# Systematic Review and Meta-Ethnography: Youth Experiences Related to Future Time Perspective

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**Abstract**. Studies on future time perspective have shown that there is a relationship between future time perspective and individual psychological conditions such as self-control, well-being, mental health, and others. This systematic literature review and metaethnography aim to assess adolescents' experiences about their future views and thoughts. The study used a systematic literature review and meta-ethnography. Systematic literature searches were conducted using eight databases. Seven research studies were included in this review. All included studies were qualitative studies. Two studies are from Israel, one from the United States, one from the United Kingdom, one from Portugal, one from Canada, and one from West Africa. Potential psychological and social support can help teenagers have a positive outlook for the future. At the same time, psychological conditions and environments that are not conducive can cause adolescents to have a negative future perspective characterized by negative emotions and negative thinking.

**Keywords**: adolescent, future time perspective, systematic literature review, metaethnography

# 1 Introduction

Future time perspective is a person's perception of the future and involves the individual's understanding and planning by considering the present with the future [1]. Future time perspective is considered to be one of the most important development activities for adolescents as it contributes greatly to the foundation of an adolescent's future career and life [2]. Self-awareness increases with age, and the increased level of knowledge in adolescence allows individuals to both think about and focus on the future [3].

Research in the field of psychology has also shown that future perspectives play an important role in changing individual behavior. Individuals who have a future perspective will display a long-term motive that will ultimately promote higher self-control [4]. In a pandemic situation, the perspective of the future is significantly negative with depression, uncertainty, and stress. Individuals who understand the situation and do not accept the negative responsibility of the ongoing situation can take the necessary measures to understand the emergency and protect their mental health as current citizens can do for the future [5].

Future time perspective although it has a positive impact on the current conditions in society can also change the meaning of the future itself from hope to threat [6]. These conditions can lead to young people having a positive future perspective and a negative future perspective.

According to Carelli, Wilberg, and Åström, the future time perspective can have a double value. If it is positive and motivates you to achieve goals, it has a positive effect on health. Conversely, a largely negative vision of the future can impact mental and physical health [7].

Molinari, Speltini, Passini, and Carelli research found that a positive image from the perspective of adolescents, caused adolescents to enjoy the time they spend without neglecting their responsibilities to create a better world in the future [8]. May tend to view the future negatively, making adolescents less future-oriented and more prone to negative behaviors such as substance abuse and lack of commitment to education [9]. Teens who experience the worst events in their lives unwanted experiences such as school suspensions, the death of a close friend, an illness, or a serious injury are focused on the past rather than the future. This causes teens to get stuck in the past and not take steps to prepare for their future which has an impact on a bleak future [10]

Quantitative literature searches such as the meta-analysis of future perspectives have already been carried out on the topics of professional future perspectives, a meta-analysis of antecedents and results [11], as well as on topics of systematic reviews and meta-analysis [12]. The analysis of the future perspective is also the subject of a meta-analysis on the motivational power of the future perspective in the context of education, work, and health [13]. However, the authors' rigorous search failed to find a qualitative research synthesis on future prospects among young people. Although the synthesis of various qualitative studies can provide a detailed and in-depth understanding and information about how adolescents perceive their future time as something positive or negative, it can stimulate youth protection efforts, and contribute to the development of theories about positive future perspective and negative future perspective. Meta-ethnography is one of several qualitative syntheses based on the qualitative interpretation of primary studies to generate new concepts or theories about a phenomenon. Therefore, this meta-ethnography was conducted to complement the published literature on the adolescent population by examining the experiences of adolescents in terms of future time perspective.

# 2 Purpose

The purpose of this systematic literature review and meta-ethnography is to describe adolescents' experiences of future beliefs/thoughts. This study addresses two questions that we want to know, namely 1) What experiences do young people have related to views/thoughts about their future? 2) What do teenagers think about the future?

# 3 Method

# 3.1 Study Design

This study uses a systematic literature search, the aim of which is to collect and evaluate critical data transparently. We used the systematic literature review method to identify relevant qualitative research findings on young people's experiences regarding their views/thoughts regarding the future.

The literature search was conducted between April and May 2024 using the Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), Proquest, EBSCO, and PubMed databases. The search also uses grey literature from Google Scholar, IEEE Xplore, and Semantic Scholar. This search has no time limit to get original results by using PICOS. The use of PICOS for qualitative systematic reviews is recommended as it is more sensitive and can capture more articles [14].

The term Boolean is applied to the process of literature search for keywords ( ( adolescen\* OR youth OR teen\* OR "young adult" ) AND ( "future time perspective" OR "future orientation" ) AND ( interview OR themes ) AND ( experience OR understan\* ) AND ( qualitative OR "qualitative research" ) ). We have registered the protocol of this study in the OSF to provide transparency. The protocol and characteristics of primary studies can be accessible at https://osf.io/r4u86/?view only=72338c1589a44b99bb2b0dce0c83836b

The inclusion criteria applied are: Focusing on the topic of young people, which deals with the future perspective/future orientation, is the result of interviews and contains themes, explores the experiences or understanding of young people on future perspective or future orientation, and is a qualitative study. The exclusion criteria are; It does not focus on youth issues (such as children, parents, the elderly), does not explore the future perspective/future orientation, is not the result of an interview and does not contain a theme, does not explore the experience or understanding of it and is not a qualitative one study (e.g. quantitative, experimental, mixed method).

## 3.2 Quality Assessment

The articles included in this review were assessed for quality using the Critical Appraisal Skills Program (CASP) checklist for qualitative studies [15]. The two researchers read each article in its entirety several times and then made a review, assigning an overall score based on 10 lists of quality assessment checks.

#### 3.3 Analysis

Articles obtained from the results of the systematic literature search and subsequently further extracted and synthesized using the method of meta-ethnography. Meta-ethnography is a systematic approach that synthesizes data from different studies to generate new insights into participants' experiences and perspectives [16]. Meta-ethnography is conducted in seven phases: beginning, deciding what is relevant to initial interest, reading the study, determining how the study of the study is connected, translation/translating studies from each other, synthesis translation, and express synthesis [17]. The study was written and reported following the eMERGe reporting guidelines for meta-ethnography [18].

We integrate our results by taking into account the background context and the different cultural perspectives of the study examined. Our experience in research on adolescents, particularly about psychological states and factors that influence them, helps and guides our position in understanding the complexity of adolescents' experiences about their future views. Additionally, our more than thirteen years of experience conducting qualitative research is our guide for conducting qualitative data analysis to provide deeper interpretation and synthesis.

## 4 Results and Discussion

## 4.1 Selection of studies

The search strategy yielded 1899 articles. Subsequently, the two researchers involved in the study independently conducted an initial screening of relevant articles by assessing titles and abstracts, leaving 118 potential articles. The full text is then read again by two researchers and an independent assessment is made. Of the 118 articles, 111 were found not to meet the inclusion criteria, leaving a total of 7 articles included. Of the 111 published articles, 13 articles were due

to inappropriate population, 39 articles were due to inappropriate results, 57 articles were due to improper study design, and 2 articles were due to lack of use of English. The Prisma flowchart in Figure 1 documents these findings according to the guidelines [19]

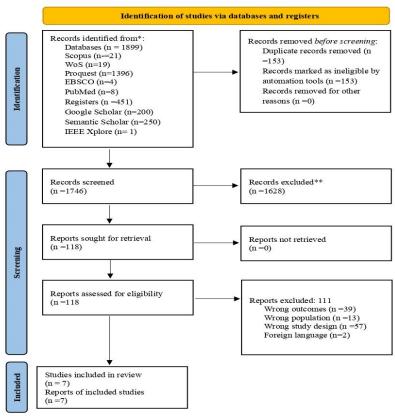


Figure 1. PRISMA search flow diagram

# 4.2 Study quality

All included studies are assessed and given an overall score for the quality assessment by ticking the option "Yes" for questions 1 to 9 and "Valuable" for question 10. The results of the quality assessment in the seven studies showed that all questions could be answered. A checkmark in the "Yes" option and no checkmark in the "No" column, means that 100% of the studies were of good quality and worthy of further analysis. A summary of the results of this quality assessment can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) results from primary studies

Questions	[20]	[21]	[22]	[23]	[24]	[25]	[26]
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes						
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes						
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes						
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes						
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes						
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes						
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes						
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes						
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes						
10. How valuable is the research?	valuab le	valuab le	valuab le	valuab le	valuab le	valuabl e	valuab le
CASP Score Persentage	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

# 4.3 Study Characteristics

Seven studies were included in this review after passing the feasibility assessment. The seven primary studies are studies published from 2013 to 2023. From the primary study, it is known that the background and location of the study were different, namely two studies from Israel, one from the USA, one from the United Kingdom, one from Portugal, one from Canada, and one from West Africa. The study design of the primary studies consists exclusively of qualitative research, consisting of two studies using grounded theory methods, one study using phenomenology, one study using case studies, one study using phenomenography, and two studies using descriptive methods. All studies used participants in their teens, but one study even included two participants in their early thirties because the developmental stages of the adolescents in the study were believed to be the same due to post-war conditions. The total number of participants in this primary study was 598 people aged 14 to 30 years.

#### 4.4 Data extraction, translation, and synthesis

In meta-ethnography, the first step is to begin and the second step is to decide what is relevant to the interest. Both steps have already been described, namely starting with meta-ethnography if we are interested in the topic of future prospects among young people and then asking research questions about it. The second step is to decide what is relevant to the original interest. We begin this second step by defining the focus of the synthesis, namely the focus on obtaining a synthesis of adolescent experiences about the future time perspective through qualitative data. Starting with establishing the focus of this synthesis, we continue this by attempting to find relevant studies through systematic literature searches and making decisions about what things will be included in the inclusion criteria and what things may lead to studies being included in the exclusion criteria. This decision-making process is important to find the right study so that we can pass it on to the quality assessment process in this second phase.

The process of data extraction, translation and synthesis is achieved by continuing this metaethnography study to the fourth to seventh steps. Reading the primary study (step three) is done by reading the study multiple times that have passed the quality assessment to understand the purpose of the research, the sample, and the concept as a whole. In this third phase, we also began to explore raw data, metaphors, and new themes. We made a data extraction with tables to show the important characteristics of each such study presented in Table 2. As we move forward in this third phase, we pay attention to suggestions from the literature to implement "first-order construct", "second-order construct", and "third-order construct" which may be useful for differentiating defined ethnographic meta-data [16]. The first-order construct is the words spoken by the participants in the primary study, the second-order construct is the author's interpretation of the words spoken by the participants in the primary study, and the third-order construct is the reviewer (in this case we as the researcher who synthesizes the data from the first and second order construct).

Noblit and Hare outline that researchers need to think about the studies included to relate them to one another in the context of the methodology and topic of the main study. The translation process can be carried out by two people to carry out mutual translation. Subsequently, similar results and findings can be combined into one, and by involving a third person as an additional interpreter, the results can be compared or contrasted to review the included studies [17]. Such statements from Noblit and Hare should be taken into account to extend meta-ethnography to the next level. The fourth step in meta-ethnography is to determine how studies relate to each other. In this fourth step, when the data extraction process begins, careful attention begins to determine how each study can be related to one another. To perform the mutual translation in this study (step five), we systematically organize concepts, themes, and metaphors by grouping concepts with similar meanings. Based on the data obtained, we (third-order construct) carry out an interpretation called synthesis (step six). Before determining the interpretation of the study objectives, sample, framework, and methodology of the primary study, we carry out this interpretation process by repeatedly reading the extracted passages and texts. Interpretation also through the discussion process of the researchers to reach an agreement. The results of the interpretation in the form of a synthesis are then translated concerning the evidence from the data obtained (seventh step).

Table 2. Characteristics of primary studies

Authors (Year) Countr	Study Objectives	Study Desain	Number and characteristics of participants	Results
Lima, L. N (2013) Portugal	To understand the time orientation (past, present, future) of adolescents in orphanages, as well as to understand how they plan their future	Qualitat ive explorat ive, analysis using grounde d theory	17 adolescents living in an orphanage for at least 5 years (boys = 8, girls = 9). Age 15 - 18 years	Analysis using quantitative and qualitative analysis. The results revealed no statistically significant differences in their focus on the past, present, and future. However, qualitative analysis shows that adolescents tend to be more focused on the past and future than on the present. The participant's future time perspective is sparse and poorly structured, more imaginary than motivated, especially concerning living conditions such as work and home.
Vakunta, L. Y. (2015) West Africa	To understand the perceptions and experiences of the rural youth environment in the Koinadugu region, Sierra Leone can influence future outlook and education	qualitative with Case Studies	155 youth in Sierra Leone and 5 adult stakeholders. Age 17-25 years with 2 participants early age 30 years)	Young people are optimistic about the future. In general, they believe that things will improve for their community and that with hard work and government support, they will achieve the expected success
Shoshana (2020) Israel	To understand the future orientation of young Muslim boys in Israel who dropped out of school	Qualitative with phenomen ology	24 Israeli Muslim teenage boys who dropped out of school for more than 2 years. 14 - 17 years old	Three prominent future orientations have been identified among adolescents: a refusal to engage with the future, and a preference for the present, a closed future (a strong belief that the future is likely to be similar to the present), and a desire to become self-employed regardless of work to make regionally independent

Roche, K. M., et al (2021) USA	To explore how adolescents of Latin American descent in the U.S. perceive their future in today's antimmigrant environment, focusing on how they are perceived based on their parents ' residential status	Qualitative with phenomen ographic analysis	340 adolescents of Latin American descent were viewed based on parental residence status. Age 15 -18 years.	The theme of negative feelings about the future dominated 75% of participants' responses and included three sub-themes: fear and worry, blocking opportunities for success, and discrimination. The theme of positive feelings shapes the responses, which are left with the sub-theme of trust in security, quality feeling of security, and hope. Young people whose parents are not local experience more fear and anxiety and a lack of confidence in safety.
Guterman (2021) Israel	To examine the future orientation of adolescents raised with homeschooling in Israel, focusing on three aspects of future life: higher education, work and career, and family.	Qualitative with thematic analysis	15 Israeli teens with homeschooling education (Boys = 9, girls = 6) ages 16 - 21	Most participants have a strong future orientation in terms of three main areas that await them in their lives: higher education, work and career, and family (future family and contact with family of origin). In addition, most of them are able to determine future success from their perspective and the majority are also currently taking action to promote the future they want
Hatala, et al (2021) Canada	Focus addresses how concepts of time and the future affect resilience processes in Indigenous youth in Canadian urban contexts	Qualitative design with Indigenous methodolo gies and grounded theory.	28 teenagers (boys = 12, girls = 16). Age 15 - 25 years	There is a complex process and navigation between difficult moments and resilience strategies. The stressful context in which Indigenous youth often find themselves can influence the development of their concept of time and limit their ability to imagine the future. Future orientation represents the core of the resilience process and is supported by fostering a sense of belonging, developing self-control and promoting cultural continuity.
Tang, P., et al	To understand how	Qualitative with	19 adolescents with depression and	Five areas were found: first, the influence of mood

(2023) United Kingdom	adolescents perceive and interpret the impact of mental health conditions on their thinking about the future	thematic analysis	anxiety. 16 - 19 years old	on the ability to think about the future, and the focus on the reduced ability and motivation to engage in future thinking. Second, the influence of mood on images, thoughts, and feelings about the future includes the emotional valence of future-related thinking, clarity, structure, and the extent to which adolescents indicate feelings of subjective control (i.e., agency). Third, social influence focuses on social factors that could improve or worsen future thinking. Fourth, reflection on personal worries and future expectations in the context of personal interpretation of past worries and expectations and how future thoughts influence mood. Personal coping refers to how adolescents deal with negative emotions whenthinking about the future
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# 4.5 Study Results

The first question in this study is: What experiences have young people had about views/thoughts about their future? From the seven primary studies included, it is known that the experiences that adolescents have are the experience of being exposed to war events, the experience of being homeschooled, the experience of living in an orphanage, including the experience related to parents' citizenship status in urban environments that present many challenges, the experience of suffering from depression and anxiety, and the experience of dropping out of school. All the experiences the teenager goes through affect his future prospects. The second question is: What do teenagers think about the future? Based on the extraction, interpretation and synthesis of data, the theme was developed to describe adolescents' views/thoughts about their future while answering the second question. There are four constructed themes consisting of a positive view of the future, a negative view of the future, supportive situations and conditions, situations and conditions that are less/non-supportive.

# A positive view of the future

Young people who have a positive view of the future will see the future as an event that they will experience in the future. They will be excited when confronted with questions about the future, will not avoid questions about the future, and will be able to give a positive picture of

what their life will be like in the future, such as continuing education [20], [24], having a job and living the future with family [20], [24], [22]. Young people who look positively into the future also tend to recognize potential and opportunities in all situations. They will try their best to accomplish tasks such as completing their studies, or studying hard because they firmly believe that the future can be shaped by the positive actions and thoughts of today [20], [24], [23].

## A negative view of the future

Adolescents who have negative thoughts about the future often experience various challenges and difficulties in dealing with self-development and the maturation process. This is what young people in Sierra Leone experience in a study conducted by Vakunta. Young people in Sierra Leone are said to have experienced the events of a long-term civil war, so the conflict situation does not give young people much to do and affects their development This study mentioned that adolescents in their early 30s may have the same developmental stages as adolescents age 15 to 25 [21]. The challenges and difficulties of adolescents can also arise in environmental conditions such as racism and exploitation that are inflicted on adolescents, leaving them depressed, and humiliated and finding it difficult to find a job [22]. Another condition is the parents' citizenship status as immigrants and laws that frequently change about citizens living and settling in a country cause adolescents to have negative thoughts about their future [23] or mental health problems in adolescents such as depression. Fears also make it difficult for adolescents to think positively about their future [26].

Studies conducted by Roche and Lima reported negative feelings or emotions that adolescents feel and this is related to their views about the future Adolescents may experience negative emotions such as anxiety, fear of not making the most of opportunities, fear of not being able to meet expectations in the future, and experiencing failure [23], [20].

#### Supportive situations and conditions

For teenagers, a positive outlook on the future will be a great help in determining direction and preparing for the future. Psychological potential is one of the crucial factors in adolescents having such a positive attitude. Young people need to be confident that hard work will bring them a better future. They must believe that the future is in their own hands and that with the help of teachers they can ease the way forward [21]. For this reason, young people must also have a sense of responsibility for the task or work being completed and be committed to completing the task/work in the best possible way. The strong determination and commitment reported in the primary study were able to lead youth to overcome the obstacles and still think positively about their future, even under adverse conditions [20]. In other studies, this determination and commitment is mentioned rather than the ability for self-control, i.e. as the ability to make plans and implement them to build a desired future [25].

Social support from people around them will help teenagers be more positive about the future. This social support can take the form of support from family to help them get an education or start a business so that young people can believe that they have a future [21]. Support from mentors/caregivers can take the form of seeking social security to obtain guarantees after leaving the orphanage. Support can also include emotional and practical support from a mentor or carer to help teenagers see their future positively [20].

Situations and conditions that are less / not supportive.

There are several situations and conditions that less or do not support young people's future prospects. Primary studies mentioned that an unconducive environment in which adolescents live can cause adolescents to have difficulty thinking about their future and they can get stuck in both the past and the present [22], [25], [23]. The environmental conditions in which racism and exploitation of Arab youth affect their future are limited and do not provide many choices for the types of work [22]. Discrimination against young people with parental immigrant citizenship status can also lead to young people not having any plans for the future [23]. Another study found that poor environments, vulnerability to physical or sexual violence, and proximity to substance abuse problems make adolescents reluctant to think about the future and more likely to focus on the present/now. The present orientation is also characterized by a pessimistic attitude due to negative environmental conditions and the presence of life problems such as family problems. In this study, some adolescents reported that they were just going about a daily routine without knowing what their next life would be like [25].

Poor mental health conditions such as depression and acute anxiety, reported in one of the studies, can cause teenagers to fail to focus on the future. While the mental health of young people is poor, thoughts about the future of young people will be overwhelmingly negative. Adolescents reflect that when they suffer from depression and anxiety, they become irrationally negative about the future, face academic failure, fall short of their own and other's expectations, and feel never good enough or useless [26]. Fear and anxiety are also said to influence one's views or thoughts about the future. This fear arises when adolescents feel the fear of not being able to meet their expectations in the future and suffering failures, such as [20], [23].

#### 4.6 Discussion

This meta-ethnography seeks to interpret and integrate high-quality literature on youth experiences in the context of future perspectives. The two main questions in this review relate to young people's experiences and how young people's experiences relate to future prospects. To answer these two questions, we first tried to find previous meta-ethnographic studies on the future time perspective. However, in our search, which included eight databases and without restrictions on the search date, no assessments of future prospects were found among adolescents or participants of other age groups, so we can say that this review is the first meta-ethnographic review conducted on the Future time perspective was carried out with young people.

The primary study examined in this meta-ethnography review shows that the conditions prevailing in society cause adolescents to have a positive future perspective or a negative future perspective. This is consistent with Morseli's statement that the future perspective is expected to frame the future of adolescents as a good hope or expectation, which may turn into a threatening or bleak future due to prevailing social conditions [6].

As conditions occurring in the community, the primary study identified the state of urban communities that are vulnerable to social problems such as drug use or sexual violence [25], the state of society that is not optimal due to these has developed in the post-war period [21], the situation of immigrant communities threatened by the instability of the laws in force in a country [23] and the situation of people caught in political racism, which develops during a pluralistic society, Jews and Muslim Arabs [22]. Other conditions described in Pimer's study in this review relate more to the condition of the adolescents themselves, namely the condition of adolescents who have to live in orphanages and prepare for an independent life after leaving the orphanage

[20], the condition of adolescents who participate in homeschooling [24] and suffer from adolescent mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety [26]. The disorders occurring in adolescents in this primary study also answer our first question about adolescents' experiences related to views/thoughts about the future.

The fact that young people can have a positive future perspective or a negative future perspective when discussing prospects can be found in the meta-ethnography review on this topic. This of course offers a new depth of understanding, particularly for us, regarding young people's future time perspective, and also answers the second question we asked about what views/thoughts young people have about the future. Our review concludes that young people can experience a positive future perspective at one point in time and a negative future perspective at another point in time. Environmental conditions such as social support and good adolescent mental health can guide adolescents' future orientation in a positive direction. In the case of the primary study, we found that when the social environment is concerned about the fate of young people, young people with social assistance can shift their orientation towards the future. This is further reinforced by psychological conditions such as self-confidence, self-regulation, optimism, and improved mental health. This result is consistent with Zebardast and colleagues' research on the role of self-regulation in future perspectives. People with good self-regulation are not oriented to the past, but rather future-oriented [27].

Several articles in this review highlight unmet needs among adolescents [20], [25], [26]. We recommend that future research studies shed more light on interventions to help these teens get what they need. Such as the problem of Arab youth in Israel, because the results of previous research showed that experiences of poverty in the past can have an impact on poverty status and employment in the future. The experience of poverty is associated with demoralization processes, devaluation of human resources, and incentive problems, thus increasing the likelihood that people who become poor will remain poor for a long time [28]. Youth in orphanages who are fearful of the future and want to live independent lives outside of the orphanage can be helped through foster care programs or institutional care to help the youth grow and develop. Misra said programs designed for orphanages, such as group classes, can reduce participants' anxiety about their future, provide opportunities to focus on larger goals and provide other growth-enhancing resources. Institutional care fosters youth's determination to make positive changes in their lives [29]. This program can also be adapted to address other adolescent issues such as young people who suffer from depression or anxiety, as well as young people who experience an identity crisis due to problems in their social or family environment. In the future, research on efforts to improve adolescents' ability to cope with problems needs to be improved and more adept-oriented.

Meta-ethnographic study of adolescents' experiences of future time perspectives has some limitations. Firstly, we only use articles in English and exclude articles in other languages that we do not understand. Second, not all studies provide sufficient data. Sometimes the data is incomplete and lacks an adequate explanation of the topic of future thinking and lacks the inclusion of evidence in the form of interview excerpts. This certainly impacts the interpretation process we undertake and the way we generalize or derive the results of the study. Future research is likely to take into account the limitations we face, such as age and language challenges. Meta-ethnographic studies can also reach a wider range of experiences regarding future time perspectives among different participants, namely children, adults, or older people, and include studies using different languages.

## **5 Conclusion**

This review highlights the limitations of qualitative research synthesis in adolescent populations about their future temporal perspective. This review used meta-ethnographic methods to create a comprehensive picture by thoroughly examining young people's experiences in terms of future time perspective. Some conditions and events can occur in and around adolescents that can lead to ideas about the future. Young people themselves can have a positive future perspective and a negative future perspective. Possible psychological and social support can help teenagers have a positive outlook for the future. While psychological conditions and environments that are not conducive can cause adolescents to have a negative future perspective characterized by negative emotions and negative thinking.

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