

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON GIRL EMPOWERMENT: A SOCIOLOGICAL READING OF VALUE-BASED AND SCIENTIFIC TRAINING IN A CONSERVATIVE SOCIETY

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze a field-based training program conducted with twenty adolescent girls in Guemar, El Oued, within a conservative socio-cultural context that highly values knowledge and moral-religious principles. Using qualitative content analysis of the participants' handwritten notes, the research explores the educational and social identity dimensions of adolescence. Findings reveal that the girls prioritize academic achievement and time management, while simultaneously expressing strong commitment to ethical and religious values, alongside increasing needs for psychological and social support. Major concerns included exam anxiety, fear of losing friends, and uncertainty about future challenges, highlighting the necessity of resilience and coping skills. The study concludes that training programs in conservative societies must adopt a holistic approach, integrating academic, moral, and socio-emotional components, while actively engaging families and local associations as key sources of social capital.

Keywords: Adolescence; Socialization; Psychological and Social Support; Social Capital; Conservative Societies

I- Introduction:

In a social context characterized by conservatism, a high regard for science, and strong moral values, a training course was organized for adolescent girls with the aim of supporting their personal and skill development. This age group represents a critical phase of socialization, during which individual and social identity is crystallized, and the drive for self-assertion and relationship building intensifies. Recent studies have shown that peers and school values play a pivotal role in shaping adolescents' attitudes and behaviors (Dietvorst et al., 2024), and that personal values directly influence their educational choices and academic pathways (Tramontano et al., 2025).

In conservative societies that venerate knowledge and place values at a central position, the educational and behavioral preoccupations and aspirations of adolescent girls become significant indicators for understanding their actual needs. Researchers affirm that supporting adolescents' educational identity and developing moral and social values contributes to enhancing their human flourishing and achieving a balance between adhering to tradition and adapting to contemporary demands (Vandercastele et al., 2024; Kristjánsson & Maxwell, 2025). Furthermore, longitudinal research indicates that the values instilled during this developmental stage have a long-term impact on achievement.

A. Research Problem

How does values-based and academic training contribute to the empowerment of adolescent girls in a conservative society, and what is the nature of the preoccupations and needs revealed by their participation in this field experience?

B. Research Sub-questions

* What role do moral and religious values play in shaping adolescent girls' vision of themselves and their social relationships?

* How do they balance adherence to traditions with openness to the requirements of the modern era?

* To what extent does academic excellence and time management constitute a primary focus of adolescent girls' concerns?

* How are these concerns linked to the appreciation of knowledge as a source of social status in a conservative environment?

* What is the nature of the social fears and challenges facing the girls (such as losing friends or facing an audience)?

* How do family bonds and peers contribute to enhancing their social capital and supporting their self-confidence?

* What type of life and psychological skills do the girls feel the need to develop (such as anger management, coping with stress, or adapting to sudden circumstances)?

* How can training programs balance the academic, values-based, and psychological dimensions to meet these needs?

C.Review of Related Literature:

The list of prior studies referenced in the article:

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94(Supplement), S95–S120. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228943>

Dietvorst, S., van den Berg, Y. H. M., Veenstra, R., & Laninga-Wijnen, L. (2024). Peers and value preferences among adolescents in school classes: A social network and longitudinal approach. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-024-00878-7>

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Tramontano, C., Uskul, A. K., & Crocetti, E. (2025). Values and educational decisions: How do values relate to adolescents' academic track choices? *European Journal of Psychology of Education*.

E. Application of Previous Studies (Synthesis of the Literature):

This study drew upon a body of classic and recent research that addressed the subject of adolescence in various social and educational contexts. Coleman (1988) highlighted the concept of social capital and its role in supporting academic success through family and social relationship networks. This aligns with the findings of the current study, which showed the girls' reliance on their families and peers as a primary source of psychological and social support. Furthermore, the study by Dietvorst et al. (2024) confirmed that peers and the school serve as essential references for transmitting values and shaping behaviors, which was reflected in the adolescents' preoccupations related to losing friends and the fear of public speaking.

For their part, Vandecasteele et al. (2024) demonstrated that educational identity construction processes in adolescents are influenced by values and social contexts, which is evident in the girls' pursuit of academic excellence within a conservative environment. In the same vein, Staff & Mortimer (2024) pointed to the relationship between work-related values in adolescence and future social achievements, which explains the link between academic success among the studied sample and upward social mobility. The research by Kristjánsson & Maxwell (2025) also focused on the importance of fostering moral and religious values for achieving psychological and social flourishing, consistent with the girls' adherence to prayer and ethical commitment as a part of their social identity. Finally, the study by Tramontano et al. (2025) explained that personal values constitute a fundamental determinant of educational pathway choices, which is reflected in the adolescents' interest in time management and academic excellence as guiding values for their academic future.

1. The Theoretical Framework

1.1. Socialization

Socialization is the process through which individuals acquire the values, beliefs, and behaviors that enable them to integrate into society (Tramontano et al., 2025). During adolescence, this process becomes crucial as girls strive to construct their personal and social identity. In conservative societies, socialization is often oriented towards adhering to traditions and religious commitment, with a strong emphasis on academic excellence as a component of social status. Recent studies have demonstrated that the school environment and peers serve as key references for transmitting values and developing social skills (Dietvorst et al., 2024).

1.2. Social Control

Social Control refers to the set of formal and informal mechanisms used by society to regulate the behavior of its members (Vandercastele et al., 2024). In conservative settings, forms of social control are exercised through the family, school, and religious groups. These mechanisms can support positive development when accompanied by psychological support, but they may create pressures if applied rigorously without considering the needs of adolescent girls.

1.3. Cultural and Religious Values

Cultural and Religious Values play a central role in shaping girls' worldview and daily behavior. In the studied context, the veneration of knowledge and ethical commitment are considered fundamental standards for self-esteem and social acceptance. A recent review indicated that supporting educational identity and moral values at this stage enhances adolescents' psychological and social flourishing (Kristjánsson & Maxwell, 2025). Other research has also shown that the values adopted by girls during adolescence are linked to their future academic and professional paths (Staff & Mortimer, 2024).

1.4. Social Capital

Social Capital refers to the networks, relationships, and social resources that individuals can rely on to achieve their goals (Coleman, 1988). For adolescent girls in conservative societies, family and religious ties play a major role as sources of psychological and social support, while relationships with peers and female teachers can broaden their horizons and give them the confidence to navigate life's challenges. Recent studies have confirmed that investment in these networks enhances girls' ability to cope with academic and social pressures (Kristjánsson & Maxwell, 2025).

2. Study Significance and Objectives

2.1. Study Significance (Importance)

The significance of this study stems from several aspects:

* **Social and Cultural Significance:** The study is conducted within a conservative context (Guemmar City – El Oued Province) characterized by its adherence to religious and social values, making the understanding of adolescent girls' needs an important tool for designing developmental programs that respect the specificity of the local environment.

* **Scientific Significance:** The study contributes to filling a research gap regarding the empowerment of adolescent girls in conservative Arab societies by combining academic, values-based, psychological, and social dimensions.

* **Practical Significance:** Its findings provide a practical basis for developing integrated training programs that support adolescents in coping with academic, social, and psychological pressures.

* **Future Significance:** It highlights the need for building educational policies that maintain a balance between tradition and modernity, thereby enhancing the girls' ability to adapt to future life challenges.

2.2. Objectives of the Study

* To explore the preoccupations and needs of adolescent girls in a conservative social context through a field training experience.

* To analyze the role of moral and religious values in shaping adolescents' vision of themselves and their social relationships.

* To determine the relationship between academic excellence and time management and the appreciation of knowledge as a source of social status.

* To understand the nature of the psychological and social challenges facing the girls, such as exam anxiety, losing friends, and fear of public speaking.

* To highlight the role of the family and peers as sources of social capital in promoting self-confidence and psychological support.

* To propose comprehensive training programs that balance the academic, values-based, psychological, and social aspects to meet the girls' needs.

II– Methods and Materials:

1. Spatial Setting and Context

The training was conducted in a local association in Guemmar City, El Oued Province, a conservative region known for its adherence to religious and social values and a high appreciation for science and education. The choice of this context reflects a socio-cultural environment characterized by strong social control, allowing for the study of adolescents' preoccupations within a conservative cultural framework.

2. Sample

The sample consisted of 20 adolescent girls aged between (12–18 years). This was a convenience sample of girls affiliated with the association and some residing in its social vicinity.

3. Tool and Procedures

The course was advertised on the association's Facebook page. Registration was closed upon reaching the required number, which was 20 girls from the association's affiliates and its social vicinity.

At the beginning of the training course, each girl was asked to write down by hand her preoccupations and expectations from the course. These responses were collected as images (20 pages) and converted into digital texts using Optical Character Recognition (OCR). Qualitative Content Analysis was applied to classify the preoccupations according to sociological concepts such as socialization, social control, cultural and religious values, and social capital.

4. Analysis Method

Thematic analysis was used to extract the main axes and identify semantic patterns and frequencies. The extracted axes were linked to recent literature on adolescence in conservative societies and the importance of psychological and social support (Dietvorst et al., 2024; Kristjánsson & Maxwell, 2025; Tramontano et al., 2025).

III- Results and discussion:

1. Study Findings

1.1. Academic Excellence and Time Management

Most observations showed a strong focus on academic excellence and achieving good results, with clear anxiety about exams and competitive pressure. One participant wrote: "I want to study well and feel comfortable during exams." Another mentioned: "So I can learn to organize my time, set a study plan, and learn how to utilize time for useful tasks."

This reflects the importance of educational success as a source of identity and social status in a conservative environment that values knowledge, aligning with the findings of Tramontano et al. (2025), which indicate that personal values influence educational decisions.

1.2. Moral and Religious Values

The need for adherence to moral values emerged frequently. One girl wrote: "I joined this course to acquire moral values and learn techniques that I can benefit from in daily life." Another wrote: "Good manners – good behavior with mother – praying on time." A group of them also expressed their desire to learn the correct way of supplication and remembrance of God (Dhikr).

This indicates the central role played by religious and cultural values in shaping girls' behavior and their concept of social success, a point highlighted by Kristjánsson & Maxwell (2025) regarding the importance of supporting moral values to enhance adolescent flourishing.

1.3. Psychological and Social Support and Relationship Building

The observations showed a clear interest in strengthening social skills and overcoming fears. One participant wrote: "How can I face people, whether at school or elsewhere? I am also afraid of losing some friends." Another indicated her need for: "How to deal with anger and excessive emotions in moments when I should be normal."

These preoccupations reflect the girls' sensitivity to peer and community relationships, confirming the study by Dietvorst et al. (2024) on the influence of peers on values and behavior during adolescence. It also aligns with Vandecasteele et al. (2024), which highlighted the importance of the social environment in supporting educational identity.

1.4. Dealing with Changes and Life Challenges

Several girls expressed their anxiety about an unknown future and the pressure of sudden circumstances. One wrote: "Overcoming overthinking, whether about an exam or otherwise." Another pointed to the importance of "Dealing with sudden circumstances that occur mid-year."

This reflects the need for coping skills and psychological resilience in the face of pressure, consistent with studies recommending targeted psychological and social support programs for adolescents in traditional settings (Kristjánsson & Maxwell, 2025).

1.5. Appreciation of the Group and Family

Some observations expressed the importance of harmony with family and peers, such as: "I want to please my mother and father," and "I need advice and guidance to develop positive energy." This points to the importance of Social Capital (Coleman, 1988) as a primary support factor, where family and social ties represent a source of security and confidence.

1.6. Analytical Summary (Conclusion)

The analysis of preoccupations reveals that the girls place moral and religious values alongside academic success at the core of their social identity, and they seek practical tools for time management and study organization. Simultaneously, they suffer from exam pressure and fear of the future, and they require psychological and social support that enhances their self-confidence and their ability for social interaction. These findings confirm that training programs in conservative environments must be holistic, linking the academic, values-based, psychological, and social aspects.

2. Discussion of the Study Findings

2.1. Socialization and Identity Construction

The results reveal that adolescent girls in Guemmar City consider academic success and good conduct to be an essential part of their social identity. This aligns with Tramontano et al. (2025) regarding the influence of personal values on educational pathways, and with Dietvorst et al. (2024), who showed that peers and the school play a key role in values transmission. In a conservative society, the school and local associations become central spaces for socialization, where adolescents' identities crystallize through interactions with peers and adults.

2.2. Social Control in a Conservative Context

The girls' desire to satisfy their parents and maintain good conduct reflects the presence of strong social control mechanisms. Coleman (1988) indicates that positive social control can support academic success when coupled with psychological and social support. However, the results also show that pressures associated with fear of exams or losing friends can generate tension, necessitating more flexible educational practices that avoid imposing restrictions without providing adequate guidance.

2.3. Cultural and Religious Values as a Reference Framework

Most observations confirm the centrality of moral and religious values, such as prayer, supplication, and ethical commitment. This is consistent with Kristjánsson & Maxwell (2025), who

argue that integrating values-based and religious education enhances adolescents' psychological and social flourishing. These values not only form a moral compass but also a tool for promoting social belonging and reassurance in the face of life's challenges.

2.4. Psychological and Social Support and Social Capital

The girls' need for advice and guidance to develop positive energy, and their anxiety about facing an audience or losing friends, underscores the importance of Social Capital (Coleman, 1988) as a source of security and support. Kristjánsson & Maxwell (2025) recommend programs that enable adolescents to build healthy support networks, while Vandercastele et al. (2024) indicate that enhancing educational identity requires an encouraging social environment. In this context, local associations play a pivotal role in providing a safe environment for building social and emotional skills.

2.5. Adaptation to Changes and Life Pressures

The girls' fears about an unknown future and exams demonstrate that psychological resilience is a necessary skill in conservative environments. The role of training programs that integrate time management techniques and effort organization with psychological and social support strategies becomes evident here. Kristjánsson & Maxwell (2025) suggest that education that balances academic and emotional aspects enhances adolescents' ability to cope with changes without losing their psychological equilibrium.

2.6. Discussion Summary (Conclusion)

These findings illustrate that constructing effective developmental programs for adolescents in conservative societies requires a holistic approach:

- * Academic: Providing skills for time management and study strategies.
- * Values-based: Enhancing moral and religious values within a contemporary context.
- * Social and Psychological: Offering support that boosts self-confidence and promotes healthy relationship building.
- * Community-based: Engaging family and local associations as primary sources of social capital.

This overlap between different aspects reflects that socialization and social control cannot be understood in isolation from cultural and religious values, and that social capital is an indispensable supporting element for the success of developmental programs.

2.7. Practical Implications (Applied Conclusions)

- * Academic and Values Integration: Programs must blend study skills with moral values to ensure consistency with the community's culture.
- * Enhancing Psychological Support: It is important to integrate activities for building self-confidence and communication skills.
- * Family Empowerment: Mothers should be involved in workshops that help them provide effective emotional support to their daughters.
- * Preparation for a Changing Future: Including modules on coping with life challenges and psychological resilience will reduce future anxiety.

3. Sociological Analysis

3.1. Academic Excellence as a Tool for Social Mobility

The high percentage of academic preoccupations (40%) reflects the central role of the school as a tool for social mobility in conservative societies. This indicates that adolescents view academic success not only as a personal goal but also as a means of enhancing their family and community standing (Tramontano et al., 2025).

3.2. Social Control and Religious Values

The percentage related to moral and religious values (25%) confirms that the community exercises strong social control through the family and religious institutions. This control, according to Coleman (1988), generates social capital that promotes discipline and commitment, yet it may impose psychological pressures if not supported by flexibility and understanding.

3.3. Need for Psychological and Social Support

The 20% of girls who expressed a need for psychological and social support signals a growing awareness of the importance of mental health, even in conservative settings where discussing psychological pressures may be considered a sensitive topic. This reflects a shift in social attitudes towards psychological issues and points to the necessity of culturally congruent emotional support programs (Kristjánsson & Maxwell, 2025).

3.4. Family Ties and Social Capital

Preoccupations related to pleasing parents and maintaining friendships indicate a strong reliance on social capital as a foundation for security and support. In an environment like El Oued Province, the family and the group represent a primary source of identity and emotional support, which is consistent with Coleman's (1988) concept of the importance of social networks in building human capital.

3.5. Coping with Changes and Life Pressures

The lowest percentage (10%) concerning adaptation to challenges reveals that future anxiety exists but is less prominent than academic anxiety. This suggests that the girls relatively trust the social support system but lack clear coping strategies, underscoring the necessity of integrating adaptive skills and psychological resilience into training programs.

4. Practical Implications (Applied Conclusions)

* Academic and Values Integration: Programs must blend study skills with moral values to ensure consistency with the community's culture.

* Enhancing Psychological Support: It is important to integrate activities for building self-confidence and communication skills.

* Family Empowerment: Mothers should be involved in workshops that help them provide effective emotional support to their daughters.

* Preparation for a Changing Future: Including modules on coping with life challenges and psychological resilience will reduce future anxiety

IV- Conclusion:

The findings of this study revealed that adolescent girls in Guemmar City, El Oued Province, reflect a combination of high academic ambitions and deeply rooted moral and religious values, alongside clear needs for psychological and social support. These preoccupations, ranging from academic excellence and self-control to building healthy relationships, underscore the role of the conservative cultural environment in shaping the adolescents' priorities and social identities. The study also confirms the importance of understanding these priorities when designing educational and social interventions.

This research highlights that merely focusing on the academic dimension is insufficient to support the development of adolescents in conservative settings; rather, their needs must be viewed in light of the cultural and religious values and social support networks that form the basis of their social capital.

1. Practical Recommendations

* Design integrated training programs that combine:

* Academic skills (e.g., study strategies, time management, and psychological preparation for exams).

* Life and social skills (e.g, emotional regulation, self-confidence building, and communication skills).

* Fostering moral and religious values within a framework that reflects the local community's culture.

* Involve mothers and families in the planning and implementation stages of training programs:

* Organize meetings for parents to explain program objectives and their role in providing support.

- * Provide guiding resources for mothers to enhance their daughters' psychological stability and emotional support.
- * Encourage future studies:
 - * Study the differences between rural and urban areas in Algeria or countries with similar contexts.
 - * Analyze gender differences in preoccupations and expectations.
 - * Utilize more comprehensive quantitative and qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews or large-scale questionnaires, to enhance the credibility of the results.

Referrals and references:

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94(Supplement), S95–S120. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228943>

Dietvorst, S., van den Berg, Y. H. M., Veenstra, R., & Laninga-Wijnen, L. (2024). Peers and value preferences among adolescents in school classes: A social network and longitudinal approach. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-024-00878-7>

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Appendices :

Table (1): Distribution of Preoccupations by Main Theme

| Theme | Number of Girls | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Academic Excellence and Time Management | 8 | 40% |
| Moral and Religious Values | 5 | 25% |
| Psychological and Social Support | 4 | 20% |
| Coping with Life Challenges | 2 | 10% |
| Appreciation of Group and Family | 1 | 5% |

Table (2): Key Academic Preoccupations (Detailed)

| Academic Preoccupation | Number of Girls | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Fear of Exams | 6 | 30% |
| Desire for Academic Excellence | 5 | 25% |
| Time Management and Setting a Study Plan | 5 | 25% |
| Utilizing Time for Useful Activities | 4 | 20% |

Table (3): Key Social and Psychological Preoccupations

| Social/Psychological Preoccupation | Number of Girls | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Fear of Losing Friends | 3 | 15% |
| Fear of Facing the Public or Strangers | 2 | 10% |
| Self-Control and Anger Management | 3 | 15% |
| Need for Advice and Positive Energy | 4 | 20% |
| Developing Good Manners | 8 | 40% b u |