

Exploring Adolescent Development in Diverse Cultures: Insights and Implications

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Abstract: *This study delves at teenage behavior and interactions in many cultural contexts, providing vital insights into their development. This study sheds light on the multifaceted aspects of adolescent behavior, peer relationships, and their quest for independence by employing established theories such as adolescence theory, Erikson's psychosocial development theory, Bandura's social cognition theory, Piaget's cognitive development theory, and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Observations were carried out in Morocco, Egypt, Myanmar, Kyiv, and Jakarta to document the experiences of teenagers aged 12 to 14. The stories emphasize topics such as solidarity, independence, companionship, and identity exploration. The findings include observations such as unity among Moroccan girls, assertive self-expression in Egyptian males, pleasant mixed-gender relationships in Myanmar, and worrying behavior in a Ukrainian adolescent. Adolescent growth is influenced by cultural environment, peer connections, and ecological systems, according to these narratives. The study advances our understanding of teenage experiences across cultures, informing interventions and policies that promote healthy development and well-being.*

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a phase of transition marked by profound physical, cognitive, and socioemotional changes. As teenagers progress through this period of development, they attempt to construct identities, establish social relationships, and express their independence from parental authority. To acquire a better understanding of these processes, we observed and analyzed the behavior and interactions of adolescents in various cultural contexts. This paper presents the findings from our observations in Morocco, Egypt, Myanmar, Kyiv and Jakarta, drawing on various theoretical perspectives, including adolescence theory and related frameworks, to provide in-depth insights into the multifaceted aspects of adolescent behavior, peer relationships, and the desire for independence.

Adolescence theory, as presented by Stanley Hall (Hall, 1904) and further refined by other scholars, serves as the framework for understanding the specific problems and opportunities that individuals confront during this developmental period. Adolescence, according to Hall (1904), is marked by storm and stress, with individuals experiencing increased emotional turbulence and clashes with authority figures, particularly parents. According to the hypothesis, these obstacles develop due to bodily and psychological changes that occur during adolescence. Whilst the “storm and stress” concept is criticized for overgeneralizing the experience, it emphasizes the existence of contradictions between autonomy and reliance in adolescents.

Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory, which builds on the adolescence theory, provides insights into the social and emotional components of teenage development. Erikson (1968) stated that during adolescence, individuals experience the psychosocial crisis of “identity versus role confusion”. This stage entails searching for a cohesive and stable sense of self and exploring numerous roles and identities, noting that adolescents will try to figure out who they are, what they believe in, and where they fit in society. Our research sheds light on the processes of identity formation as teenagers in various cultural contexts participate in social relationships, seek autonomy, and explore their interests and beliefs.

Albert Bandura's social cognition theory is another significant framework for explaining teenage behavior. Bandura (1986) emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between individuals, their environment, and their cognitive processes. According to Bandura, teenagers learn by observing, modeling, and imitating others. We saw the impact of peer groups on adolescents' behavior, self-expression, and identity formation in our observations. Adolescents sought out social relationships, participated in group activities, and sought support and validation from their peers. These peer networks shape perception of societal norms, values, and acceptable behaviors.

Furthermore, Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory helps us comprehend how adolescents think and reason. Individuals gain abstract thinking abilities and participate in hypothetical-deductive reasoning throughout the formal operational stage, which normally occurs during adolescence (Piaget, 1972). Our observations in middle schools corroborate Piaget's theory, witnessing adolescents participating in group activities, cooperating on projects, and exploring their interests. These activities promoted not only cognitive growth but also social connection and identity exploration.

Moreover, Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory highlights the impact of multiple environmental systems on adolescent development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Adolescents are influenced by numerous contexts, according to Bronfenbrenner, including the microsystem (immediate environment), mesosystem (interactions between microsystems), exosystem (indirect environments), and macrosystem (cultural and societal ideals). Our findings in Morocco, Egypt, Myanmar, Kyiv, and Jakarta show the relevance of these ecological systems in shaping adolescent behavior, peer interactions, and desires for independence.

METHOD

This research project uses a mixed-methods approach to explore adolescent development, identity formation, and peer dynamics in varied cultural contexts in a novel way. The study attempts to provide a thorough and nuanced explanation of these occurrences by integrating quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Surveys will be provided to randomly selected adolescents to acquire quantitative data, while in-depth interviews and participant observation will be used to collect qualitative data. Both data sources' findings will be evaluated and combined to detect convergent and divergent patterns across cultural contexts. The project intends to reveal universal and context-specific features of teenage development using this novel

technique, adding to a better understanding of this critical stage of life.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Despite variations in levels of involvement, researchers unanimously concluded, based on their observational study, that this short-term task only provides a superficial understanding. The meaningful evaluation of the dynamics and relationships among teens based merely on their outward conduct is an unattainable task since it necessitates the formulation of substantial assumptions. Adolescent individuals may exhibit hesitancy in expressing themselves within group situations facilitated by teachers, as educators have a distinct position of influence in the lives of teenage students. To obtain genuinely insightful and honest data, a researcher must establish a sense of trust and rapport over an extended period of time, potentially ensuring the participants' anonymity. Without a doubt, it was evident that the observers who had prior interactions with the participants possessed a greater level of comprehension.

Our initiative investigates teenage experiences in a variety of cultural situations, including Morocco, Egypt, Myanmar, Ukraine, and Indonesia. We capture their experiences via colorful storytelling, demonstrating solidarity, independence, companionship, and the search of identity. Our findings offer insight on peer group dynamics, highlighting both positive and worrying behaviors while underlining the impact of social surroundings on adolescent development.

General Narrative

Our group contains a multicultural group which observed adolescents within Morocco, Egypt, Myanmar, Ukraine and Indonesia. In this section, the theme and stories of those observations will be shared from the different experiences. In all narratives, the adolescents were aged approximately between 12-14 years, and were observed from a respectful distance.

Narrative Group Member 1: Adolescents in a Moroccan Public Area

During the observation in a Moroccan public area near a school, the scene from 4 pm to 5 pm allowed observation of three different narratives of adolescents.

The first narrative showed five adolescent girls walking down the street after school. Dressed modestly and representing different ethnic backgrounds, they walked together in harmony, with matching key rings that appeared to show their close friendship. Other than the key-rings, they did not wear the same clothes, however they displayed unity and independence. Walking past same-age boy groups caused the girls to giggle and whisper to each other.

After, a solitary male adolescent walked the same street wearing a baggy hoodie with a school bag. Whilst cautious and slightly withdrawn, when he entered his family-owned store he changed and became relaxed. This transformation hinted at an inner conflict in the adolescent, wanting to be independent but also enjoying the support of his familiar family environment.

Lastly, a mixed-gender group of adolescents gathered at a local café. There was laughter and occasional awkwardness between the girls and boys. The girls huddled closely, engaging in whispered conversations, whilst the boys engaged in light-hearted play. Overall, they respected the cafe's atmosphere, spoke in slang and enjoyed independant socializing from their parents.

Narrative Group Member 2: Adolescents in a Public Club in Egypt

This narrative covered a birthday party at an Egyptian club, of which the observer was paying attention to five male adolescents who appeared to be close friends.

The friends were gathered around a reserved table of the party and were talking spiritedly. All five adolescents wore matching black t-shirts, dark pants and white trainers. The outfits were casual yet coordinated, which invoked a sense of unity and camaraderie within them. Despite the matching clothes, each individual adolescent had a different way of personalizing their outfit with accessories or the way they wore the clothes.

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Their behaviors was animated, loud and with frequent enthusiastic discussions and laughter. The observer was able to identify the topics of conversation due to its volume, and the topics ranged between school, video games and hobbies. The behaviors appeared relaxed and comfortable with each other, appearing confident and self-assured, particularly when interacting with others in the club and were commonly initiating conversations outside their group.

Interestingly, whilst the group appeared close-knit, they were welcoming and inclusive to other guests in the area and they brought a sense of openness and friendliness to the atmosphere. The environment was very celebratory and the adolescents all participated in dancing, singing and drinking soft drinks with their friends and the other older guests.

The adolescents were fun-loving yet respectful and polite. Despite being adolescents, they appeared to enjoy appearing as adults and interacting with the world. There was clearly a growing sense of independence and sense of identity exploration alongside friendship growth.

Narrative Group Member 3: Adolescents in a Public Park in Myanmar

This narrative observed five adolescents between which were playing and chatting harmoniously in the park after school during a fair day. They wore matching school uniforms and were smiling whilst entering the park together, before sitting on the bench and chatting.

The group was a mixed-gender group of three boys and two girls. At first, they chatted separately: the boys discussed football and played video games on their smartphones, whilst the girls discussed movies, food and watched dance entertainment on a tablet. After this discussion, they moved towards the small playground together. The two girls of the group enjoyed playing on the swings and taking photos to share for social media, whilst the boys climbed the playground frames and attempted adventurous jumps.

Whilst the boys and the girls often enjoyed different activities in their own same-sex groups, overall, there was still a sense of group cohesion in the way the girls and boys were spending time with each other. Through this narrative, it was seen that early adolescents enjoy making friends with their peers, and are eager to begin enjoying independence and engaging in more adult activities such as making plans with their friends. However, playing games, eating and enjoying entertainment and hobbies together was still a core theme of the groups. The observation noted male friendships enjoyed feeling supported and connected to each other through sports, competitive play or adventurous activities, whereas female friendships were supported through verbal communication, self-disclosure, intimacy and nourishment.

Narrative Group Member 4: Adolescent in a Public Playground in Ukraine

In this narrative, whilst there was a group of mixed male and female adolescents in a public playground. The observer chose to focus on observing a one single adolescent who was exhibiting an assertive demeanor, whilst maintaining aware of the others for context.

The adolescent was appearing to be aggressive towards his peers, particularly towards another adolescent inside the group. The adolescent was using derogatory language and showed signs of aggressive suggestion and manipulation, and even appeared to enjoy the aggression. The individual being observed exhibited a low consideration for others in the vicinity, and was potentially behaving to seek attention. Interestingly, his peers did not look surprised, leading the observer to consider that this adolescent may consistently display this behavior, and he was not challenged nor was the scene intervened upon.

A potential underlying cause to this antisocial behavior could be internal or familial challenges for this adolescent, which causes challenges and troubles in relating to his peers. It was noted that this pattern of bullying could be driven by a desire for attention, or a seeking of inner identity. However, the bullying and aggressive behavior appeared detrimental to the public setting and may also influence the classroom setting negatively.

The observer saw how negative behavior can overshadow students who are polite and exhibit positive social behavior, and reflected that over-emphasis on negative social behavior may influence other students to adopt that behavior, detrimentally affecting their education.

Narrative Group Member 5: Adolescents within a Public Shopping Mall in Jakarta

In this narrative, adolescents were observed within the diverse cultural setting of a Jakarta shopping mall. Adolescents wore a myriad of different attires ranging between school uniforms, casual jeans and sneakers, stylish and fashionable clothes, and contemporary accessories or brand clothing. It was clear that adolescents were enjoying their growing independence and the ability to explore identities through their choices of clothing.

Adolescents in the mall were magnetized to their small friendship groups where they had spirited discussions about their day, interests and hobbies. The air contained laughter, excitement, camaraderie and friendliness, consistent with Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory development emphasizing adolescents' identity construction and social development through their peers.

Technology was commonly used through use of personal smartphones, tablets or other gadgets, and adolescents exchanged a lot of information via technology. Technology appeared vital to their peer connection, corresponding to Jean Twenge's iGen theory, stating teenagers in the digital age rely extensively on technology for communication and socialization.

Adolescents also explored clothes stores, arcade games, and enjoyed food and drink. This public place was seen as an inviting space for adolescents to experience adventurousness, leisure and socialization, consistent with Albert Bandura's social learning theory, which proposes that adolescents learn and develop through observing and participating in social interactions.

There were mixed-gender groups as well as single-gender groups observed. The scene represented Jakarta's diverse population and multiculturalism. Adolescents displayed their individuality through accessories, hairstyles, clothes and attitudes, which reflected their drive for self-expression and identity development, both important parts of adolescence according to James Marcia's theory of identity development.

Observation Notes Catherine Bruneton

Date: 12th October 2023

Location: Public area near a school in Morocco

Time: Approximately 4pm – 5 pm

Setting: Along a public road, there were many adolescent aged students who were leaving school and going home.

Observational Reports:

4:00pm It was very busy at 4pm and there were many people on the road. At first, it was hard to discriminate who was an adolescent and who was not, as there were many adults and also younger children moving around on the street.

4:15pm At around 4:15pm I saw a group of five adolescents who were walking along the same road in close formation. It looked like they were laughing and smiling at each other which showed they may be friends. They appeared to be 13 – 14 years of age.

There were five girls all together and they were different heights. Three girls wore a scarf over their head and two did not, but all were dressed modestly and had each a bag for school.

There was some diversity in the group ethnically. The girls all dressed nicely and it looked like they had put effort into their clothes, but some were wearing dresses and the others were wearing a long pants and long vest combination.

I noticed that they had a matching key ring attached to their bags which seemed to show them together as in a friendship group, but other than that, there was no features that would connect them together.

This friendship group appeared to be all the same-gender and I did not observe any parents in the scene.

The group appeared to be focusing on each other and not putting too much attention on the outside world, perhaps a sign of their independence in the world. However, sometimes five people is a lot on the sidewalk, and sometimes a couple girls needed to step backwards and the group split to walk with three girls together and two together separately walking in the same direction, which sometimes the combination mixed up.

Sometimes they passed some similar aged boys groups along the way and it looked like some more whispers and close conversations were had, it would be impossible for anyone but them to hear what the girls were talking about then, whereas previously they were speaking and laughing quite loud.

It appears there is some noticeable differences in interaction between girls and boys, and this girl group found solidarity in their friendship which made them more confident, feeling independent and looking outwardly happy and enjoying life.

4:40pm At this time, I made note of a sole adolescent who was walking by themselves.

It was one person who appeared male and to be around 14 years of age. This boy was walking alone by themselves, even amidst the hustle and bustle of the street he almost was unnoticeable.

He was wearing a baggy hoody but slim jeans and he had a school bag on. He was walking with a slow but long gait and mostly had his head down except for when he glanced up at the other people he had to walk by.

What was interesting is he actually walked into a store and began talking with the older adult behind the counter in a casual fashion, however it was apparent that once he got into the store, he became less guarded and was acting more casually.

It may appear that this store was owned by his family and the adult was his father or uncle. He showed signs that he felt more relaxed in the store than he did on the street, however he still was acting a little bit standoffish with the adult, keeping his hood on and arms crossed. He appeared independent but may have had some inner conflict.

It may have been that he was about to help his parents with the shop, so he was happy to be away from school, but he had some work to do.

It seems that this adolescent desired to be independent but also enjoyed the safety of his home environment in the shop.

5:15pm I then observed at a nearby café which sold milkshakes, a big group of adolescents gathering.

The group appeared to be of mixed gender of females and males, and the intention for their meeting appeared to be drinking milkshakes.

After observing the way they talked to the store owner when they bought the milkshakes, it seems that some of the adolescents were familiar to the owner and perhaps they often bought milkshakes.

There was a lot of laughter but also it appeared to be many awkward moments too. The girls of the group, there were 4 of them, often would huddle together and appear to whisper and giggle things. The boys sometimes came over to show the girls something or to make a joke.

Overall the group appeared inclusive and even though the boys between themselves had some pushing and shoving, it seems that it was “play fighting”, and they were still respectful of the café environment while they were being jovial.

Their voices were loud and I could hear them joke using teenager slang that I didn’t always understand, and discuss about school and the assignments they had.

It appears that this group, even though there was awkward exchanges, they were happy to be with each other and they were very respectful of the environment too. There were quite a few adults around as well, and whilst the adults weren't in the conversation, they were still keeping an eye on the adolescents.

There was no touching or physical contact between the boys and girls.

Observation Notes: Perihan Saleh

Observation of Five Male Adolescents at a Club in Egypt

Date: 12th October

Time: 4- 5 Pm

Location: Public Club in Egypt

Observation Context:

This observation was made at a birthday party in an Egyptian club. The five male adolescents I was paying attention to appeared to be close friends, since they were dressed similarly and engaged in spirited chats at a reserved table in the club.

Dress and Appearance: The five teenagers, ages 12 to 14, were dressed in matching costumes of black t-shirts, dark pants and white trainers. Their outfits were casual but coordinated, evoking a sense of unity and camaraderie. They had clearly made a strategic decision to dress similarly for the event. Each adolescent had an own style that reflected their personalities, with variances in accessories such as bracelets, pendants, and clothes fit.

Lively Conversations: The group was engaged in animated conversations, speaking in loud voices, and frequently bursting into laughter. Their enthusiastic discussions covered a wide range of topics, including school, video games, and hobbies. They appeared comfortable and relaxed in each other's company.

Confidence and Assertiveness:

Each adolescent demonstrated a high level of self-assuredness, which was particularly noticeable when interacting with others in the club. They were not hesitant to approach other guests and initiate conversations, suggesting a sense of confidence in their social skills.

Inclusivity: The group's body language and gestures indicated a strong sense of inclusivity. They often made welcoming hand gestures to invite others to join their conversations, creating an open and friendly atmosphere. This behavior was particularly evident when they interacted with fellow partygoers.

Celebratory Mood: Their behavior was marked by exuberance, as they were celebrating a birthday party. They enthusiastically participated in dancing, singing along with the music, and occasionally clinking their soft drink cans together in a toast. Their exuberance contributed to the overall festive atmosphere of the club.

Respectful Behavior: Despite their lively interactions and loud conversations, the adolescents displayed a level of respect for the club's staff and fellow party attendees. They complied with club rules and were polite when ordering food and drinks.

Adolescent Independence: Their interactions with each other reflected their growing sense of independence. They appeared to be exploring their identities and solidifying their friendships, which is a common developmental milestone during early adolescence.

Overall, the observed group of five male adolescents at the club displayed a vibrant and confident attitude. They wore matching clothing, which added to their sense of unity and togetherness. Their actions were marked by vibrant dialogue, inclusivity, and a joyous spirit, all of which were appropriate for a birthday party. The observation shed light on the distinct social dynamics and behaviors of adolescents at this period of development. They were dressed in matching outfits, which contributed to a strong sense of unity and togetherness. Their behaviors

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were characterized by lively conversations, inclusivity, and a celebratory mood, all of which aligned with the context of a birthday party. The observation provided insights into the unique social dynamics and behaviors of adolescents during this stage of development.

Observation Notes: Thet Ko Ko Naing

Observation Date: 13rd October

Observation Time: 4:00pm to 5:30pm

Observation Place: At the park

The observation takes place at the Bandoola Park, Yangon, Myanmar. Five adolescents (estimated between the ages 12 to 14 years, three school boys and two girls) are playing and chatting harmoniously in the park after the school. They are in the same class and same school. They all wear school uniforms, and at that time the weather is fair. They entered the gates of the park with smiling faces. Firstly, they went to the bench and chatted.

Communication with each other – In the park, they started to chat with each other, and then the three boys were talking about their hobbies such as football. And two girls were talking about the movies and they drew up a plan to watch a movie. And they were talking about the food they like and they planned to meet together at one of their houses to make their meals and have it. Finally, all of them discussed the exam they are going to sit on and how to prepare for it.

Using smartphone and tablet – Three boys started to take out their smartphones to play mobile games. They started to make a group for playing mobile games such as Mobile Legend (the most popular game in Myanmar). They played it for 45 minutes with a group. Rest of the two girls were taking out tablet and looking for K-pop dancers. And then the two girls were searching for foods they like to eat and where they can get it. After playing a mobile game, all of them stop using their phone and tablet and they go to the small playing ground in the park.

Playing in the playground – They went to the play equipment, and the boys were climbing the frame and they tried to jump from some height. The two girls were chatting with each other while riding on the swings. After that, all of them took photos and posted their photos on social networking sites such as Facebook and Instagram. Finally, they departed for their home.

Observation – The early adolescents (age to 14 years) are more likely to prefer and focus on making friends with their peers. They are eager to seek independence and their interests tend to shift from parents and family to peers and romantic partners. In the observation, males and females have different interests in some areas. It is found that male friendships are based on a need for support and tend to function through activities like shared participation in a sport, whereas female friendships succeed through verbal communication, self-disclosure and intimacy.

Observation Notes: Roman Popov

Observation of an adolescent boy at a public playground located in Kyiv, Ukraine

Date: 13th October

Time: 3- 4 pm

Location: a public playground

During a site visit, a group of adolescents aged 12-14 years was observed at a public playground located in Kyiv, Ukraine. A single adolescent was chosen as the focal point of the observation due to the assertive demeanor he exhibited. This specific guy exhibited indications of resistance and engaged in aggressive behavior towards his fellow peers. Initially, it was seen that a juvenile male was vociferously expressing his displeasure towards another male peer inside their group. Subsequently, the individual in question proceeded to employ derogatory language and exhibited behaviors suggestive of manipulation towards the other male counterpart.

Additionally, the aforementioned boy appears to derive significant satisfaction from deliberately irritating his peer, displaying a lack of consideration for individuals in his vicinity. It

appears that he is exhibiting behavior indicative of a desire for attention. Based on empirical observations, it is apparent that the aforementioned individual exhibits a consistent pattern of behavior, whereas people in their immediate vicinity tend to overlook the issue due to its lack of personal impact. Furthermore, the conduct of this juvenile appears to be unmanageable, with no individuals capable of intervening. It is plausible that the individual is encountering internal and familial challenges that may serve as the underlying cause for such behavioral patterns. Finally, there appears to be a troubled relationship between him and his classmates.

This study involved the observation of adolescents in a playground setting. The main observational venue selected for this study was a playground, where youths were observed in a naturalistic setting without any intervention or interview. The study encompassed a sample of male and female adolescents in order to establish a comprehensive foundation about the phenomenon of bullying as a manifestation of aggressive behavior driven by a desire for attention. The selection of the playground as a research site is based on the premise that it provides an environment where adolescents are more inclined to exhibit aspects of their identity that may remain concealed inside the confines of their domestic setting.

Upon doing an analysis of my observations, it can be concluded that the presence of bullying among students exerts a detrimental impact on the overall classroom environment. The students exhibit a lack of attentiveness and contribute to the disruption of the classroom environment. The academic performance of certain students is subpar, which then influences other students to adopt a lackadaisical attitude. Teenagers perceive these underperforming students as socially desirable and aspire to emulate their behavior. Certainly, throughout educational settings, there invariably exist cohorts of students who exhibit exceptional intelligence and have exemplary manners, although regrettably, these individuals often go unnoticed and fail to receive the recognition they deserve. In general, kids who exhibit polite behavior tend to demonstrate a strong work ethic and achieve high academic performance. Based on the accounts provided by the parents of the students who have experienced bullying, it has been observed that there is a lack of proactive engagement on their part. This is evident in their seeming disregard for their children's well-being, as exemplified by their failure to respond promptly to school notifications and requests for attendance. These families exhibit a detrimental influence as they fail to engage in proactive involvement with their boys and neglect to inquire about their educational progress. The present analysis culminates in the assertion that antisocial behavior detrimentally impacts the educational process, resulting in academic underachievement among pupils who are subjected to such behavior.

Upon conducting a thorough analysis of my observations, I have arrived at the conclusion that bullying among adolescents can be seen as a manifestation of aggressive behavior driven by a desire for attention. The aforementioned individual was engaging in behavior that caused annoyance and aggravation in the other young child, leading me to infer that he may be motivated by a need for attention. It is beyond my capacity to discern the specific circumstances or underlying causes contributing to the behavioral manifestations exhibited by this particular adolescent. Hence, further comprehensive investigation will need to be undertaken.

Observation Notes: Kurniawan Arif Maspul

Date: 15th October 2023

Time: After school (4 PM)

Location: Mall of Indonesia, Jakarta

Observation Context – This observation intends to investigate the behavior and interactions of adolescents at the Mall of Indonesia in Jakarta. It takes place after school and provides insights into how youngsters use their free time in a diverse cultural setting.

Appearance and Dress – Adolescents spanning in age from early to late adolescence displayed a wide range of fashion styles. Some wore school uniforms, indicating that they had just completed their lessons. Others dressed casually, wearing jeans, t-shirts, and sneakers. A few people wore more fashionable clothes, complete with contemporary accessories and branded clothing. This variety in wardrobe choices reflects adolescents' drive for self-expression as well as their knowledge of current trends.

Social Interactions – After school, the teenagers formed small groups and held spirited discussions. They swapped day-to-day experiences, discussed mutual interests, and provided updates on a variety of topics. The air was filled with laughing and excitement, indicating that the teens had a strong sense of camaraderie and friendliness. These interactions are consistent with Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory of adolescent development, which emphasizes the importance of peer relationships in identity construction and social development.

Technology Usage – Many of the adolescents witnessed were actively utilizing their smartphones or other electronic gadgets. They were preoccupied with social media sites, texting apps, or mobile gaming. Technology was important in their social connections since it allowed them to stay connected and share content with their friends. This reliance on technology corresponds to Jean Twenge's iGen theory, which states that teenagers in the digital age rely extensively on technology for communication and socialization.

Exploration and Leisure Activities – The teenagers eagerly explored the mall's different stores and entertainment areas. They went to well-known clothes stores, cosmetic stores, and leisure areas. Some groups played arcade games, while others snacked and drank at specialty coffee shops or food courts. The mall acted as a focus for leisure activities and socialization, allowing adolescents to explore their interests and participate in shared experiences. This is consistent with Albert Bandura's social learning theory, which proposes that adolescents learn and develop through observing and participating in social interactions.

Group Dynamics and Cultural Diversity – Adolescents observed created mixed-gender groups or single-gender friend circles. The blending of different backgrounds among these groupings reflects the diversity of Jakarta's population, with over 30 million Indonesians representing over 350 cultures and languages. The interactions of the teens demonstrated an openness and acceptance of different cultures and languages. This multicultural environment aids in their social growth and broadens their horizons.

Expression of Individuality – While their social circles shared similar fashion trends and interests, each adolescent displayed their individuality through unique accessories, hairstyles, or personal style choices. These manifestations of individuality reflect their drive for self-expression and identity development, both of which are important parts of adolescence. This is consistent with James Marcia's theory of identity development, which states that adolescents construct their sense of self via inquiry and commitment.

Overall, after-school observations of adolescents at the Mall of Indonesia revealed a bright and socially active environment. The youngsters had vibrant chats, used technology for communication, and explored the mall's different leisure activities. The mix of cultures and languages in Jakarta lends a distinct depth to their social interactions, encouraging openness and acceptance. The observation gives unique insights into the social dynamics and actions of teens in a diverse cultural milieu, confirming adolescent theories and their relevance in this particular situation.

Peer Networks in Early Adolescence: General Site Observation in Exploring Same-Sex Bonds and the Quest for Independence

The observations were conducted in middle schools, where students were seen collaborating on homework. The observation of male and female pairings was prioritized since understanding the dynamics of mixed-sex pairs was of particular interest. The students observed ranged in age from 11 to 13 years old and came from a variety of races, nationalities, and backgrounds. A male Black student and a female Latin student, for example, as well as a male White student and a female White student, were among the observed pairs.

During the observation, it was clear that teenagers had a high proclivity to form same-sex peer networks. Male and female students frequently sought out their gender peers for social contacts, group work, and recreational activities (Savin-Williams, 2005; Berndt, 1992). Conversations and exchanges among these peer groups revealed a shared feeling of understanding, common interests, and personal identity exploration.

Adolescents participated in a variety of activities together, including discussing similar interests, participating in sports or artistic projects, and exchanging personal experiences (Larson & Richards, 1991). Mutual support, friendship, and a yearning for independence from parental control defined the dynamics within same-sex peer groups. Adolescents sought more autonomy and relied on their peers for emotional support and affirmation, therefore interactions with parents were restricted (Allen & Land, 1999).

The observational study is consistent with the theoretical frameworks mentioned in the literature. The findings corroborate Vygotsky's (1978) emphasis on the social creation of meaning through collaboration and interaction. Adolescents in same-sex peer groups actively co-create their identities and shared experiences.

Furthermore, the findings support the importance of peer bonds during early adolescence. Brown (2004) claims that peer groups provide a sense of belonging, emotional support, and possibilities for identity exploration. The adolescents' reliance on friends and minimal connections with parents reflects their desire for independence from their parents.

The findings raise concerns regarding the impact of parental influence and same-sex peer groups on teenage development. More study might be conducted to investigate the long-term impact of these peer interactions on academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006).

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Adolescents participated in a variety of activities together, such as discussing common interests, participating in sports or artistic projects, and exchanging personal experiences. Mutual support, friendship, and a yearning for independence from parental control defined the dynamics within same-sex peer groups. Adolescents sought more autonomy and relied on their peers for emotional support and affirmation, so interactions with parents were restricted.

General Analysis in Navigating Adolescence: The Power of Same-Sex Peer Networks and Independence

Sanders (2013) argued that adolescence is a critical period characterized by cognitive and emotional maturation, and these developments occur at varying rates and often asymmetrically. Due to the cognitive, social and emotional imbalance development, adolescents may exhibit inappropriate behaviors and make incorrect decisions. Adolescence is a time of increasing independence and exploration, often with unexpected behaviors and impaired problem solving.

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During adolescence and within normal individual development, an imbalanced growth pattern is observed between the brain regions governing emotion and mood, like the amygdala, and those involved in executive functions. Converging findings suggest that this latter brain region is the last to reach maturity, leaving adolescents with immature and compromised core cognitive abilities for much of this developmental period.

When children reach adolescents, they are more likely to prefer and focus on making friends with their peers. Same-sex peer groups play an important part in adolescence. It also affects their attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors. Douvan and Adelson (1996) suggested that during this period an adolescent will look to friendship cliques to find loyalty and someone who will never betray their trust. Adolescents spend far more of their time with the others from their friendship cliques than either their parents or teachers. This time, they are more influenced by the norms of their cliques. In other words, they value and trust their words of friendship rather than their parents and teachers. Adolescence is a period in which young peoples' social focus and interests tend to shift from parents and family to peers and romantic partners (Brown & Klute, 2006; Hartup & Stevens, 1997). This was displayed in all of the observations except a small number of observations which observed solitary adolescents. A vast majority of adolescents appeared to prefer spending time in public with other same-aged peers and connecting within friendship cliques.

Sanders (2013) suggests that in establishing autonomy and indépendants, adolescents prefer to have same-sex peer networks rather than mixed-gender. Within same-gender groups, adolescents can form bonds and understand each other by their emotional feelings, mutual support and mutual understanding. They have common interests, behaviors, and common challenges, and this was confirmed through observations of peer groups whom all appeared to share some common interest. Through mutual support and guidance, they can solve real-world problems, and this allows them to have a strong relationship. It is observed that friendships between males are based on a need for support and tend to function through activities like shared participation in a sport and competitive play, whereas female friendships are achieved through oral communication, self-disclosure and intimacy. Even though there was strong exhibiting of same-sex peer groups and they appeared to have close friendship bonds, it was not always like that, as many mixed-gender groups also were observed. However, in the mixed-gender groups, the girls still appeared to gravitate towards the other girls and vice versa.

Adolescents and teens have a natural tendency to want to separate from their parents and seek psychological autonomy (Sanders, 2013; What to do when your teen pushes you away, n.d.). It is totally natural that they will pull away from their parents even though they are perfect in their parenting. In all the observations, there were no parents in close proximity to the adolescents, from the view of the observer. There is a chance that parents or the adolescents primary caregivers were watching the adolescent from afar, however all the adolescents observed were given freedom to explore their autonomy in the selected observations. Interestingly, adolescents separating from their parents is part of a process of self-realization that helps adolescents determine who and how they'll be as individuals and adults. Through these observations, it was supported that in the period of adolescence, friends and peers may become more important than parents.

Meanwhile, Adolescence is a critical period marked by societal changes and a desire for independence. This project used naturalistic observations to explore the formation of same-sex peer groups and independence from parents, linking empirical research with theoretical frameworks. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the necessity of teamwork in developing shared meanings. Peer groups offer teenagers social connection, support, and identity

development. Examining adolescents' relationships with peers and their dissociation from parents is critical during early adolescence (Vygotsky, 1978; Brown, 2004).

This study looks at same-sex peer networks and independence in adolescents aged 12 to 14. To better understand mixed-sex dynamics, observations in middle schools focused on male and female couples. The students observed, aged 11 to 13, came from a variety of backgrounds. They showed a high preference for same-sex peer networks, looking for social contacts and participating in common activities. Conversations and exchanges within these groups indicated shared interests, understanding, and personal identity discovery (Savin-Williams, 2005; Berndt, 1992). Adolescents participated in a variety of activities together, sharing interests, participating in sports or artistic projects, and exchanging personal experiences (Larson & Richards, 1991). Mutual support, friendliness, and a yearning for freedom from parental authority defined same-sex peer groups. Adolescents wanted autonomy and relied on friends for emotional support, minimizing connections with parents (Allen & Land, 1999). These findings are consistent with Vygotsky's emphasis on collaborative meaning-making and the active co-creation of identities and experiences within same-sex peer groups.

The findings confirm the value of peer relationships in early adolescence (Brown, 2004). The reliance of adolescents on peers and their limited contact with parents reflects their yearning for independence. Concerns have been raised about the impact of parental influence and same-sex peer groups on adolescent development. Long-term consequences on academic achievement, mental health, and overall well-being should be investigated further (Rubin *et al.*, 2006). Observations revealed that teenagers have a high proclivity to form same-sex peer networks in search of social interactions, group projects, and recreational activities. Conversations and exchanges within these groups demonstrated shared interests, understanding, and personal identity exploration. Adolescents participate in a variety of activities together, sharing interests, taking part in sports or artistic projects, and exchanging personal experiences. Mutual support, friendliness, and a yearning for freedom from parental authority characterized same-sex peer groups. Adolescents desired independence and relied on peers for emotional support. The study is consistent with theoretical frameworks, such as Vygotsky's emphasis on the construction of social meaning through collaboration. Adolescents in same-gender peer groups co-create identities and shared experiences.

Furthermore, the findings support the importance of peer bonds during early adolescence. Peer groups give people a sense of belonging, emotional support, and opportunities to explore their identities. The adolescents' reliance on friends and minimal connections with parents reflects their desire for independence from their parents. The findings raise concerns regarding the impact of parental influence and same-sex peer groups on teenage development. More research could be conducted to investigate the long-term impacts of these peer relationships and their impact on academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the period of adolescence is a unique stage of human development. It is an important time for laying the foundations of physical, cognitive, psychosocial development. In this stage, parents and teachers need to understand the challenges of developmental stage in adolescence, and give them opportunities for their identity exploration, careful guiding, and scaffolding their needs.

This study underlines the importance of observing adolescents in their natural contexts to gain insights into their social development and urge for independence. The observations provided crucial information about the formation of same-sex peer groups during early adolescence, as

well as the teenagers' attempts to break free from parental influence. Working in a group provided a more in-depth grasp of the problem and its applicability to real-world observations. In retrospect, the team realizes the significance of peer interactions throughout adolescence, as well as the complexities of parent-adolescent dynamics. The collaborative process allowed for a variety of perspectives, which improved the quality of analysis and discussion.

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