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Fostering positive mindset: grounded theory study of self-awareness in emerging adults

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Statement of the Problem: The transformative aspect of emerging adulthood brings about a development of self-processes, including changes in self-esteem and personal goals. Success in this life stage entails the emotional growth necessary to navigate the demands and challenges of college life. Understanding the concept of self-awareness within this particular age group sheds light on emerging adults' internal world and the transformative aspect of their emotional growth. Uncovering the thoughts processes that foster or hinder self-awareness is important to the understanding of how emerging adults learn to make the positive or negative. However, existing research in self-awareness has explored this phenomenon mostly using quantitative research methodology or through tying an individual's level of self-awareness to specific actions or outcomes. Little is known about the process of how college students emerging adults notice and monitors their inner thoughts and emotions.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: A grounded theory study using in-depth semi-structured interview was utilized. Nine interviews have been conducted. A constructionist framework was employed to generate a theory as how self-awareness facilitates specific patterns of thinking in emerging adults. The choice of grounded theory emanates from a lack of knowledge regarding underlying thinking procedures and internal states that emerging adult college students navigate in an attempt to make meaning out of the new academic experience and life stage.

Findings: Initial data analysis generated the following categories of the theory: a non-judgmental perception of negative thinking and negative emotions that allow for a better understanding of the self, negative state of mind is easy to overcome when it is accepted and acknowledged, knowledge of the actual and desired self generates an intentional decision to shift to a positive mindset. Preliminary findings indicate that college academic and social environment foster a new understanding of the self that yield a change in mindset and in self-knowledge.

Biography

Maha Ben Salem is a third year PhD student at the University of Northern Colorado. Her research interests include positive psychology, self-awareness, positive mindset, self-knowledge, emotional intelligence, learning styles and college adaptation specifically for emerging adults. Her 12-year college teaching experience inside and outside the US has generated a research interest in understanding emotional and psychological factors that foster wellbeing and allow for a successful college experience.

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