

Transformational Approach for Building a Healthy Relationship among Contemporary Youths

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Abstract

This study explores a transformational approach to building healthy relationships among contemporary youths, emphasizing the need to reshape attitudes, behaviors, and societal norms that influence how young people relate to one another. With increasing challenges such as peer pressure, social media influence, and exposure to toxic relationship models, there is a growing need to instil values like mutual respect, empathy, and emotional intelligence. The transformational approach moves beyond conventional teaching methods by promoting holistic spiritual, emotional, and social development through values-based education, conflict resolution, and ethical decision-making. It highlights the importance of empowering youths to understand personal boundaries and respect others, fostering a harmonious and respectful social environment. Through a qualitative approach, the study underscores the importance of collaboration between families, educational institutions, religious organisations, and community leaders in mentoring and supporting youth. The study explores the concept of transformation through its components and healthy relationships among contemporary youth, as different relationship forms are explored. Therefore, the study opines that if Schools and Educators as Key Stakeholders, Family and Parental Involvement, Peer Mentorship and Community Programs, Faith-Based Organisations and Religious Leaders, as well as Social Media Platforms and Influencers, could explore a transformational approach towards sexual misconduct among youth, healthy relationships would be built.

Keywords: *Transformation, Transformational Approach, Healthy Relationship and Contemporary Youths.*

Introduction

A transformational approach to building healthy relationships among contemporary youths emphasises the importance of reshaping attitudes, behaviours, and societal norms regarding how young people connect. This approach seeks to instil values of mutual respect, empathy, emotional intelligence, and effective communication, recognising that these are the foundational elements of any healthy relationship. In today's fast-paced, interconnected world, where peer pressure, social media influence, and exposure to unhealthy relationship models are prevalent, encouraging these

qualities among youth is crucial. It implies teaching youths about what constitutes a healthy relationship and empowering them to make informed, positive choices in their connections, whether in friendships, romantic relationships, or family dynamics.

A transformational approach goes beyond traditional educational methods but focuses on holistic development, spiritually, emotionally, and socially. It will integrate various aspects of youth development, including values-based training, conflict resolution skills, and ethical decision-making. An active engagement of youth in discussions and activities that explore self-awareness, empathy, and respect for others would promote a culture where individuals are equipped to nurture and maintain healthy relationships. Youth are encouraged to understand rights and boundaries to develop the capacity to respect the rights and boundaries of others, thus contributing to a more harmonious social environment.

Incorporating individual growth and community support, this approach advocates for collaboration between families, educational institutions, religious organisations, and community leaders. As positive role models, mentorship opportunities and open spaces for dialogue are provided, and the transformational approach will ensure that youth have the guidance and resources they need to form lasting, healthy relationships. Therefore, this study seeks to explore a proactive, supportive framework for relationship-building that can help address issues like sexual misconduct, emotional abuse, and unhealthy power dynamics among young people from a transformational perspective. It is opined that this approach would empower youth to redefine relationships, ensuring they are based on respect, trust, and genuine care.

Concept of Transformation

Transformation is a fundamental and profound character, appearance, or structure change. In a social and psychological context, transformation is often viewed as a process of growth and development, where individuals or communities undergo a shift in their mindset, behaviour, or values. Transformational change is frequently driven by the desire to improve, evolve, or adapt to new circumstances, and it involves a deep understanding of oneself and the surrounding environment (Sliwka et al, 2024). According to transformational leadership theorist Bass, this type of change is not merely superficial or incremental; it results in a lasting alteration that impacts all aspects of life (Kumolu-Johnson, 2024). Transformation, in essence, is about empowering individuals to move beyond their current limitations and embrace a new path that promotes personal or collective well-being.

In personal development, transformation is often linked to an individual's ability to reframe beliefs and actions to align with values. It involves a shift from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset, where challenges are viewed as opportunities for learning and development. Dweck (2024), in her work on growth mindset, explains that individuals who adopt a transformational outlook on life are more resilient and open to change, which ultimately leads to better outcomes in both personal and professional realms. Transformation encourages individuals to reimagine their future, creating a path for continuous learning and self-improvement. The mindset is central to fostering healthy relationships, equipping individuals with the emotional intelligence and empathy necessary to connect meaningfully with others.

Transformation is also a collective process, particularly in communities and societies. Social transformation involves altering systemic structures and cultural norms influencing behaviour, beliefs, and values. This type of transformation is often driven by social movements, advocacy, and education that challenge existing inequities and promote inclusivity, justice, and equality (Hanandini, 2024). Freire (1970) emphasises in his work on critical pedagogy that

transformation in communities requires a process of conscientisation, where individuals and groups become critically aware of the social, political, and economic forces that shape their lives. While fostering critical thinking and dialogue, societies can initiate broad changes that address issues like discrimination, inequality, and social injustices, leading to more equitable and healthy communities.

In leadership and organisational change, transformational leadership is key in guiding individuals and organisations through periods of significant change. Bass (1985) defines transformational leadership as inspiring and motivating others to transcend their self-interests for the greater good, fostering innovation and change. Individuals with a transformational mindset are visionaries who encourage growth, creativity, and new ways of thinking. By adopting transformational ideology, individuals can guide others through change, helping them develop new skills, embrace new values, and contribute to a collective vision. Transformational mindset is particularly relevant in educational and religious contexts, where individuals are responsible for shaping the character and values of youth, especially in building healthy relationships and addressing issues like sexual misconduct.

Components of Transformational

The transformational approach to leadership, personal development, or societal change is characterised by inspiring individuals or communities to reach their fullest potential through a shift in mindset, values, and behaviours (Schiuma et al., 2022). The approach emphasises profound, sustainable change rather than superficial or short-term fixes. The transformational approach has several core components, each creating positive, lasting change in individuals and organisations. These components include vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, individualised consideration, and ethical considerations. These elements foster growth, empower others, and drive continuous improvement.

1. Visionary Mindset

One of the foundational components of the transformational approach is visionary, which involves setting a clear, compelling vision for the future. Individuals who embrace this component provide direction and inspiration by helping others understand where they are heading and why it matters. According to Bass (1985), a transformational leader creates a vision that resonates with followers, inspiring them to work towards a common goal. This visionary approach motivates others to commit to shared values and objectives, helping them overcome obstacles and stay focused on long-term aspirations. By providing this clear and motivating direction, individuals with a transformational mindset encourage others to transcend their immediate interests for the greater good.

2. Inspirational Motivation

Transformational ideology also involves the element of inspirational motivation, which encourages individuals to achieve higher levels of performance by appealing to their intrinsic desires. Inspirational motivation is about instilling passion, enthusiasm, and optimism within followers. Motivation aligns individual goals with the group's broader mission, fostering a sense of purpose and dedication. Northouse (2018) asserts that individuals who can inspire others tend to create environments where people feel empowered to take initiative and reach beyond their current limitations. This component promotes confidence and drives individuals to invest in their growth as they see the broader significance of their actions within the community or organisation.

3. Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual stimulation is another key component of the transformational approach, encouraging individuals to think critically, creatively, and independently. Individuals who embrace this component challenge the status quo, promote innovation, and foster an environment where new ideas are welcomed. The component is significant for growth and development, as it enables individuals to question assumptions, explore new possibilities, and take risks in problem-solving. According to Avolio and Bass (2004), intellectual stimulation is essential for encouraging critical thinking and innovation, as it fosters a climate where followers are encouraged to push boundaries and explore fresh perspectives. It leads to personal and organisational progress as individuals begin to see problems and challenges as opportunities for creative solutions.

4. Individualised Consideration

Transformational mindset also provides individualised consideration, which involves recognising each individual's unique needs, strengths, and potential. Individuals who practice individualised consideration take the time to understand the followers personally, offering mentorship, support, and guidance tailored to the individual's goals and circumstances. Bass (1985) suggests that transformational leaders foster a sense of belonging and mutual respect by focusing on each individual's growth and well-being. The approach strengthens relationships and empowers individuals to develop unique potential, contributing to a more productive, engaged, and harmonious environment. It fosters personal growth and ensures that others feel valued and heard.

5. Ethical and Integrity Principle

Ethical conduct is a key component of the transformational approach, central to fostering trust, respect, and commitment within a group or organisation. Transformational individuals are expected to model high ethical standards and demonstrate integrity in decision-making and behaviour. Individuals who exemplify ethical conduct help create a culture of transparency, fairness, and accountability. According to Northouse (2018), ethics is crucial because it allows followers to align their values with the organisation's mission, enhancing their commitment to the cause. Ethical ideology prioritises the well-being of others, making decisions that benefit both the group and others involved. The approach ensures that transformational change occurs not only through performance improvement but also through the establishment of an ethical and supportive community environment.

These core components of the transformational approach contribute to its effectiveness in inspiring change, whether at an individual, organisational, or societal level. Transformational ideology fosters environments that encourage growth, innovation, and moral responsibility by focusing on vision, motivation, critical thinking, individualised support, and ethical conduct.

Healthy Relationships among Contemporary Youth.

A healthy relationship among contemporary youth is grounded in mutual respect, trust, effective communication, and emotional support. In today's rapidly evolving world, where social media and peer influence play significant roles, understanding what constitutes a healthy relationship is essential. Healthy relationships are built on a foundation where both parties feel valued, heard, and respected. Youths in healthy relationships know how to establish and respect emotional, physical, or digital boundaries (Nesi, Choukas-Bradley & Prinstein, 2018). They also communicate openly and honestly, fostering deeper connections and minimising misunderstandings. The concept of

healthy relationships extends beyond romantic partnerships to include friendships, family relationships, and interactions within communities.

One of the critical aspects of a healthy relationship among contemporary youth is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognise, understand, and manage one's own emotions while also acknowledging and influencing the feelings of others. Contemporary youths who possess emotional intelligence are better equipped to navigate the complexities of relationships, handling conflicts constructively and with empathy. According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence enables individuals to form deeper connections, allowing them to be more self-aware and sensitive to the feelings of others. Awareness is fundamental in youth relationships, where impulsivity and emotional outbursts can often cloud judgment.

In addition to emotional intelligence, effective communication is another pillar of healthy relationships among youth. Communication is not just about speaking but also about listening attentively and understanding non-verbal cues. Youths in healthy relationships practice active listening, giving full attention to what the other person is saying and making the other person feel valued and understood. Studies show that poor communication is a significant source of conflict in relationships, and fostering practical communication skills can help prevent misunderstandings and ensure that both parties feel heard and respected (Haskins, 2013). For contemporary youth, communicating effectively, especially in digital communication, is essential for maintaining healthy and respectful interactions.

Furthermore, mutual respect and equality are crucial in building and sustaining healthy relationships among youth. In relationships where respect and equality thrive, both individuals feel empowered to express their opinions, make decisions together, and contribute equally to the relationship's growth. It is imperative in romantic relationships, where power imbalances can lead to unhealthy dynamics. Contemporary youth need to learn that relationships should be partnerships where individuals support each other's goals and aspirations. A study by Mahalik et al. (2003) highlights that when youth are taught to respect themselves and others, they are more likely to establish relationships that promote their overall well-being and personal growth. In such relationships, individuals feel safe, valued, and encouraged to be authentic, essential for long-term emotional health and happiness.

Forms of Healthy Relationships among Contemporary Youth.

Contemporary youth refers to the present generation of young people, typically from adolescence to young adulthood, who navigate a rapidly changing world marked by technological advancements, globalization, social media influence, and shifting cultural norms. According to Arnett (2015), this phase, often termed "emerging adulthood," is characterised by exploration of identity, instability, self-focus, and a sense of possibilities. Contemporary youths are increasingly exposed to diverse ideas, lifestyles, and challenges that shape their values, behaviours, and aspirations. They are also uniquely positioned to influence social change through digital platforms and global networks (UNESCO, 2018). Thus, understanding contemporary youth involves recognizing their dynamic roles in society, their struggles with identity, and their potential as agents of transformation in a complex, interconnected world.

Healthy relationships among contemporary youth can take many forms, each with its own set of dynamics, expectations, and significance in the development of young people. These relationships can exist within friendships, romantic partnerships, family ties, and interactions in the broader community. Regardless of the context, the common thread in all healthy relationships is mutual respect, trust, communication, and support. Each type of relationship plays a pivotal role

in shaping a youth's emotional, social, and psychological well-being. Below is a highlight that discusses various healthy relationships among contemporary youth, drawing on relevant authors and research.

1. Friendships

Friendships are among the most foundational and influential relationships for contemporary youth. Healthy friendships are characterised by mutual respect, trust, and emotional support. Youth often turn to friends for companionship, advice, and shared experiences. According to Furman and Buhrmester (1992), friendships provide a critical space for emotional development during adolescence, as they teach youths how to negotiate conflict, support one another emotionally, and create bonds based on common interests and shared values. Healthy friendships are marked by open communication and the ability to resolve disagreements constructively. In these relationships, youth also learn about boundaries, empathy, and the importance of respecting each other's differences, which are key components of any healthy relationship (Schumacher, 2014).

2. Romantic Relationships

When healthy, romantic relationships among contemporary youth offer emotional growth, intimacy, and mutual understanding. In healthy romantic relationships, youths can express love, care, and affection while maintaining their identities and boundaries. Communication is key in romantic relationships, where partners openly discuss their feelings, desires, and concerns. The work of Collins (2003) suggests that youth in healthy romantic relationships experience higher levels of self-esteem, emotional security, and life satisfaction, as these relationships foster personal growth and provide support through various life challenges. Healthy romantic relationships are also characterised by equality, where individuals contribute to decision-making and respect each other's aspirations and goals.

3. Family Relationships

Family relationships, particularly with parents and siblings, are foundational to a young person's emotional and social development. Healthy family relationships are based on love, respect, and open communication. In these relationships, youths learn core values, such as responsibility, empathy, and caring for others. According to the research by Laursen and Collins (2009), family relationships are critical during adolescence, as they serve as a stable source of emotional support while youths navigate other social influences and challenges. Healthy family relationships provide a safe and nurturing environment where young people can express themselves, ask for guidance, and develop their identities with the reassurance of unconditional love. The role of family in fostering healthy relationships is thus indispensable in shaping youths' attitudes toward others.

4. Peer Relationships in the Broader Community

In addition to personal friendships and family ties, youth are influenced by peer interactions within the broader community, such as in school or extracurricular settings. Healthy peer relationships, both in and out of school, are essential for social development. These relationships teach youth to collaborate, share experiences, and develop a sense of belonging. The work of Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) highlights that peer relationships help youths explore their social identities and navigate the dynamics of group interactions. Healthy peer relationships are built on respect for diversity, inclusivity, and the ability to celebrate differences without judgment. These relationships also play a significant role in supporting youth in developing prosocial behaviours, such as helping others, showing kindness, and resolving conflicts amicably.

5. Mentorship and Role Models

Whether formal or informal, mentorship relationships provide youths with guidance, inspiration, and support from individuals with more life experience. Mentors serve as role models, helping

youth navigate challenges, develop career aspirations, and build life skills. According to Rhodes (2002), mentorship is essential for at-risk youth, as it provides a structured, supportive relationship that can significantly impact their personal and academic outcomes. Healthy mentor-mentee relationships are grounded in trust, respect, and mutual understanding, where mentors offer guidance while respecting the autonomy and individuality of the youth. These relationships encourage personal development and foster a sense of social responsibility and leadership.

Healthy relationships among contemporary youth are diverse and multifaceted, ranging from friendships to romantic relationships, family dynamics, and mentorship connections. Each type of relationship contributes to young people's overall emotional, psychological, and social development (Silke, Brady, & Dolan, 2019). These relationships provide the foundation for future adult relationships, helping youth understand the importance of communication, respect, and mutual support in building lasting connections.

Transformational Approach and Healthy Relationships with Youth

The transformational approach focuses on inspiring and motivating individuals to achieve greater self-awareness, develop positive behaviours, and transcend their limitations, all of which are essential in fostering healthy relationships among youth. The approach is grounded in the idea that individuals, especially youth, can undergo profound personal growth and transformation through guidance, support, and the right environment (Antonopoulou, 2024). In building healthy relationships among youth, the transformational approach highlights the importance of personal development, emotional intelligence, and positive social influences. Below are different ways and stakeholders who could utilise the transformational approach in building healthy relationships among youth, with relevant authors providing insights into the process.

1. Schools and Educators as Key Stakeholders

Schools and educators are pivotal in shaping youth development and fostering healthy relationships. Educators can utilise the transformational approach by creating learning environments that promote emotional intelligence, social skills, and conflict-resolution abilities. Bass (1990) described that transformational leadership encourages educators to inspire and motivate students to reach their full potential academically, emotionally, and socially. By integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into school curricula, educators help students develop the necessary skills to understand themselves and others, communicate effectively, and resolve conflicts peacefully. Schools can also offer mentorship programs, where teachers or counsellors guide youth through the complexities of forming and maintaining healthy relationships. These programs teach values such as empathy, active listening, and emotional regulation, which are crucial in fostering healthy peer relationships.

2. Family and Parental Involvement

The family unit is one of the most influential stakeholders in the transformational approach to building healthy relationships among youth. Parents and caregivers are primary role models for how relationships should be conducted. Transformational parenting emphasises positive reinforcement, open communication, and modelling healthy relationship behaviours. According to Grolnick (2003), authoritative parenting, characterised by warmth and structure, fosters secure attachment and emotional intelligence in children and adolescents, equipping them with the tools to form healthy relationships. Families can create supportive environments where youth feel safe to express themselves and seek guidance on relationship issues. Parents can use transformational approaches to instil values such as mutual respect, empathy, and emotional resilience, which empower youth to navigate relationships with confidence and respect for others.

3. Peer Mentorship and Community Programs

Peer mentorship programs are another crucial stakeholder in the transformational approach to building healthy relationships. Peer mentors, older or more experienced youth, can be guides and role models for their younger peers. These programs allow for sharing experiences, fostering a culture of support and mutual learning among youth. According to Rhodes (2002), mentorship programs transform youth by providing positive role models who inspire and motivate them to make better choices and form healthier relationships. Community programs, such as youth clubs or after-school initiatives, offer safe spaces for youth to interact, engage in group activities, and learn from each other. These environments promote social skills, encourage positive peer interactions, and create opportunities for youth to practice healthy relationship behaviours, such as cooperation, conflict resolution, and mutual respect.

4. Faith-Based Organisations and Religious Leaders

Faith-based organisations and religious leaders also play an essential role in utilising the transformational approach to nurture healthy relationships among youth. In the Christian context, spiritual guidance can help youth understand the deeper values of love, respect, forgiveness, and service to others. Through sermons, youth groups, and community outreach programs, religious leaders can provide youths with the moral framework and spiritual tools to navigate relationships with integrity and compassion. As applied by religious leaders, the transformational leadership model emphasises inspiring youth to adopt values that align with their faith and personal development. Leaders in faith communities can serve as mentors and offer guidance on forming healthy relationships grounded in trust, mutual respect, and kindness, following the example of transformational figures such as Christ, who promoted peace and understanding in His relationships with others (Umer, 2024).

5. Social Media Platforms and Influencers

Social media platforms have influenced youth culture and relationships in the digital age. Social media influencers and content creators can play a transformative role in promoting healthy relationship skills among youth. By using their platforms to model positive behaviours, share personal stories, and encourage open conversations about healthy relationships, influencers can provide youth with valuable insights and role models. Social media has the potential to create supportive networks, especially for marginalised youth who may feel isolated. However, it also requires responsibility and ethical guidance to avoid perpetuating harmful stereotypes or unrealistic relationship expectations. According to Boyd (2014), social media can be a double-edged sword, but when used effectively, it can promote positive messages and provide transformative opportunities for building healthy relationships.

The transformational approach to building healthy relationships among youth requires the active participation and collaboration of various stakeholders, including schools, families, mentors, religious leaders, and social media influencers. By fostering environments where emotional intelligence, communication skills, and mutual respect are valued, youth are empowered to form relationships that are not only healthy but also conducive to their overall personal development. The involvement of multiple stakeholders ensures that the transformational approach reaches youth in diverse contexts and offers them the tools they need to navigate relationships successfully in the contemporary world (Eden & Onyebuchi, 2024).

Conclusion

The study has presented the transformational approach to building healthy relationships among contemporary youths, which presents a proactive and holistic framework that prioritizes reshaping

attitudes and fostering essential values such as empathy, mutual respect, and emotional intelligence. Recognizing the complex social pressures young people face today, including peer influence, media exposure, and distorted models of relationships, this approach provides the tools necessary for informed and respectful connections. The approach cultivates an environment where youth can thrive relationally by integrating spiritual, emotional, and social development and involving families, institutions, and communities in supportive roles. The study explored the concept of transformation through its components and healthy relationships among contemporary youth as different relationship forms are explored. Therefore, the study opines that if Schools and Educators as Key Stakeholders, Family and Parental Involvement, Peer Mentorship and Community Programs, Faith-Based Organisations and Religious Leaders, as well as Social Media Platforms and Influencers, could explore a transformational approach towards sexual misconduct among youth, healthy relationships would be built. Ultimately, the research offers a sustainable solution for addressing issues like sexual misconduct and emotional abuse by empowering young people to engage in relationships that reflect trust, integrity, and genuine care, contributing to healthier individuals and communities.

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