, self-esteem, and emotional awareness. Many reported dissatisfaction with their physical appearance and a heightened sensitivity to peer and social media comparisons. These findings are consistent with previous work showing that social media use amplifies adolescents' awareness of body image and contributes to distorted self-perceptions (Purnama & Fitriana, 2024; Ratnawati & Rahmadani, 2020). At the same time, some adolescents in this study engaged in self-reflection and future-oriented thinking, constructing aspirations around education and career goals despite structural barriers. This aligns with evidence that positive parenting qualities and father involvement foster adolescents' self-confidence and strengthen their future self-concept (Agustina & Auliya, 2024; Chen et al., 2020; Isnaini et al., 2021).

The adolescents' struggle with emotional awareness—often expressing difficulty in identifying or verbalizing feelings—echoes earlier findings on how inconsistent parenting and family conflict can undermine emotional development and self-concept clarity (Bubnova & Kerke, 2020). Moreover, research has suggested that academic pressures and limited educational opportunities also affect

self-reflection processes, contributing to uncertainty about the future (Dirlam & Merry, 2020). Taken together, these patterns confirm that personal identity among marginalized adolescents develops within the intersection of intrapersonal dynamics and external constraints.

**Social identity.** The role of peers emerged prominently, with adolescents describing the dual impact of friendship as both supportive and risky. Experiences of loyalty and acceptance contributed positively to self-worth, whereas exclusion and bullying severely undermined self-concept. These findings resonate with previous studies emphasizing peer attachment as a key predictor of self-esteem and social adjustment (Levey et al., 2019; Zhang & Zhang, 2024). In particular, adolescents who reported bullying experiences described feelings of inferiority and shame, consistent with prior research linking bullying to distorted self-concept (Tamaela et al., 2024; Wijayanto & Hidayati, 2021).

**Family role** also strongly influenced participants' self-concept, with adolescents reporting parental expectations, sibling comparisons, and the need for recognition. These results corroborate earlier findings on the significance of father involvement and parenting styles in shaping adolescents' self-image and confidence (Agustina & Auliya, 2024; Isnaini et al., 2021; Rao & Wang, 2023). Importantly, adolescents described tension between feeling supported and feeling constrained by family demands, illustrating the ambivalence of parental influence in marginalized settings.

**Community belonging** was another important theme, with some adolescents expressing pride in their neighborhood while others reported shame and stigma. This duality reflects previous studies on how marginalized adolescents often internalize societal stereotypes, yet also find solidarity and identity within their communities (Ihsan & Sabarudin, 2023; Lbs & Ichsan, 2023). Cultural identity further complicated self-concept, as adolescents negotiated between traditional values and the influence of globalized cultural norms mediated by technology and social media (Qadaruddin et al., 2023). Consistent with earlier research, this study confirms that marginalized adolescents experience identity negotiation as a dynamic process in which culture, religion, and modern influences interact (Ihsan & Sabarudin, 2023).

**Coping and resilience.** Despite substantial challenges, participants demonstrated resilience through diverse coping strategies. Some ignored stigma, used humor, or sought safe spaces, while others engaged in sports, artistic expression, or online communities. These strategies align with prior evidence that adolescents develop adaptive behaviors to

mitigate stressors, particularly when supported by peers, teachers, or family members (Yim & McCann, 2024). Religious or spiritual coping was also highlighted, resonating with research on the role of social-religious factors in strengthening self-concept and morality among adolescents (Lbs & Ichsan, 2023).

The capacity for resilience building—expressed as persistence in education, positive self-talk, and redefinition of self-worth—suggests that adolescents in marginalized communities actively resist negative stereotypes. This finding mirrors prior studies highlighting the reciprocal relationship between self-concept and life satisfaction, where positive self-perceptions foster well-being and resilience (Xing et al., 2024). Moreover, identity negotiation, a theme widely reported by participants, demonstrates adolescents' agency in balancing traditional and modern values, consistent with findings from research on cultural transitions and media influences (Purnama & Fitriana, 2024; Qadaruddin et al., 2023).

The results underscore the multidimensional nature of adolescent self-concept. The interaction of personal, social, and coping dimensions demonstrates that self-concept is not a single construct but a constellation of interconnected experiences influenced by diverse ecological systems. This aligns with ecological models of development, where identity is constructed within family, peer, school, and community contexts, and is shaped by structural inequalities and cultural frameworks (Chen et al., 2020; Ihsan & Sabarudin, 2023).

The findings also contribute to the growing body of research emphasizing the role of social support in identity development (Yim & McCann, 2024). Supportive relationships function as protective factors, enabling adolescents to resist the negative consequences of stigma, discrimination, and poverty. Conversely, when support systems are absent or negative—such as through bullying, authoritarian parenting, or media-induced social comparison—self-concept becomes fragmented. This study therefore reinforces the duality of influences: both risk and resilience factors coexist within the everyday lives of marginalized adolescents.

Another important implication relates to cultural hybridity. Adolescents' negotiation between traditional and modern values highlights the need to conceptualize self-concept not as fixed but as fluid and context-dependent. As demonstrated in this study, identity construction involves constant balancing acts between competing demands—parental authority versus autonomy, community belonging

versus external stigma, tradition versus modernity. This dynamic mirrors contemporary research on identity in transitional cultural contexts (Bubnova & Kerke, 2020; Qadaruddin et al., 2023).

## 5. Limitations & Suggestions

While this study provides valuable insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study employed a qualitative design with a sample of 21 adolescents from marginalized communities in Turkey. Although the sample was diverse in gender and age, the findings cannot be generalized to all marginalized adolescents in different cultural or national contexts. Second, data collection relied exclusively on semi-structured interviews. While interviews allowed for depth of exploration, triangulation with additional methods such as focus groups, participant observation, or diary studies might have enriched the data. Third, the use of self-reported narratives may have been influenced by social desirability or adolescents' reluctance to share sensitive experiences fully. Finally, while NVivo 14 supported systematic coding, thematic interpretation remains subject to researcher bias despite efforts to enhance trustworthiness through peer debriefing and iterative coding.

Future studies should expand on these findings by adopting a mixed-methods approach that integrates qualitative depth with quantitative breadth. Large-scale surveys could complement in-depth interviews to capture broader patterns of self-concept among marginalized adolescents across diverse regions. Comparative cross-cultural research would also be valuable, examining similarities and differences in self-concept formation across different marginalized groups and cultural settings. Longitudinal designs could further clarify how self-concept evolves over time and how it interacts with key developmental outcomes such as academic achievement, resilience, and mental health. In addition, future research could explore the role of emerging digital technologies, including online communities and artificial intelligence-driven platforms, in shaping adolescents' self-concept, particularly given the increasing centrality of digital identity.

The findings of this study also carry practical implications for educators, parents, and policymakers. Schools should prioritize creating safe, inclusive environments that address bullying and provide adolescents with opportunities for positive peer engagement. Teachers can play a critical role by fostering supportive relationships and recognizing the strengths of students from marginalized

communities. Families, particularly fathers, should be encouraged to actively participate in adolescents' lives, providing warmth, guidance, and autonomy support. Community programs should be designed to strengthen adolescents' sense of belonging, cultural pride, and resilience through extracurricular activities, mentorship, and creative expression. Policymakers should address structural inequalities—such as poverty, educational disparities, and social stigma—that undermine self-concept development. By addressing both interpersonal and structural factors, interventions can empower marginalized adolescents to construct positive, resilient, and multidimensional self-concepts.

## Acknowledgments

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

## Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

## Ethical Considerations

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

## Transparency of Data

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

## Funding

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

## Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed in this article.

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