

Exploring the Dimensions and Components of Educational Governance Affecting Adolescent Identity Formation: A Qualitative Study Using Thematic Analysis

Malihe. Zoodbin¹, Nader. Motie Haghshenas^{2*}, Valiollah. Rostamalizadeh³

¹ PhD Student, Department of Sociology, SR.C., Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

² Assistant Professor, Department of Population Economics and Human Capital, Population Research Institute, Tehran, Iran

³ Associate Professor, Department of Migration and Urbanization, National Population Research Institute, Tehran, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: nader.haghshenas@nipr.ac.ir

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to explore the dimensions and components of educational governance that influence adolescent identity formation.

Methods and Materials: This qualitative study was conducted in Alborz Province using thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 22 participants representing three key levels of the educational governance system: family, school, and policymaking. Participants were selected to provide diverse perspectives on the mechanisms through which educational governance shapes adolescents' identity development. The interview data were analyzed through six systematic phases: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. The analysis focused on identifying interconnected structural, procedural, and value-cultural mechanisms affecting adolescent identity formation.

Findings: The thematic analysis yielded three overarching dimensions that collectively constituted the central theme of the "educational governance network gap." The structural dimension encompassed excessive centralization, implementation gaps, weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation, project-based and episodic approaches, ambiguity in institutional missions, and instability at middle-management levels. The procedural dimension included inter-institutional conflicts in education, poor coordination within the educational network, exclusion of adolescents from participatory processes, educational inconsistency, mutual blame and avoidance of responsibility, and ceremonial or slogan-based programs. The value-cultural dimension comprised an excessive emphasis on academic achievement and university entrance examinations, generational gaps and conflicts between traditional and modern values, globalization and the dominance of digital culture, declining social capital and institutional trust, structural vulnerabilities within families, and contextual diversity in Alborz Province. These dimensions were interrelated and jointly influenced adolescents' opportunities for coherent identity formation.

Conclusion: Effective educational governance for adolescent identity formation requires simultaneous attention to structural, procedural, and value-cultural dimensions and a transition from centralized, fragmented, and directive governance toward a network-based, participatory, accountable, and identity-oriented model.

Keywords: Educational Governance; Governance Dimensions; Adolescent Identity Formation; Thematic Analysis; Sustainable Development

1. Introduction

Education systems are increasingly understood not merely as administrative structures responsible for delivering formal instruction, but as complex governance environments in which multiple institutions, actors, rules, values, resources, and social expectations interact to shape individual and collective development. Within this perspective, educational governance extends beyond conventional educational administration and encompasses the processes through which authority is distributed, priorities are established, decisions are made, responsibilities are coordinated, stakeholders participate, and educational outcomes are monitored and evaluated. The classical foundations of educational governance emphasize the interaction among institutional structures, administrative arrangements, leadership, policy, and community relations, indicating that the effectiveness of educational systems depends not only on organizational efficiency but also on the quality of relationships among the actors involved in education (Sergiovanni et al., 2004). Contemporary scholarship has further expanded this perspective by conceptualizing educational governance as a multidimensional field involving institutional coordination, accountability, participation, decentralization, technological transformation, and responsiveness to social and cultural diversity (Rodrigues et al., 2025). Accordingly, governance provides an important analytical framework for understanding how educational systems address complex developmental issues that cannot be managed effectively by a single institution or through purely hierarchical mechanisms.

The growing complexity of educational environments has intensified scholarly attention to the quality of governance arrangements. Educational systems now operate within rapidly changing demographic, technological, economic, and cultural contexts in which conventional centralized models may be insufficient for responding to emerging needs. Research on good educational governance has demonstrated that organizational structure, behavioral mechanisms, and contextual conditions jointly determine the capacity of an educational system to achieve its objectives (Maniei et al., 2019). From this standpoint, effective governance requires clarity of institutional responsibilities, coherent policymaking, appropriate distribution of authority, monitoring and accountability mechanisms, and alignment between policy formulation and implementation. In the Iranian context, studies of educational policymaking have

similarly highlighted the importance of examining the broader governance architecture rather than considering educational problems solely as deficiencies in schools or individual organizations (Heydari, 2024). Such an approach is particularly important when the educational issue under consideration involves identity, values, socialization, and adolescent development, because these domains are shaped simultaneously by families, schools, governmental institutions, media, communities, and the wider cultural environment.

One of the central principles of contemporary educational governance is meaningful stakeholder participation. Governance differs from conventional top-down administration in that it recognizes the distributed nature of knowledge, resources, responsibility, and influence across multiple actors. Families, teachers, school administrators, students, policymakers, social institutions, and community organizations may hold different forms of knowledge and different expectations regarding educational goals. Therefore, the quality of interaction among these stakeholders can directly affect policy legitimacy, implementation, responsiveness, and educational effectiveness. Evidence indicates that stakeholder participation can strengthen educational decision-making by increasing the correspondence between policies and the lived realities of educational communities while simultaneously enhancing collective responsibility for outcomes (Rezaei et al., 2022). Educational governance is also closely related to educational justice because unequal access to decision-making, resources, opportunities, and institutional support can reproduce educational and social inequalities. Governance arrangements capable of ensuring participation, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness are therefore essential for reducing disparities and promoting educational justice in public education (Amani & Dehghan, 2023).

Despite this emphasis on participation and distributed responsibility, many contemporary education systems remain characterized by tensions between centralized control and local autonomy. Excessive centralization can limit the capacity of local actors to adapt programs to culturally and socially diverse contexts, whereas uncontrolled decentralization may generate fragmentation, inconsistency, or unequal access to resources. A major challenge of educational governance is therefore to establish an appropriate balance between national strategic coherence and contextual flexibility. Recent systematic analyses of educational governance have shown that governance

problems frequently involve coordination failures, competing institutional logics, accountability tensions, uneven stakeholder participation, and difficulties translating policy intentions into local practices (Rodrigues et al., 2025). In rapidly changing societies, governance must consequently be understood as a relational and adaptive process rather than a fixed administrative arrangement. This perspective is particularly relevant for adolescents, whose developmental experiences are embedded in multiple and sometimes contradictory environments.

The digital transformation of society has added another layer of complexity to educational governance. Digital platforms, artificial intelligence, data infrastructures, social media, and networked communication technologies increasingly affect how educational institutions operate and how young people learn, interact, and construct meaning. Innovative technologies can potentially improve governance by enhancing information flows, transparency, responsiveness, monitoring, and evidence-based decision-making (Abdallah et al., 2024). Likewise, emerging governance frameworks based on artificial intelligence, blockchain, and data-driven management seek to create more integrated, transparent, and adaptive educational systems (Gurram et al., 2025). Comparative analyses of educational governance in the digital age also indicate that school transformation increasingly depends on governance models capable of integrating technological innovation with institutional adaptation and stakeholder needs (Bagheri Movahed et al., 2025). These developments demonstrate that contemporary educational governance can no longer be conceptualized independently of digital transformation.

Nevertheless, technological transformation does not automatically result in more democratic or developmentally appropriate governance. Digitalization may simultaneously produce new forms of control, privatization, surveillance, dependency, and asymmetry in educational decision-making. The growing role of private platforms and data infrastructures can reshape the institutional boundaries of educational governance and transfer important forms of authority from public educational institutions to technology companies and platform providers (Nichols & Thrall, 2025). Critical perspectives have also emphasized how market-oriented and neoliberal mechanisms may influence educational governance through managerial control, standardization, competition, and performance-based accountability, potentially reducing educational processes to measurable outputs at the expense of broader developmental, ethical, and cultural purposes (Alexsandy et al., 2025). Thus,

educational governance in the digital era must address not only technological efficiency but also questions of agency, values, participation, cultural autonomy, and the purposes of education.

Alternative governance perspectives increasingly emphasize horizontal networks rather than purely vertical forms of authority. Network-based educational governance is based on interaction, collaboration, distributed expertise, reciprocal accountability, and shared problem-solving among actors. Research on horizontal forms of digital educational governance suggests that educational change may spread through interconnected local networks rather than solely through large-scale centralized expansion (Gallagher et al., 2024). Such findings are important because complex educational and social problems rarely correspond neatly to institutional boundaries. When different institutions work independently, educational messages and interventions may become fragmented. Conversely, networked governance can potentially create greater coherence between formal educational institutions, families, community organizations, media environments, and young people themselves. This issue becomes especially significant in relation to adolescent identity formation, for which consistency, meaningful participation, social recognition, and access to credible identity resources are particularly important.

Adolescence represents a critical developmental period during which individuals actively explore, negotiate, and consolidate different dimensions of identity. Identity formation involves questions related to personal values, social belonging, cultural membership, morality, future orientation, interpersonal relationships, and the individual's position within society. Although identity development has psychological dimensions, it is not an exclusively intrapersonal process. Adolescents construct their identities through continuous interaction with family relationships, school experiences, peers, social institutions, cultural narratives, and increasingly digital environments. Research has shown that emotional and moral variables are significantly associated with adolescents' identity formation, indicating that identity development reflects the interaction between internal psychosocial resources and external social conditions (Khalafi, 2024). Studies conducted in highly challenging developmental contexts similarly demonstrate that identity formation is influenced by the educational and psychosocial support available to adolescents and by the meanings they construct around their experiences (Lathifah & Prastiwi, 2025). Consequently,

adolescent identity should be viewed as a dynamic developmental outcome emerging from interactions between individuals and their multilayered environments.

Schools occupy a particularly important position within this process because they are among the most sustained institutional environments encountered by adolescents. Beyond academic instruction, schools communicate norms, values, expectations, conceptions of citizenship, social roles, cultural narratives, and models of appropriate behavior. Educational institutions can therefore support identity formation by providing opportunities for participation, belonging, dialogue, recognition, moral reflection, and social engagement. Conversely, schools that prioritize narrowly defined academic performance while marginalizing developmental, cultural, civic, and identity-related functions may be less capable of responding to adolescents' broader developmental needs. Contemporary discussions of educational governance increasingly recognize that learning outcomes themselves are constructed through governance processes that define what counts as legitimate educational achievement and which outcomes receive institutional recognition (Ioannidou & Zarifis, 2026). Accordingly, a governance model dominated solely by examination results or quantitative performance indicators may overlook crucial identity-related outcomes that are difficult to reduce to standardized measures.

This issue is particularly relevant in educational environments where competition for academic achievement and university admission exerts substantial pressure on schools, families, teachers, and students. When educational success is defined predominantly in terms of grades, examinations, and admission outcomes, educational-developmental activities may become secondary. Such conditions can create a discrepancy between the formally declared mission of education and its operational priorities. From a governance perspective, this discrepancy is not simply a pedagogical problem; it reflects how institutional incentives, accountability mechanisms, resource allocation, and performance criteria shape the behavior of educational actors. Governance arrangements therefore influence whether adolescent development is approached holistically or reduced to academic achievement. The relationship between educational governance and identity formation must consequently be examined through structural and process-related mechanisms as well as through the values embedded in educational policies and institutional practices.

Adolescent identity formation has become even more complex under conditions of globalization and the expansion

of digital culture. Contemporary adolescents encounter identity narratives from local communities, national institutions, global popular culture, peer networks, influencers, social media platforms, and algorithmically curated digital content. Social media has emerged as a particularly influential arena for identity exploration, self-presentation, social comparison, belonging, and interaction. Evidence regarding adolescents indicates that social media use can significantly shape self-identity by providing new spaces for identity experimentation and exposure to diverse social norms and cultural models (Chen, 2025). These environments can increase adolescents' access to information and alternative perspectives, but they can also intensify uncertainty, comparison, value conflicts, and fragmentation in the sources from which identity is constructed. The resulting conditions challenge traditional educational institutions whose authority over knowledge, norms, and cultural socialization is no longer exclusive.

The coexistence of traditional and modern sources of identity may also intensify intergenerational and cultural tensions. In societies experiencing rapid social change, adolescents may encounter substantial differences between the values promoted within families, formal educational institutions, peer cultures, digital environments, and global media. Studies of national identity reproduction among students have demonstrated that cultural factors are significantly implicated in the processes through which young people understand and reproduce collective identity (Jahanshahi, Haghighatian, & Behian, 2024). At the same time, structural conditions can threaten the reproduction of national identity among adolescents, suggesting that identity-related challenges cannot be explained solely by individual attitudes or cultural preferences (Jahanshahi, Haghighatian, & Bahian, 2024). These findings support a broader governance perspective in which identity formation is shaped by the interaction of cultural content, institutional arrangements, socioeconomic structures, and adolescents' everyday experiences.

The governance of identity-related education is therefore inherently inter-institutional. Families constitute the first context of socialization, schools provide formal and sustained educational experiences, religious and community institutions communicate moral and collective meanings, traditional media disseminate institutional narratives, and digital environments expose adolescents to highly diverse and often competing cultural frameworks. If these institutions function without coordination, adolescents may receive fragmented or contradictory messages concerning

values, belonging, responsibility, citizenship, morality, and desirable ways of life. Conversely, excessive attempts to impose uniform identity narratives may neglect adolescents' agency and the pluralistic realities of contemporary social life. Effective educational governance must therefore create conditions for coherence without suppressing diversity, provide guidance without eliminating adolescent participation, and sustain shared developmental goals while recognizing contextual differences.

These concerns are especially relevant in socially and culturally diverse regions. Governance models developed according to uniform assumptions may be poorly suited to areas characterized by ethnic diversity, migration, socioeconomic inequality, differing family structures, and multiple cultural patterns. Broader studies of educational governance have identified contextual diversity and institutional complexity as major challenges for the effective implementation of educational policy (Castendi et al., 2022). This implies that governance arrangements must be sensitive to local contexts and capable of incorporating the knowledge of actors directly involved in educational practice. In a province such as Alborz, where multiple ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, and lifestyle patterns coexist, adolescent identity formation is likely to be influenced by interactions between national educational policies and highly diverse local experiences. An analysis confined to formal policy documents would therefore be insufficient to reveal the actual mechanisms through which governance affects adolescent identity.

Another important issue is the potential discrepancy between formal governance structures and the lived experience of governance among educational actors. Policies may formally assign responsibilities to different institutions, while actual practices may involve overlapping functions, unclear accountability, ineffective coordination, inconsistent implementation, or mutual displacement of responsibility. Studies of educational governance have repeatedly emphasized that institutional effectiveness depends on the alignment of structures, processes, and actor relationships rather than merely on the existence of policy frameworks (Maniei et al., 2019). Similarly, stakeholder participation is meaningful only when actors have genuine opportunities to influence decisions rather than being included symbolically (Rezaei et al., 2022). For adolescents in particular, the absence of meaningful participation may be consequential because identity development involves agency, self-definition, voice, and the negotiation of social expectations. Treating adolescents merely as passive

recipients of educational programs can therefore conflict with the developmental requirements of identity formation.

Furthermore, changes in the wider governance environment make it necessary to reconsider conventional assumptions about who governs education. Digital platforms, informal learning networks, media actors, peer communities, and transnational cultural flows increasingly participate in shaping educational experiences. As digital infrastructures become embedded in educational governance, formal institutions may lose their monopoly over the production and circulation of educational meaning (Nichols & Thrall, 2025). At the same time, network-based and technologically mediated governance can create new possibilities for participation and horizontal collaboration (Gallagher et al., 2024). The central policy challenge is therefore not simply whether educational systems should embrace technological change, but how they can govern increasingly complex networks of influence in ways that remain accountable, developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and oriented toward adolescents' well-being and identity development.

Despite the growing literature on educational governance, digital transformation, stakeholder participation, educational justice, and adolescent identity, these domains have often been investigated separately. Governance studies frequently focus on organizational performance, accountability, leadership, technology, or policy implementation, whereas identity studies tend to emphasize psychological, cultural, or social determinants at the individual or group level. There remains a need for an integrative framework that conceptualizes adolescent identity formation as an outcome influenced by the quality of interactions among educational governance actors. Such an approach can reveal how structural arrangements, governance processes, and underlying value-cultural orientations jointly create conditions that either support or hinder coherent identity development. Recent scholarship emphasizing the expanding conceptual scope of educational governance provides a foundation for such integration (Rodrigues et al., 2025), while emerging work on technologically transformed governance underscores the urgency of reassessing institutional roles in rapidly changing educational ecosystems (Abdallah et al., 2024; Bagheri Movahed et al., 2025; Gurram et al., 2025).

From this perspective, examining adolescent identity formation requires moving beyond single-institution explanations. Neither the family, school, media, nor policymaking system can independently account for the

identity challenges experienced by contemporary adolescents. What matters is the architecture of relationships among these actors: whether their responsibilities are clear, whether their actions are coordinated, whether policies are implemented consistently, whether monitoring systems attend to developmental outcomes, whether adolescents have a meaningful voice, and whether educational values correspond to the realities of a digitally connected and culturally diverse generation. Critical perspectives on centralized and market-oriented governance further demonstrate that governance arrangements can themselves generate contradictions when control, standardization, or performance imperatives become disconnected from educational and developmental purposes (Alexsandy et al., 2025). Therefore, analyzing the dimensions of educational governance associated with identity formation can contribute both to the theoretical understanding of educational governance and to the development of more responsive educational policies.

In Iran, the significance of this issue is reinforced by the coexistence of centralized educational policymaking, strong formal expectations regarding educational and cultural socialization, rapid technological change, diverse local contexts, and changing identity references among younger generations. Existing Iranian studies have addressed educational justice (Amani & Dehghan, 2023), stakeholder participation (Rezaei et al., 2022), governance structures and policymaking (Heydari, 2024), cultural determinants of national identity reproduction (Jahanshahi, Haghighatian, & Behian, 2024), structural threats to adolescent national identity (Jahanshahi, Haghighatian, & Bahian, 2024), and psychosocial predictors of adolescent identity formation (Khalafi, 2024). However, a more comprehensive qualitative examination is required to explain how actors located at different levels of the educational governance system perceive the structural, process-related, and value-cultural mechanisms through which governance shapes adolescent identity formation. Such an investigation is particularly valuable because qualitative inquiry can uncover inconsistencies, tensions, informal practices, and contextual dynamics that may remain invisible in formal institutional analyses.

Accordingly, the present study conceptualizes adolescent identity formation not merely as an individual developmental issue but as a phenomenon embedded within a network of educational governance relationships. This perspective assumes that adolescents' opportunities to construct coherent identities are influenced by institutional

coordination, the consistency of educational messages, stakeholder participation, accountability structures, local responsiveness, cultural diversity, family conditions, and the growing influence of digital environments. By examining these dimensions simultaneously and incorporating the perspectives of actors at the family, school, and policymaking levels, the study seeks to provide a context-sensitive understanding of the governance conditions associated with adolescent identity formation and to identify potential deficiencies within the educational governance network.

Therefore, the aim of this study was to explore the dimensions and components of educational governance affecting adolescent identity formation through a qualitative thematic analysis of the perspectives of family-, school-, and policymaking-level actors in Alborz Province.

2. Methods and Materials

Given the exploratory, multilevel, and context-dependent nature of the phenomenon of educational governance and its relationship with adolescent identity formation, a qualitative approach and thematic analysis method were employed. Thematic analysis, as a flexible yet systematic method, enables the identification, analysis, and reporting of patterns (themes) within qualitative data. This method is particularly appropriate for studies seeking to systematically identify and classify the dimensions of a phenomenon. In the present study, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach was employed, comprising: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generation of initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. This approach enables the researcher to adhere to scientific principles while developing a rich interpretation of the data.

The study population consisted of actors at three levels—family, school, and policymaking—in Alborz Province. Alborz Province was selected because of its diverse demographic, social, and cultural characteristics, including ethnic diversity, substantial in-migration, and the presence of marginalized urban communities, as well as the coexistence of different lifestyles and identity patterns. Participants were selected using purposive sampling and, in specific cases, snowball sampling. In purposive sampling, participants were selected based on their knowledge, experience, professional position, and degree of direct involvement with the phenomenon under investigation. In cases where access to certain key actors was not possible

through the initial purposive sampling procedure, snowball sampling was employed. Sampling was conducted concurrently with data collection and analysis, and theoretical saturation was considered the criterion for terminating the sampling process. Theoretical saturation was considered to have been reached when new data no longer

resulted in the emergence of new categories or new conceptual relationships. Accordingly, sampling continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, and semi-structured interviews were ultimately conducted with 22 participants.

Table 1

Detailed Characteristics of the Study Participants

No.	Code	Level of Involvement	Age	Gender	Education	Work Experience	City	Interview Duration
1	F1	Family	42	Female	Bachelor's degree	—	Karaj	52 minutes
2	F2	Family	47	Male	High school diploma	—	Fardis	48 minutes
3	F3	Family	39	Female	Master's degree	—	Hashtgerd	61 minutes
4	F4	Family	45	Female	Bachelor's degree	—	Karaj	44 minutes
5	F5	Family	44	Male	Bachelor's degree	—	Mahdasht	55 minutes
6	F6	Family	41	Female	Master's degree	—	Karaj	50 minutes
7	S1	School	52	Male	Master's degree	28 years	Karaj	68 minutes
8	S2	School	48	Female	Bachelor's degree	22 years	Fardis	59 minutes
9	S3	School	39	Female	Master's degree	14 years	Karaj	72 minutes
10	S4	School	45	Male	Bachelor's degree	20 years	Hashtgerd	55 minutes
11	S5	School	41	Female	Master's degree	16 years	Karaj	64 minutes
12	S6	School	50	Male	Bachelor's degree	26 years	Fardis	58 minutes
13	S7	School	37	Female	Bachelor's degree	12 years	Karaj	71 minutes
14	S8	School	44	Female	Master's degree	18 years	Nazarabad	63 minutes
15	S9	School	49	Male	Bachelor's degree	24 years	Karaj	60 minutes
16	P1	Polycymaking	55	Male	Doctoral degree	30 years	Tehran/Karaj	85 minutes
17	P2	Polycymaking	51	Female	Doctoral degree	25 years	Karaj	78 minutes
18	P3	Polycymaking	48	Male	Master's degree	22 years	Karaj	70 minutes
19	P4	Polycymaking	53	Female	Doctoral degree	27 years	Tehran/Karaj	82 minutes
20	P5	Polycymaking	46	Male	Master's degree	20 years	Karaj	66 minutes
21	P6	Polycymaking	50	Female	Doctoral degree	24 years	Karaj	74 minutes
22	P7	Polycymaking	54	Male	Doctoral degree	28 years	Tehran/Karaj	79 minutes

An examination of the participants' characteristics indicates that the study sample had an appropriate degree of diversity. In terms of gender distribution, 12 participants were female (approximately 55%) and 10 were male (approximately 45%). Regarding educational attainment, seven participants held doctoral degrees, eight held master's degrees, and seven held bachelor's degrees or high school diplomas. Geographically, participants were selected from different cities in Alborz Province, including Karaj, Fardis, Hashtgerd, Mahdasht, and Nazarabad.

The primary instrument for data collection was the semi-structured interview, conducted using an interview guide developed on the basis of the theoretical foundations and research questions. Unlike structured interviews, semi-structured interviews use a topic guide comprising a set of key domains and questions while allowing the interviewer sufficient flexibility to elaborate on questions or pursue new lines of inquiry according to the flow of the conversation

(Patton, 2015). The interview procedure was conducted as follows. First, the interview guide was developed based on the theoretical foundations and research questions and was finalized after approval by the supervisor and advisor. Subsequently, with due consideration of ethical principles, including obtaining informed consent and ensuring confidentiality, each participant was interviewed in a quiet setting of their choice. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission and were transcribed immediately afterward. Data analysis was conducted in six phases based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach. The analytical process was performed using MAXQDA 2022 software.

Phase One: Familiarization with the Data. The researcher became deeply familiar with the richness and depth of the data through complete transcription of the interviews and repeated reading of the transcripts. At this

stage, preliminary notes regarding potential ideas and patterns were recorded.

Phase Two: Generation of Initial Codes. At this stage, the data were systematically coded line by line. The analysis of 387 pages of transcribed interview data yielded 1,892 initial codes. The codes were primarily recorded using the participants' own language, after which more abstract concepts were inductively derived from them.

Phase Three: Searching for Themes. At this stage, the initial codes were categorized into 28 subthemes according to their conceptual and functional similarities. These subthemes were subsequently organized into three main themes—structural, process-related, and value-cultural—based on their semantic overlap.

Phase Four: Reviewing Themes. The identified themes were reviewed at two levels: (a) review at the theme level, involving assessment of the internal coherence of the data within each theme, and (b) review at the level of the entire dataset, involving examination of the validity of the themes across the complete dataset. At this stage, some themes were merged, some were eliminated, and others were redefined.

Phase Five: Defining and Naming Themes. A precise definition, nature, scope, and constituent components were specified for each theme. The overarching theme of the “educational governance network gap” was identified and defined as the central core encompassing the other themes.

Phase Six: Producing the Report. At this stage, the findings were developed into an analytical report incorporating textual evidence and a conceptual map of the themes.

In qualitative research, given the interpretive and context-dependent nature of the data, the evaluation of the rigor and accuracy of findings is based on the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To ensure the rigor and credibility of the findings, member checking and peer review strategies were employed. For member checking, following the complete transcription of the interviews and extraction of the initial codes, interpretive texts and summaries of the main categories and preliminary relationships were provided to several key participants to

verify the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations. For peer review, the findings were periodically presented to the supervisor, advisor, and two experts familiar with thematic analysis so that the coding process, categorization of the data, and the researcher's interpretations and reasoning could be critically reviewed. To ensure dependability and confirmability, prolonged engagement with the research field and theoretical saturation were employed. In addition, a comprehensive audit trail was maintained, including audio recordings, interview transcripts, the researcher's daily reports, and the MAXQDA project file.

3. Findings and Results

Following the complete transcription of the in-depth semi-structured interviews and extraction of the initial codes, the systematic coding process was initiated. As shown in Table 2, analysis of 387 pages of transcribed data yielded 1,892 initial codes. At the initial stage, these codes were predominantly recorded using the participants' own words. Following refinement, comparison, and integration of the codes through the constant comparative method, the 1,892 initial codes were reduced to 116 abstract concepts. These concepts were subsequently organized into 28 subcategories based on conceptual and functional similarities.

Following an in-depth analysis and constant comparison among the 28 subcategories, the overarching theme of the study was identified as the “educational governance network gap.” This central phenomenon constitutes the core of the model and reflects the lack of coherence, coordination, effectiveness, and efficiency among the five educational institutions—family, school, mosque, national media, and cyberspace—in guiding the adolescent identity formation process. The “educational governance network gap” refers to a condition in which the institutions responsible for the education and identity formation of adolescents lack the necessary coordination, coherence, and effectiveness because of structural, process-related, and value-related factors and consequently transmit contradictory and fragmented educational messages to adolescents.

Table 2

Textual Evidence for the Overarching Theme

Participant Code	Interview Excerpt
P4	“We have an educational network that is not really a network at all. Each of these institutions follows its own path, and no one is responsible for coordination.”
S7	“The family says one thing, the school says another, and satellite television and Instagram say something else. The adolescent becomes lost in the middle and does not know what to believe.”

F3	"There is no connection between the mosque and the school. National media also provides its programs separately. It is as though each of them lives in a different country."
P1	"The principal weakness of our educational governance is precisely this fragmented, siloed way of operating. There is no connection among the different sectors involved in education."

The first main theme concerns the design and strengthening of formal and informal institutions that provide the necessary foundation for adolescents'

development and identity formation. This dimension comprises the following components:

Table 3

Subthemes of the Main Theme "Educational Governance Structure"

Component	Related Concepts	Textual Evidence	Category No.
Excessive centralization	Centralized national decision-making; lack of provincial authority; uniform approach to education; distance between the center and the field	"Educational programs are issued from Tehran without any understanding of what is happening in Alborz with all of its ethnic diversity. One single prescription is provided for the entire country." (P4)	1
Implementation gap	Gap between policy documents and implementation; failure to achieve higher-level objectives; theory-practice gap; routinization	"The Fundamental Transformation Document is very good, but it has not reached the field. There is a substantial gap between rhetoric and practice." (P2, F1)	2
Weakness of the monitoring and evaluation system	Quantitative and superficial evaluation; neglect of identity-related outcomes; absence of qualitative indicators	"They ask us how many educational sessions we held and how many people participated, but no one asks what impact these sessions had on the students' identities." (S3)	3
Episodic and project-based approach	Short-lived initiatives; lack of continuity; changes following managerial turnover; absence of a long-term perspective	"The NAMAD program was introduced and lasted for two years. Now no one follows it up anymore. The next program comes along, and everything starts again from zero." (P6, S2)	4
Ambiguity in institutional missions	Overlapping responsibilities; duplication of activities; absence of a single responsible authority; overlapping institutional mandates	"The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance does one thing, national broadcasting does something else, and the Ministry of Education does another. No one knows who is actually responsible or who should be held accountable." (P1, P5)	5
Lack of stability at the middle-management level	Preference-based changes; absence of long-term school-level planning; managerial instability; disruption of educational continuity	"Every new administrator imposes a new preference on the school. The previous program is discontinued and a new one begins. There is no continuity in the work." (S1, S4)	18

The findings indicated that excessive centralization (Category 1) constituted the most important structural barrier to educational governance. This factor results in educational programs and policies lacking flexibility and alignment with local requirements. The absence of authority at intermediate and local levels deprives administrators and educators of opportunities for initiative. The implementation gap (Category 2) reflects the considerable distance between formal policies and their practical implementation at the school level. Weakness of the monitoring and evaluation system (Category 3) prevents ineffective programs from being identified and corrected. The episodic and project-

based approach (Category 4) impedes the development of sustainable and long-term educational processes. Ambiguity in institutional missions (Category 5) leads to duplication of activities, inefficient use of resources, and the transmission of inconsistent educational messages. Lack of stability at the middle-management level (Category 18) also results in program instability and confusion among teachers and students.

The second main theme emphasizes modes of interaction, participation, and decision-making within governance processes. This dimension comprises the following components:

Table 4

Subthemes of the Main Theme "Educational Governance Processes"

Component	Related Concepts	Textual Evidence	Category No.
Inter-institutional conflict in education	Conflict between parental and school messages; value conflicts among institutions;	"Parents say one thing, the school says something else, and satellite television and Instagram say something different	7

	multiplicity of normative sources; adolescent confusion	again. Our child is lost among all these messages and does not know what to believe.” (F3)	
Lack of coordination within the five-part educational network	Lack of effective communication among institutions; separation between mosque and school; absence of a coordinated network; institutional isolation	“The mosque and the school have no relationship with each other at all. Each follows its own path. The family is also lost in the middle.” (S6, P2)	8
Exclusion of adolescents from participation	Absence of student voice; top-down imposition; lack of participation in decision-making; directive approach	“No one has ever asked the student: What do you think? How do you feel? What do you want? Everything is imposed from above.” (F4, S8)	9
Educational hypocrisy (discrepancy between words and actions)	Contradiction between discourse and behavior; educational hypocrisy; gap between educators’ words and actions; educational double standards	“We tell the child to be honest, but we ourselves write false information on the report card. We tell them to participate, but we do not allow them to make decisions.” (S2, S7)	10
Mutual blame and avoidance of responsibility	Mutual blaming; avoidance of responsibility; finger-pointing; absence of shared commitment	“The family says the school should educate the child, and the school says it is the family’s responsibility. The result is that no one does anything.” (F2, S1, P4)	11
Rhetorical and ceremonial programs	Ceremonial programs; ineffective conferences; superficial educational activities; symbolic cultural displays	“We held a large conference, put up posters, took selfies, and that was it. Nothing actually happened.” (P6, S2)	24

The findings indicated that inter-institutional conflict in education (Category 7) and lack of coordination within the five-part educational network (Category 8) were among the most important process-related challenges. These two components demonstrate that educational institutions transmit contradictory messages to adolescents rather than generating synergy. The exclusion of adolescents from participation (Category 9) indicates that, in many educational structures, adolescents are regarded as the “objects of education” rather than as “educational actors.” Educational hypocrisy (Category 10) refers to the

discrepancy between educators’ words and actions, which contributes to adolescents’ distrust. Mutual blame and avoidance of responsibility (Category 11) reflect the absence of collective accountability for adolescent education. Rhetorical and ceremonial programs (Category 24) also indicate superficiality and the lack of operational substance in educational activities.

The third main theme emphasizes the value-based content and norms governing educational governance and comprises the following components:

Table 5

Subthemes of the Main Theme “Values and Culture Governing Educational Governance”

Component	Related Concepts	Textual Evidence	Category No.
Exclusive focus on academic objectives (university entrance examination orientation)	Absolute prioritization of the university entrance examination; marginalization of educational-developmental activities; toxic competitive system; instrumental view of the school	“The pressure of the university entrance examination and grades is so intense that neither the teacher has time for educational-developmental activities nor the student has the motivation for them.” (S2, S5, F6)	13
Generational gap and conflict between traditional and modern values	Intergenerational value gap; tension between tradition and modernity; differing expectations; changing sources of identity reference	“Parents and adolescents do not live on the same planet. Each speaks a different language. The generational gap has become very deep.” (F5, S6, P2)	17
Globalization and the dominance of digital culture	Unrestricted access to diverse content; conflict between local and global identities; crisis of meaning in the age of globalization	“Today’s adolescent no longer takes guidance from the mosque or the pulpit. They are constructing their identity through Telegram channels, Instagram, and TikTok.” (P7, S9)	20
Erosion of social capital and institutional trust	Families’ distrust of the educational system; declining trust in educational institutions; skepticism toward formal programs	“Families no longer trust what the school says. They say that whatever the school teaches is only useful for examinations, not for life.” (F2, P5)	28
Structural vulnerabilities of the family	Family disintegration in marginalized urban areas; weak parental supervision; poverty and economic insecurity; addiction and divorce	“On the outskirts of Karaj, parents are preoccupied with work, the family has fallen apart, and the child is left on their own. The school cannot accomplish much by itself.” (S1, P3)	15
Contextual diversity and plurality in Alborz Province	Ethnic and cultural diversity; ineffectiveness of uniform programs; need for localization; diversity of identity patterns	“Alborz is full of different ethnic groups: Turks, Kurds, Lurs, and people from Tehran. Everyone has their own culture and customs. A single program cannot work for everyone.” (P4, F3)	16

The findings indicated that the exclusive focus on academic objectives and university entrance examination orientation (Category 13) constituted the most important value-cultural challenge. The dominance of an academically oriented logic within the educational system has marginalized developmental education, ethics, identity, and personality development. The generational gap (Category 17) reflects the widening distance between parents and adolescents in the domain of values. Globalization and the dominance of digital culture (Category 20) have created a new context for identity formation in which traditional educational institutions have only a limited presence. The erosion of social capital and institutional trust (Category 28) leads adolescents to turn toward informal and unregulated sources of identity construction. Structural vulnerabilities of the family (Category 15) demonstrate that the identity crisis cannot be understood separately from structures of inequality and social deprivation. Contextual diversity and plurality in Alborz Province (Category 16) further reinforce the necessity of flexibility and localization in educational programs.

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the dimensions and components of educational governance affecting adolescent identity formation through the perspectives of actors at the family, school, and policymaking levels. The thematic analysis revealed an overarching theme identified as the “educational governance network gap,” which was manifested through three major dimensions: structural, process-related, and value-cultural. At the structural level, excessive centralization, implementation gaps, weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation, episodic and project-based approaches, ambiguity in institutional missions, and instability at the middle-management level emerged as the principal challenges. At the process level, inter-institutional conflict, poor coordination across the five-part educational network, exclusion of adolescents from participation, discrepancies between educational discourse and practice, mutual blame and avoidance of responsibility, and ceremonial programming were identified. At the value-cultural level, excessive emphasis on academic achievement and university entrance examinations, generational value gaps, globalization and digital culture, declining social capital and institutional trust, structural family vulnerabilities, and contextual diversity in Alborz Province

were found to shape the governance environment surrounding adolescent identity formation.

The overarching theme of the educational governance network gap suggests that adolescent identity formation is not governed through a coherent and integrated system, but rather through a fragmented constellation of institutions that frequently operate independently or even contradictorily. This finding supports the broader conceptualization of educational governance as a multidimensional and relational process in which institutional coordination, accountability, participation, and policy coherence are essential for achieving educational outcomes (Rodrigues et al., 2025). It is also consistent with the classical view that educational governance depends on the alignment of administrative structures, organizational roles, leadership processes, and community relationships rather than on isolated institutional action (Sergiovanni et al., 2004). From this perspective, the identity-related difficulties identified by participants may not be interpreted simply as weaknesses of families, schools, or media independently; instead, they reflect deficiencies in the governance architecture connecting these institutions.

The structural dimension demonstrated that excessive centralization was perceived as one of the most important barriers to effective educational governance. Participants emphasized that centrally designed programs often lacked sufficient sensitivity to local social, cultural, and demographic conditions. This finding aligns with studies highlighting the importance of contextual responsiveness and decentralized participation within educational governance systems (Rodrigues et al., 2025). It also corresponds with research conducted in Iran suggesting that governance effectiveness requires a more balanced distribution of authority and a policymaking system capable of responding to contextual realities rather than relying exclusively on centralized administrative prescriptions (Heydari, 2024). Educational governance based on rigid central control can restrict the capacity of local administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders to adapt developmental programs to adolescents’ actual needs. This problem becomes particularly significant in a culturally heterogeneous context such as Alborz Province, where a uniform educational model may inadequately reflect diverse family backgrounds, ethnic identities, lifestyles, and patterns of socialization.

The implementation gap identified in this study further indicates that the existence of formal educational policies does not necessarily guarantee their realization in practice. Participants described a notable distance between policy

documents and school-level implementation, suggesting that educational governance suffers from a disconnect between formal intentions and operational mechanisms. This result is consistent with the three-branch perspective on good educational governance, according to which structural arrangements, behavioral processes, and contextual factors must operate coherently for governance objectives to be achieved (Maniei et al., 2019). It is also supported by research emphasizing that governance quality depends not merely on policy formulation but on effective stakeholder participation, implementation capacity, and accountability mechanisms (Rezaei et al., 2022). When policies related to adolescent development and identity remain largely rhetorical or are implemented inconsistently, schools may be unable to provide sustained developmental experiences capable of influencing identity formation.

Weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation also emerged as a major structural challenge. Participants reported that existing evaluation systems tended to focus on quantitative indicators such as the number of programs or participants rather than on deeper developmental outcomes such as identity, belonging, trust, agency, or moral development. This finding can be interpreted in light of contemporary debates about how governance systems construct and prioritize educational outcomes. Ioannidou and Zarifis argue that learning outcomes are shaped through governance processes that determine which forms of achievement are institutionally recognized and measured (Ioannidou & Zarifis, 2026). Therefore, if evaluation systems privilege easily measurable indicators while neglecting developmental and identity-related outcomes, institutions may gradually orient their activities toward compliance rather than meaningful educational transformation. This logic also helps explain the study's identification of ceremonial and slogan-based educational programs.

The findings regarding the episodic and project-based nature of educational initiatives and instability at middle-management levels further demonstrate how discontinuity can undermine educational effectiveness. Identity formation is a gradual developmental process requiring sustained relationships, consistent values, and long-term institutional engagement. Repeated changes in educational priorities, programs, and managerial approaches may weaken continuity and reduce stakeholders' trust in educational interventions. Contemporary governance literature similarly emphasizes institutional stability, coordination, and continuity as necessary conditions for effective transformation, particularly in periods of technological and

social change (Bagheri Movahed et al., 2025). When new programs replace previous initiatives without systematic evaluation or institutional learning, the educational system may reproduce cycles of short-term intervention without developing cumulative capacity.

The ambiguity of institutional missions identified in this study is closely related to the broader problem of fragmented governance. Participants referred to overlapping responsibilities among educational, cultural, media, and social institutions and the absence of clear accountability for adolescent development. Such findings are consistent with governance research emphasizing that the increasing multiplicity of actors can create coordination problems when roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined (Rodrigues et al., 2025). Similar challenges have been identified in studies of educational governance in complex institutional environments, where fragmented authority and competing organizational mandates reduce policy coherence and responsiveness (Castendi et al., 2022). From an identity-formation perspective, institutional ambiguity can become particularly problematic because adolescents may receive multiple messages from different authorities without a coherent framework through which to integrate them.

At the process level, one of the most important findings was inter-institutional conflict in education. Participants repeatedly described contradictory messages from families, schools, religious institutions, traditional media, and digital environments. Such inconsistency can undermine adolescents' capacity to interpret norms and values coherently. This result is consistent with studies demonstrating that adolescent identity develops through interaction with multiple social and cultural contexts rather than within a single institutional environment (Khalafi, 2024). Research on national identity reproduction among students has similarly shown that cultural factors and social environments play a significant role in shaping identity processes (Jahanshahi, Haghighatian, & Behian, 2024). Moreover, structural threats to identity reproduction among adolescents indicate that contradictions embedded in the wider social environment may weaken the continuity of identity-related socialization (Jahanshahi, Haghighatian, & Bahian, 2024). The current findings therefore suggest that identity fragmentation may partly reflect governance fragmentation.

The lack of coordination within the five-part educational network—family, school, mosque, national media, and cyberspace—reinforces this interpretation. Rather than functioning as mutually reinforcing elements of a

developmental ecosystem, these institutions were often perceived as isolated from one another. This finding accords with network-based approaches to educational governance that emphasize horizontal relationships, collaboration, and distributed coordination among actors (Gallagher et al., 2024). Horizontal governance models suggest that sustainable educational change is more likely to emerge through interconnected networks than through isolated vertical directives. In the context of adolescent identity formation, this implies that stronger institutional communication and collaboration may reduce contradictory messaging and create greater continuity across adolescents' different social environments.

Another significant process-related finding was the exclusion of adolescents from participation in decisions affecting them. Participants indicated that adolescents are frequently treated as recipients or objects of educational programs rather than as active agents within educational processes. This finding can be interpreted through the literature on stakeholder participation, which emphasizes that governance becomes more legitimate and effective when relevant stakeholders are meaningfully involved in decision-making (Rezaei et al., 2022). Adolescents' participation may be especially important because identity formation itself involves agency, exploration, self-definition, and negotiation of values. Educational systems that impose decisions without meaningful student voice may therefore undermine one of the developmental mechanisms through which identity becomes consolidated. Such exclusion may also contribute to alienation from formal institutions and increase reliance on alternative sources of meaning and belonging.

The discrepancy between educational discourse and actual practice, identified as educational hypocrisy, represents another critical finding. Adolescents appear particularly sensitive to inconsistencies between the values promoted by adults and the behaviors demonstrated in practice. When schools or families advocate honesty, participation, responsibility, or respect while simultaneously engaging in contradictory practices, institutional credibility may decline. This finding is closely related to the study's identification of weakening institutional trust. Educational governance research emphasizes accountability, transparency, and consistency as important elements of effective institutional functioning (Amani & Dehghan, 2023). From this perspective, the erosion of trust may not simply result from changing youth attitudes but may also reflect inconsistencies in institutional behavior.

Mutual blame and avoidance of responsibility further illustrate the absence of shared accountability in the educational governance network. Families may expect schools to assume responsibility for education and socialization, while schools may attribute identity-related problems to families, media, or wider society. This reciprocal displacement of responsibility prevents the formation of a collective governance framework. Effective educational governance requires shared responsibility among stakeholders and mechanisms through which different actors can coordinate their contributions (Rezaei et al., 2022). Without such arrangements, responsibility becomes dispersed in ways that allow each institution to distance itself from negative outcomes while no actor assumes responsibility for integration.

The value-cultural dimension revealed that academic achievement and university entrance examination orientation frequently overshadow developmental, moral, and identity-related purposes. This finding suggests that the governance of education is influenced by the indicators through which success is defined. When performance is measured primarily through examination scores and academic advancement, schools and families are incentivized to prioritize these outcomes. Such a narrow performance orientation is consistent with critical perspectives on neoliberal governance, which emphasize standardization, competition, managerial control, and measurable outcomes (Alexsandy et al., 2025). Although academic achievement remains an important educational objective, excessive emphasis on measurable performance may marginalize less quantifiable but developmentally important outcomes such as social identity, moral reasoning, civic participation, and psychological maturity.

The generational gap and conflict between traditional and modern values were also prominent. Participants described substantial differences between the value systems and communication styles of adolescents and adults. This finding is compatible with evidence that adolescent identity develops within changing cultural environments and is influenced by both psychosocial resources and external value systems (Khalafi, 2024). It is also consistent with research demonstrating that the reproduction of national and cultural identity among students is dependent on the social and cultural conditions through which collective meanings are transmitted (Jahanshahi, Haghighatian, & Behian, 2024). When traditional institutions fail to communicate values in forms that are meaningful to contemporary adolescents, the transmission of identity narratives may weaken.

Globalization and the dominance of digital culture were among the strongest contextual factors identified in the study. Adolescents increasingly construct identity through social media, digital networks, online communities, and transnational cultural content. Chen's findings indicate that social media plays an important role in adolescent self-identity formation by providing environments for self-presentation, comparison, interaction, and exploration (Chen, 2025). The findings of the present study extend this perspective by showing that digital identity formation also constitutes a governance problem. Traditional educational institutions no longer exercise exclusive influence over adolescents' access to meaning, values, and identity models. Educational governance must therefore account for digital platforms as influential actors within the broader educational ecosystem.

Digital transformation also changes the institutional structure of governance itself. Emerging technologies can improve coordination, data management, responsiveness, and decision-making (Abdallah et al., 2024), while AI-, blockchain-, and data-based systems may provide new tools for integrated educational governance (Gurram et al., 2025). At the same time, digital platforms can create new forms of dependency, privatization, surveillance, and external control over educational processes (Nichols & Thrall, 2025). Therefore, the digital environment should neither be treated solely as a threat nor simply as an opportunity. The central challenge is to develop governance mechanisms that enable educational institutions to engage with digital culture in ways that strengthen adolescent agency, critical literacy, and coherent identity development.

The weakening of social capital and institutional trust identified in the present study may intensify adolescents' movement toward informal identity resources. When families and adolescents perceive schools and official institutions as disconnected from real life, institutional narratives may lose legitimacy. This result is compatible with the broader governance emphasis on trust, responsiveness, fairness, and meaningful participation (Amani & Dehghan, 2023). Trust is especially important in identity formation because adolescents are more likely to internalize values and institutional messages when they regard their sources as credible, fair, and consistent.

Structural vulnerabilities within families also emerged as an important value-cultural factor. Poverty, economic insecurity, parental absence, addiction, divorce, and weakened supervision were perceived as limiting the family's capacity to support adolescent development. This

finding demonstrates that identity formation cannot be analyzed independently of social inequality and family conditions. Studies of adolescent identity in difficult psychosocial contexts have similarly shown that developmental outcomes are strongly influenced by the quality of support and meaning-making available to young people (Lathifah & Prastiwi, 2025). Thus, educational governance should not treat identity-related difficulties solely as school-based problems but should acknowledge the broader social conditions that shape family capacity.

5. Conclusion

Finally, the contextual diversity of Alborz Province highlights the limitations of uniform educational policies. Cultural plurality, migration, ethnic diversity, and variation in family and identity patterns necessitate flexible governance arrangements. Governance models for the digital age increasingly emphasize adaptability and contextual sensitivity rather than universal administrative prescriptions (Bagheri Movahed et al., 2025). Similarly, governance challenges in diverse educational environments demonstrate the importance of aligning institutional structures with local realities (Castendi et al., 2022). Overall, the findings suggest that effective educational governance for adolescent identity formation requires a transition from centralized, fragmented, and institutionally isolated arrangements toward a network-based, participatory, accountable, context-sensitive, and identity-oriented model. Such a model should integrate structural reform, institutional coordination, adolescent participation, digital responsiveness, and cultural sensitivity while preserving coherence in the developmental objectives of the educational system.

6. Limitations and Suggestions

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the research was conducted in Alborz Province, and the specific demographic, cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic characteristics of the province may limit the transferability of the findings to other regions. Second, the study relied on the perspectives of actors at the family, school, and policymaking levels and did not directly include adolescents as interview participants, although adolescent participation emerged as a central theme. Third, because the study employed a qualitative thematic-analysis design, the findings provide an in-depth interpretation of participants'

experiences rather than statistically generalizable estimates. Fourth, participants' accounts may have been influenced by personal experiences, professional positions, organizational expectations, or social desirability. Finally, although theoretical saturation was achieved, the complexity and dynamic nature of educational governance mean that additional dimensions may emerge in other institutional, cultural, or geographical settings.

Future studies should examine the proposed dimensions of educational governance in other provinces and social contexts to determine the extent to which the identified themes are transferable across different educational environments. Researchers are also encouraged to directly investigate adolescents' perspectives and compare their experiences with those of parents, teachers, school administrators, and policymakers. Quantitative studies could develop and validate a measurement instrument based on the structural, process-related, and value-cultural dimensions identified in this study and test their relationships with different dimensions of adolescent identity. Mixed-method studies may further clarify the mechanisms linking governance quality to identity-related outcomes. Longitudinal research could examine how changes in institutional coordination, stakeholder participation, digital environments, and educational policies influence adolescent identity formation over time. Comparative studies across different cultural settings or educational systems could also provide a deeper understanding of how governance models interact with local values and social structures.

Educational policymakers should establish a coordinated governance framework that clearly defines the responsibilities of families, schools, cultural institutions, media organizations, and digital-sector actors in supporting adolescent development. Greater authority should be delegated to provincial and local levels so that educational programs can be adapted to the cultural and social characteristics of local communities. Monitoring and evaluation systems should move beyond quantitative indicators and incorporate measures related to identity development, participation, institutional trust, social belonging, and developmental outcomes. Schools should create formal mechanisms for meaningful adolescent participation in decision-making and program design. Inter-institutional coordination committees should be established to reduce contradictory educational messages and improve continuity among families, schools, community institutions, and media environments. Educational programs should be designed as sustained developmental processes rather than

short-term ceremonial projects. Greater attention should also be given to digital literacy, critical engagement with social media, family support, and culturally responsive programming. Finally, managerial stability, accountability, transparency, and consistent alignment between institutional discourse and practice should be strengthened to rebuild adolescents' and families' trust in the educational governance system.

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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.

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