

Exploring Manifestation Practices and Self-Esteem Among Urban Young Adults: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract—This study explores the relationship between manifestation practices and self-esteem among young adults in Bengaluru, India. Manifestation—defined as an art of turning a thought, belief, or desire into lived reality by channelling focused intention, visualization, and purposeful action. It has gained popularity through digital platforms and cultural traditions, yet its psychological impact remains underexplored. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Free Will Theory, and neuroscientific perspectives, the research adopts a qualitative, interpretivist design using semi-structured interviews with twelve participants aged 18–29. Thematic analysis revealed four overarching themes: pathways to manifestation, core practices and techniques, self-esteem and emotional regulation, and manifestation as a psychological tool. Participants described manifestation as both a goal-setting mechanism and an emotional support system, enhancing confidence, resilience, and coping strategies. Findings suggest that manifestation practices contribute to evolving self-esteem by reinforcing agency, motivation, and emotional regulation. This study expands the literature by offering qualitative insights into how young adults interpret and internalize manifestation, highlighting its potential role in youth empowerment, counselling strategies, and digital wellness programs.

Index Terms—Affirmations, Emotional Regulation, Manifestation, Self-Esteem, Young Adults.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview

In recent years, the concept of manifestation has gained considerable attention among young adults, particularly through digital platforms that promote self-love, personal development, and mental well-being. Manifestation can be understood as the process of transforming thoughts, beliefs, or desires into reality through focused intention, visualization,

affirmations, and purposeful action. It is based on the belief that directing one's thoughts and intentions can influence real-world outcomes. Although manifestation is often criticized as pseudoscientific, emerging perspectives in psychology and neuroscience suggest that such practices may activate cognitive and emotional processes that shape behaviour, motivation, and self-perception.

Young adulthood, typically defined as the developmental stage between the ages of 18 and 29 (Arnett, 2000), is characterized by identity exploration, emotional fluctuations, and increased self-focus. During this period, individuals actively work toward developing their self-concept while striving for autonomy, purpose, and psychological resilience. Self-esteem, defined as an individual's overall sense of self-worth (Rosenberg, 1965), plays a crucial role in this developmental phase. Understanding the relationship between manifestation practices and self-esteem is therefore an important area of inquiry. Despite the growing popularity of manifestation, there is limited qualitative research exploring how young adults personally experience and internalize these practices.

This chapter presents the theoretical background of the study and outlines the research problem, objectives, and significance of the research. It also provides operational definitions of key terms and introduces the research questions that guide the study.

1.2. Background of the Study

Manifestation has evolved from a fringe metaphysical concept into a mainstream psychological tool, especially among youth navigating transitional life stages. Influencers, wellness coaches, and mental health advocates increasingly promote manifestation as a strategy for achieving goals, healing trauma, and

cultivating emotional resilience. Practices such as scripting, vision boarding, and daily affirmations are now embedded in the digital routines of many young adults.

Despite its popularity, the psychological mechanisms underlying manifestation remain underexplored. While some studies have examined related constructs—such as optimism, self-efficacy, and positive thinking—few have isolated manifestation as a distinct belief system. Moreover, most existing research employs quantitative methods, leaving a gap in understanding how individuals personally interpret and internalize these practices.

Young adulthood is a particularly relevant context for studying manifestation and self-esteem. According to Arnett (2000), this life stage involves intense identity formation, emotional volatility, and a search for meaning. Individuals in this age group often turn to belief-based practices to navigate uncertainty, build confidence, and assert control over their futures.

Self-esteem, a foundational construct in developmental psychology, influences how individuals perceive themselves, relate to others, and pursue goals. High self-esteem is associated with psychological well-being, academic achievement, and interpersonal success, while low self-esteem correlates with anxiety, depression, and self-doubt (Orth & Robins, 2014). Understanding how manifestation practices interact with self-esteem may offer insights into the emotional lives of young adults and inform interventions that support mental health.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three interrelated theoretical perspectives that inform the exploration of manifestation and self-esteem.

1.3.1 Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985)

Self-Determination Theory posits that human motivation is driven by three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Manifestation practices may enhance perceived autonomy and competence by encouraging individuals to set intentions, visualize success, and affirm their capabilities. These practices align with intrinsic motivation and may foster a sense of control over one's life trajectory.

1.3.2 Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986)

Bandura's theory emphasizes the role of self-efficacy—belief in one's ability to execute actions required to achieve goals. Visualization and affirmations, core components of manifestation, may reinforce self-efficacy by helping individuals mentally rehearse success and internalize positive self-beliefs. Observational learning, another key aspect of the theory, is evident in how young adults adopt manifestation practices from peers and influencers.

1.3.3 Free Will Theory (Lavazza & Inglese, 2015; Mitchell, 2024)

Free Will Theory suggests that individuals possess genuine agency—the capacity to choose thoughts and actions independent of deterministic forces. Manifestation aligns with this view by emphasizing intentionality and volition. It encourages individuals to believe in their power to shape outcomes through focused thought and symbolic action.

1.3.4 Neuroscience of Manifestation

Recent neuroscientific research provides growing support for the cognitive and neural basis of manifestation practices. Volitional processes are understood to engage a distributed brain network associated with intentional thought, goal pursuit, and self-regulation. The prefrontal cortex plays a central role in goal-setting, planning, and executive control, enabling individuals to translate abstract desires into structured action plans. The anterior cingulate cortex contributes to conflict monitoring and decision-making, helping individuals evaluate discrepancies between current reality and desired outcomes. The precuneus is strongly associated with visualization and mental imagery, processes that are central to techniques such as scripting and guided imagery used in manifestation.

Additionally, the supplementary motor area is involved in the initiation of intention, supporting the translation of internal goals into preparatory action states. The reticular activating system functions as a filtering mechanism, prioritizing goal-relevant stimuli in the environment and increasing attentional sensitivity toward opportunities aligned with one's intentions (Doty, 2024; NeuroLab, 2025). Collectively, these findings suggest that manifestation practices may not merely reflect abstract belief systems but are grounded in identifiable neural

mechanisms that support goal-directed behavior, attentional regulation, and emotional control.

1.4. Statement of the Problem

Despite the widespread popularity of manifestation among young adults, its psychological impact remains under-researched. Specifically, the relationship between manifestation beliefs and self-esteem has not been empirically explored using qualitative methods. Most existing studies rely on quantitative surveys and focus on related constructs such as optimism or affirmations, without capturing the nuanced, lived experiences of individuals who engage in manifestation.

This study addresses the following problem. How do young adults experience and interpret manifestation practices, and what role do these practices play in shaping their self-esteem?

By using semi-structured interviews, the research aims to uncover personal narratives that reveal how manifestation is understood, practiced, and emotionally experienced in relation to self-worth.

1.5. Aim and Objectives of the Study

1.5.1 Aim

To explore the relationship between manifestation practices and self-esteem among young adults through qualitative interviews.

1.5.2 Objectives

- To understand how young adults define and engage in manifestation practices
- To explore participants' perceptions of self-esteem and its development
- To identify themes linking manifestation practices to self-esteem
- To examine cultural, gender, and socioeconomic influences on these experiences
- To contribute to evidence-based frameworks for youth empowerment and mental wellness

1.6. Research Questions

As a qualitative study, the research is guided by open-ended questions:

1. How do young adults describe their manifestation practices and intentions?
2. What meanings do participants assign to self-esteem in their personal lives?

3. In what ways do manifestation practices influence or reflect self-esteem?

4. How do demographic factors (e.g., gender, SES) shape these experiences?

These questions aim to elicit rich, narrative data that illuminate the psychological and cultural dimensions of manifestation and self-esteem.

1.7. Significance of the Study

This research holds significance across multiple domains:

1.7.1 Academic Contribution

The study expands the literature on belief systems, volitional psychology, and self-esteem by introducing qualitative insights. It challenges the binary framing of manifestation as either pseudoscience or spiritual dogma, offering a nuanced understanding rooted in psychological theory and lived experience.

1.7.2 Practical Application

Findings from the study may inform the development of counseling strategies, digital wellness programs, and self-help interventions specifically tailored to the needs of young adults. As manifestation practices such as visualization, affirmations, and goal-focused thinking are widely used among youth, understanding how these practices are integrated into their daily lives can help mental health professionals design more relevant and culturally sensitive approaches to support psychological well-being.

By exploring how young adults use manifestation to cope with emotional challenges, build confidence, and pursue personal goals, practitioners can develop tools and programs that align with the values, communication styles, and developmental needs of this age group. For instance, counselors and wellness educators may incorporate positive visualization, goal-setting exercises, and reflective practices into therapeutic or developmental interventions.

Furthermore, manifestation practices can help individuals cultivate motivation, maintain a positive outlook, and strengthen their sense of self-worth. When used in a balanced and realistic manner, these practices may encourage individuals to focus on their strengths, develop resilience, and approach life challenges with greater optimism. As a result, manifestation can serve as a supportive psychological tool that promotes personal growth, enhances self-

esteem, and fosters a more hopeful and constructive perspective toward future outcomes.

1.7.3 Youth Empowerment

The study highlights how young adults use manifestation to construct empowering self-narratives, assert agency, and build resilience. These insights can support mental health initiatives that promote autonomy, confidence, and emotional regulation.

1.7.4 Methodological Innovation

By using semi-structured interviews, the study captures depth and context often missed in quantitative research. It allows for the exploration of meaning-making processes and cultural influences that shape belief systems.

1.8. Definitions of Key Terms

The key terms used in the paper:

- **Manifestation Skills:**

Intentional practices such as visualization, affirmations, scripting, and goal-setting aimed at influencing outcomes through focused thought and belief (Dixon et al., 2023)

- **Self-Esteem:**

An individual's overall evaluation of self-worth, encompassing confidence, self-respect, and perceived competence (Rosenberg, 1965)

- **Young Adults:**

Individuals aged 18–29, typically navigating identity formation, autonomy, and emotional development (Arnett, 2000)

- **Qualitative Research:**

A methodological approach focused on understanding meaning through interviews, narratives, and thematic analysis

- **Semi-Structured Interviews:**

A flexible interview format that allows participants to express personal experiences while guiding the conversation with core questions

- **Free Will Theory:**

A philosophical and psychological framework suggesting that individuals possess agency and the

capacity to make intentional choices (Lavazza & Inglese, 2015)

- **Visualization:**

The mental simulation of desired outcomes, often used to reinforce goals and intentions

- **Affirmations:**

Repetitive positive statements aimed at reinforcing belief and self-worth

- **Scripting:**

Writing future scenarios as if they have already occurred, used to align thought with desired outcomes

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Overview

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of scholarly literature on manifestation practices and self-esteem, with a particular focus on young adults aged 18 to 29. The review is organized into five key sections: an empirical review of recent studies, a synthesis of findings across domains, identification of research gaps, and a conceptual framework outlining the relationship between key variables. Drawing from psychological, neuroscientific, and cultural perspectives, this chapter establishes the theoretical and empirical foundation for the present qualitative study, which explores how manifestation beliefs are experienced and interpreted in relation to self-worth.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Manifestation Beliefs and Psychological Impact

Recent studies have begun to empirically examine manifestation as a structured belief system with psychological implications. Dixon, Hornsey, and Hartley (2023) developed the Manifestation Scale, a psychometrically validated tool that measures belief intensity and behavioral engagement. Their study of 1,023 participants revealed that strong manifestation beliefs were positively correlated with optimism, perceived success, and future-oriented thinking. Methodologically, the study employed exploratory factor analysis and regression modeling to establish construct validity.

Doty (2024) proposed a neuroscientific model of manifestation, arguing that focused intention activates volitional brain networks including the prefrontal cortex, anterior cingulate cortex, and precuneus. His work integrates fMRI data with cognitive-behavioral theory, suggesting that manifestation may engage executive functions and emotional regulation.

Ramasamy and Devendran (2025) conducted a mixed-methods study among Indian college students, showing that manifestation practices such as scripting and affirmations enhanced emotional resilience and reduced stress. Their qualitative interviews revealed themes of agency, clarity, and self-trust, while quantitative measures showed significant improvements in well-being scores.

Bi.Body (2025) used neuroimaging to identify dopaminergic reward circuits and neuroplastic changes associated with manifestation. The study found that repeated visualization and affirmation practices increased activity in the ventral striatum and medial prefrontal cortex, regions linked to motivation and self-referential processing.

The Indian Journal of Psychology (2024) published a study examining belief-based practices among Indian youth. It found that manifestation significantly improved self-esteem and reduced anxiety. The study used thematic analysis to explore cultural narratives around self-worth and intentionality.

These studies collectively suggest that manifestation may enhance psychological functioning by reinforcing personal agency, emotional regulation, and goal-directed behavior.

2.2.2 Affirmations and Self-Esteem

Affirmations are a subcategory of manifestation involving the repetition of positive statements to reinforce self-worth and goal orientation. They are often used to counter negative self-talk and promote adaptive self-concept.

Sachdeva and Gautam (2024) conducted a randomized controlled trial with 120 young adults, finding that daily affirmations improved emotional resilience and moderately enhanced self-esteem. The study used the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the General Well-Being Index, showing statistically significant changes over a four-week intervention.

Rader et al. (2025) explored metacognitive strategies in self-esteem regulation, identifying decentering and affirmation as key mechanisms. Their study found that individuals with high self-esteem used affirmations more effectively, while those with low self-esteem benefited from guided affirmation scripts. Thematic analysis revealed that affirmation practices helped participants reframe self-narratives and reduce internalized criticism.

Sherman and Cohen (2016) demonstrated that self-affirmation reduces stress and protects self-worth in high-pressure contexts. Their experimental design involved threat induction followed by affirmation tasks, showing reduced cortisol levels and improved self-concept clarity.

Taylor and Brown (2019) revisited the role of positive illusions, including affirmations, in promoting mental health. They argued that affirmations function as cognitive buffers, enabling individuals to maintain self-worth in the face of adversity.

The Indian Journal of Psychology (2024) confirmed that affirmations improve self-image and life satisfaction among Indian youth. The study emphasized the role of language, cultural framing, and digital exposure in shaping affirmation efficacy.

These findings validate affirmations as a scientifically grounded practice and justify their inclusion in qualitative interview protocols exploring self-esteem development.

2.2.3 Visualization and Goal Pursuit

Visualization involves mentally simulating desired outcomes and is often used in manifestation to reinforce belief and motivation. It is closely linked to self-efficacy, emotional regulation, and goal clarity.

Pham and Taylor (2019) replicated their earlier work on process-based visualization, showing that imagining the steps toward a goal rather than just the outcome significantly improved performance and persistence. Their study used behavioral tasks and self-report measures to assess motivation and task completion.

Taylor et al. (2020) found that mental imagery enhances coping and self-regulation, especially in

stressful contexts. Their longitudinal study tracked college students over a semester, showing that those who practiced visualization reported lower anxiety and higher academic confidence.

Doty (2024) linked visualization to neuroplasticity and emotional clarity. His research showed that repeated imagery strengthens gray matter in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and reduces amygdala reactivity, shifting the nervous system from stress to calm.

Bandura (2017) connected visualization to self-efficacy, suggesting that belief in one's ability influences behavior and emotional outcomes. Visualization was shown to increase perceived competence and reduce avoidance behaviors.

Ramasamy and Devendran (2025) demonstrated that visualization activates neural circuits linked to motivation and emotional regulation. Their qualitative data revealed that participants used visualization to pre-live success, which enhanced confidence and reduced fear of failure.

These studies support visualization as a cognitive-emotional strategy that may enhance self-esteem through goal clarity, emotional regulation, and self-efficacy.

2.2.4 Self-Esteem: Psychological Foundations

Self-esteem is a foundational construct in psychology, influencing emotional resilience, motivation, and identity formation.

Rosenberg (1965) introduced the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, defining self-esteem as a global self-evaluation of worth. The scale remains the most widely used instrument for measuring self-esteem across cultures.

Orth, Robins, and Widaman (2017) conducted a longitudinal study showing that self-esteem predicts academic performance, mental health, and life satisfaction across developmental stages. Their structural equation modeling revealed that self-esteem trajectories are stable and predictive of life outcomes. Brummelman and Thomaes (2017) emphasized the role of self-esteem in adolescent identity formation and emotional regulation. Their study used narrative interviews and psychometric assessments to explore

how self-worth develops in response to social feedback.

Dhar and Dhar (2015) validated a culturally sensitive self-esteem scale for Indian populations, highlighting the importance of contextual relevance. Their work emphasized the role of family, collectivism, and spiritual beliefs in shaping self-concept.

Brown (2020) found that high self-esteem buffers against negative feedback and promotes resilience. His meta-analysis showed that individuals with stable self-esteem were less reactive to criticism and more likely to engage in adaptive coping.

Lannin, Vogel, and Heath (2021) conducted a meta-analytic review showing that self-esteem is a robust predictor of mental health outcomes, including depression, anxiety, and interpersonal functioning.

These studies justify the use of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale in the present study and underscore the importance of self-esteem in shaping psychological outcomes among young adults.

2.3 Synthesis of Literature

Across the reviewed studies, several converging themes emerge regarding manifestation practices and self-esteem. There is broad consensus that techniques such as affirmations, visualization, and scripting contribute to improved emotional regulation, increased motivation, enhanced goal clarity, and a stronger sense of perceived agency. These practices are often understood within established psychological frameworks such as self-efficacy theory and self-determination theory, where intentional cognitive rehearsal and positive self-referential processing strengthen adaptive behavioral patterns. Self-esteem, in turn, is consistently associated with psychological well-being, resilience, and goal attainment, functioning as both an outcome and mediator of adaptive cognitive practices.

Recent neuroscientific advancements further support the cognitive basis of manifestation by identifying the involvement of volitional and goal-directed brain networks, including the prefrontal cortex (goal setting and planning), anterior cingulate cortex (conflict monitoring and decision-making), precuneus (mental imagery and self-referential processing), supplementary motor area (initiation of intention), and the reticular activating system (attentional filtering of

goal-relevant stimuli) (Doty, 2024; NeuroLab, 2025). These findings align manifestation-related practices with established mechanisms of cognitive control, attentional regulation, and neuroplasticity.

Despite these supportive findings, debate persists regarding the empirical rigor and conceptual clarity of manifestation research. Critics argue that its metaphysical origins and popularized interpretations often blur distinctions between scientifically grounded cognitive techniques and spiritual belief systems.

Concerns remain about the lack of longitudinal and experimental studies, the sustainability of reported effects, and the difficulty in differentiating manifestation outcomes from constructs such as dispositional optimism, expectancy effects, or placebo responses. Furthermore, cultural framing significantly shapes how manifestation is understood and practiced. In collectivist and spiritually embedded contexts such as India, manifestation is frequently intertwined with traditional philosophical systems, potentially influencing both interpretation and psychological impact.

Emerging trends indicate a growing interdisciplinary integration of neuroscience, metacognition, and cultural psychology in manifestation research. Scholars are increasingly examining how reflective awareness, cognitive restructuring, and intentional self-regulation interact with neural plasticity and belief formation. Additionally, digital media platforms play a pivotal role in disseminating manifestation narratives, thereby influencing self-concept development, motivational schemas, and youth identity construction. This has resulted in hybrid models that blend psychological theory, spiritual practice, and digital culture, marking a significant advancement in the conceptualization and contextualization of manifestation within contemporary psychological science.

2.4 Research Gap

Despite growing interest, the following gaps persist. There is a lack of qualitative inquiry capturing how individuals personally interpret manifestation through interviews. Most research is Western-centric, with limited exploration of manifestation in Indian youth populations. Manifestation is rarely studied as a distinct psychological construct using validated tools. Few studies link neuroscience to subjective experiences of manifestation. The predictive

relationship between manifestation and self-esteem remains underexplored in narrative form.

This study addresses these gaps by conducting semi-structured interviews with young adults aged 18 to 29, exploring how manifestation beliefs are expressed, experienced, and linked to self-worth. It integrates psychological, cultural, and neurocognitive perspectives into thematic analysis.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study is grounded in three intersecting domains: manifestation practices, self-esteem, and moderating demographic factors. It draws from Self-Determination Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Free Will Theory, and neuroscientific models of volitional behavior.

2.5.1 Core Assumptions

Manifestation practices such as intention-setting, visualization, affirmations, and scripting are intentional strategies that reinforce personal agency and goal orientation. These practices may influence self-esteem by enhancing emotional regulation, self-concept clarity, and perceived control over outcomes. Demographic variables such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status may moderate how manifestation is interpreted and how effectively it supports self-worth.

III. METHOD

3.1 Overview

This chapter outlines the methodological approach used to explore the relationship between manifestation practices and self-esteem among young adults. It details the research design, participant characteristics, sampling strategy, interview instrumentation, data collection procedures, and analytical techniques. The study adopts a qualitative framework using semi-structured interviews conducted exclusively in English.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative, exploratory research design. This approach is appropriate for investigating subjective experiences, belief systems, and emotional interpretations that cannot be fully captured through quantitative methods. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather in-depth data

on how young adults perceive and practice manifestation, and how these practices relate to their sense of self-worth.

The research is grounded in interpretivist epistemology, which emphasizes meaning-making, personal narratives, and contextual understanding. The design prioritizes depth, nuance, and cultural relevance over generalizability or statistical prediction.

3.3 Participants

Participants were young adults aged 18 to 29, residing in urban and semi-urban areas of Bengaluru, India. This age range corresponds to the developmental phase of emerging adulthood, characterized by identity exploration, emotional growth, and self-concept formation. All participants were fluent in English and comfortable expressing personal experiences in English. This language criterion ensured consistency in data collection, transcription, and thematic analysis.

3.4 Sample

Purposive sampling was used to recruit individuals who actively engage in manifestation practices or express interest in belief-based self-development. This non-probability sampling technique is suitable for qualitative research where insight and depth are prioritized.

3.4.1 Inclusion Criteria:

- Aged between 18 and 29
- Fluent in English
- Familiar with or practicing manifestation techniques (e.g., affirmations, visualization, scripting)
- Willing to participate in a recorded interview conducted in English

3.4.2 Exclusion Criteria:

- Diagnosed psychological disorders that may affect self-perception
- Inability to provide informed consent
- Incomplete or withdrawn participation

A total of 12 participants were interviewed. Saturation was achieved by the tenth interview, with the remaining interviews used to confirm thematic consistency.

3.5 Instrumentation

The primary instrument used was a semi-structured interview guide developed by the researcher. The guide consisted of 12 open-ended questions, designed to explore three domains:

- Manifestation practices and beliefs
- Self-esteem and emotional self-perception
- The intersection between manifestation and self-esteem

All questions were administered in English. The guide was reviewed by three academic experts for content validity and piloted with two participants to ensure clarity and relevance. No standardized psychological scales were used; instead, self-esteem was explored through narrative responses and personal reflections.

3.6 Procedure

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study. An informed consent letter was prepared and reviewed by the research supervisor to ensure clarity and appropriateness before distribution. Each participant received the consent form, was briefed on the purpose and procedures of the study, and voluntarily agreed to participate. To formally document their consent, participants read the form and provided their signature, confirming their understanding and willingness to take part. Participants were recruited through university networks, social media platforms, and peer referrals. Each participant received an informed consent form written in English, outlining the purpose of the study, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw at any time. Interviews were conducted in English, in person depending on participant preference and availability.

Interviews lasted between 30 to 45 minutes and were audio-recorded with participant consent. Transcripts were anonymized and stored securely. No identifying information was retained, and all data were used solely for academic purposes.

Ethical considerations included:

- Voluntary participation
- Right to withdraw without penalty
- Anonymity and confidentiality
- Psychological safety during interviews
- Debriefing and referral information provided if needed

3.7 Data Analysis

Qualitative Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework. Both manual coding and NVivo software were employed to ensure methodological rigor, systematic organization, and deep engagement with the data. The integration of manual and software-assisted analysis strengthened credibility and analytical transparency.

Phase 1: Familiarization with the Data

Following data collection, all interviews were transcribed verbatim in English. The researcher listened to each audio recording multiple times to verify transcription accuracy and to immerse herself in the participants' narratives. Transcripts were read repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of emerging patterns related to manifestation practices and self-esteem. During this stage, manual annotations were made by highlighting significant statements and recording initial reflections in a research journal. These notes captured preliminary impressions, emotional undertones, and recurring ideas that later informed the coding process.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

Initial coding was first conducted manually to ensure close interaction with the data. Meaningful phrases and relevant segments of text were underlined and labeled with descriptive codes reflecting participants' explicit statements as well as underlying meanings. After manual coding, the transcripts were imported into NVivo software to organize and systematically categorize the codes. NVivo facilitated the creation of nodes, comparison of coded segments across participants, and identification of recurring patterns. Both semantic and latent coding approaches were applied to capture surface-level content and deeper interpretive meanings within the data.

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

In this phase, the generated codes were examined for similarities and conceptual connections. Related codes were grouped together to form broader categories. The researcher initially created thematic maps manually to visualize relationships between codes and then structured these relationships within NVivo using hierarchical node systems. Patterns that consistently

appeared across multiple participants were considered potential themes. This stage involved an iterative process of organizing and reorganizing codes to identify meaningful clusters relevant to the research objectives.

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

The preliminary themes were carefully reviewed against the coded extracts and the entire dataset to ensure coherence and consistency. The researcher revisited transcripts to confirm that each theme was sufficiently supported by participant data and accurately reflected their experiences. Some themes were refined, merged, or restructured to eliminate overlap and improve conceptual clarity. Cross-verification was conducted both manually and within NVivo to ensure reliability and thematic integrity.

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Once the themes were finalized, each was clearly defined to capture its central essence and relevance to the research questions. Detailed descriptions were developed to explain the psychological meaning and significance of each theme. Sub-themes were identified where necessary to provide depth and nuance. The naming of themes was done carefully to ensure they were concise, representative, and analytically meaningful.

Phase 6: Producing the Report

In the final stage, the themes were organized into a coherent narrative presented in Chapter IV. Representative participant quotations were selected to illustrate each theme and maintain authenticity. The findings were interpreted in light of the theoretical framework and existing literature to establish conceptual integration. Throughout the analysis, an audit trail was maintained documenting coding decisions and theme development. Peer debriefing and member checking were conducted to enhance credibility and trustworthiness. As the study followed a qualitative exploratory design, no inferential statistical analysis was performed.

IV. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Overview

This chapter presents the findings of the study on manifestation practices and self-esteem among urban

young adults. The results are organized to provide a clear account of how participants encountered, practiced, and interpreted manifestation, and how these practices influenced their self-esteem and emotional regulation. The discussion integrates these findings with the theoretical framework (Self-

Determination Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Free Will Theory, and neuroscientific perspectives) and the research questions guiding the study.

4.2 Presentation of Results

Table 1 *Demographic Details Table*

Sl. No.	Participant No.	Age	Gender	Background	Educational / Professional Status	Cultural / Faith Identity
1	P1	19	F	Andhra Pradesh, settled in Bangalore	Aspiring Neuropsychologist	Hindu
2	P2	19	F	Bangalore	First-year BSc Psychology Student	Christian
3	P3	18	F	Student	Undergraduate Student	Muslim
4	P4	18	F	First-year BSc Psychology Student	Undergraduate Student	Muslim
5	P5	19	F	Final-year Rehabilitation Student	Undergraduate Student	Muslim
6	P6	18	F	First-year Psychology Student	Undergraduate Student	Muslim
7	P7	20	F	Psychology Student, Athlete, College Vice President	Undergraduate Student	Catholic
8	P8	18	F	Undergraduate Student	Undergraduate Student	Hindu
9	P9	18	F	Psychology Student	Undergraduate Student	Christian
10	P10	18	F	Psychology Student, Tamil Nadu	Undergraduate Student	Christian
11	P11	27	M	Entrepreneur	BBA Graduate, Restaurant Owner	Muslim
12	P12	28	M	Entrepreneur from business family	Business Leader	Muslim

Table 2 *Major Themes Across Participants (P1–P12)*

Major Theme	Description	Participants	Frequency (n=12)
Pathways to Manifestation	Digital, social, or cultural introduction to manifestation	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12	11
Core Practices & Techniques	Scripting, affirmations, visualization, prayer	P1–P12	12
Cultural/Religious Framing	Manifestation interpreted via Hindu, Muslim, Christian beliefs	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12	12
Self-Esteem & Emotional Regulation	Confidence, coping, insecurity management	P1–P12	12

Manifestation as Psychological Tool	Seen as mindset, growth mechanism, not magic	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12	11
Action-Oriented Manifestation	Effort + belief required	P3, P7, P8, P11, P12	5

Table 3 Core Practices Used by Participants

Practice	Participants	Frequency
Scripting	P1, P2, P5, P7, P8, P10	6
Affirmations	P1, P2, P6, P7, P11, P12	6
Visualization	P1, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P11, P12	8
Prayer as Manifestation	P2, P3, P4, P6, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12	9
Vision Boards	P7	1
Diary Writing/Habit Tracking	P10	1
Mirror Self-Talk	P7, P8	2

Table 4 Self-Esteem Patterns

Self-Esteem Pattern	Participants	Frequency
Confidence through achievement	P1, P2, P3, P6, P7, P8, P11, P12	8
Context-dependent self-esteem	P4, P7, P9	3
Fluctuating/Evolving self-esteem	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P10	6
External validation influence	P4, P7, P8, P9, P12	5
Productivity-linked self-worth	P11, P12	2

4.3 Thematic Findings

The thematic analysis of twelve semi-structured interviews revealed four overarching themes. Participants described discovering manifestation mainly through digital platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Pinterest, while some reported engaging in similar practices even before knowing the term. Cultural and religious interpretations, including Hindu, Christian, Muslim, and Catholic perspectives, also shaped how participants understood

manifestation. Common practices included scripting, affirmations, visualization, and prayer, which participants associated with increased confidence, motivation, and emotional regulation. Many participants reported that manifestation supported their self-esteem by helping them cope with insecurity and manage emotions in different life situations. Overall, participants viewed manifestation less as a mystical process and more as a psychological tool for goal-setting, resilience, and personal development.

Table 5 Theme 1: Pathways to Manifestation

Sub-Themes	Description	Excerpts
Digital Discovery	Social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Pinterest introduced manifestation.	P1: "When I was going through Instagram videos... manifestation is like something you think and it'll happen." P2: "I just came through manifestation through an Instagram reel... I thought it was quite interesting." P7: "I started with Pinterest and vision boards in 10th grade... it gave me structure and clarity." P12: "I saw a reel about scripting and thought, why not try it? It felt like a way to organize my thoughts."

Unconscious Engagement	Some participants practiced manifestation before knowing the term.	P4: "I used to manifest, but I didn't know that it was manifesting. After you told me, I got to know."
Cultural and Religious Framing	Manifestation interpreted through Hindu, Christian, Muslim, and Catholic lenses.	P3: "Manifestation in my culture is like you pray for it... you must manifest it, then pray and work for it." P2: "In our culture, it is more about the prayers or the rituals you follow." P1: "In my culture, manifestation is always like positive thinking." P7: "I don't follow traditional Catholic ideas... I see manifestation as personal spirituality and intentional thinking." P12: "For me, manifestation is like dua — you ask, you believe, and you work for it."

Table 6 *Theme 2: Core Practices and Techniques*

Sub-Themes	Description	Excerpts
Scripting and Affirmations	Writing desires and repeating affirmations to build belief and clarity.	P1: "I tried scripting about what I want in life... it has become true." P6: "I use affirmations like 'I'm already a doctor'... it builds confidence."
Visualization	Imagining outcomes to boost motivation and emotional comfort.	P3: "I visualised getting 90%... and I got 91%. It helped me stay confident." P4: "Visualization gives more confidence... it's comforting."
Prayer as Manifestation	Prayer integrated with intentional thinking and goal setting.	P3: "You pray for it... it shapes how you practice manifestation." P6: "Prayer is seen as a form of manifestation that calms and motivates."

Table 7 *Theme 3: Self-Esteem and Emotional Regulation*

Sub-Themes	Description	Excerpts
Confidence through Practice	Successes in manifestation enhanced self-esteem.	P1: "I just wrote, I need a bag... and I got it on my birthday. I felt so happy." P2: "Manifestation has built my confidence... now I feel I can face anything." P7: "In college, I feel powerful... But at home, I feel small because of comparisons." P12: "When I achieve something I've written down, I feel proud."
Coping with Insecurity	Participants described managing self-doubt and emotional lows.	P4: "When people appreciate me, I feel confident... when they don't, I feel insecure." P3: "I push myself and listen to motivational speeches."
Evolving Self-Esteem	Self-esteem described as growing or fluctuating over time.	P4: "In PU college, my confidence was very low... now it is developing again." P6: "I shifted from introversion to confidence... public speaking helped me grow."

Table 8 *Theme 4: Manifestation as Psychological Tool*

Sub-Themes	Description	Excerpts
Dual Purpose	Seen as both goal-setting and emotional support.	P1: “Actually both... you can achieve goals and feel better also.” P2: “It helps overcome low self-esteem and achieve goals too.”
Memory and Motivation	Successes and failures are emotionally memorable.	P4: “When we get something... we remember it forever. When we don’t... we remember that also.” P7: “When my vision board didn’t come true, I felt crushed. But I learned to adjust and try again.”
Intentional Action and Self-Development	Manifestation framed not as magic, but as a psychological tool requiring effort.	P7: “I don’t believe in mystical manifestation... it’s psychology. It’s about rewiring your mindset.” P12: “It’s not magic. You write, you visualize, and you act. That’s how it works.”

4.4 Findings Linked to Research Questions

Although the present study did not employ inferential statistical analysis, the qualitative findings are systematically interpreted in relation to the stated research questions and situated within relevant theoretical and empirical literature.

Participants described manifestation as an intentional cognitive and emotional practice involving visualization, affirmations, journaling, scripting, prayer, and goal-setting. Rather than viewing it as mystical determinism, most participants framed manifestation as a structured psychological process requiring effort, belief, and behavioral action. Digital media platforms played a key role in introducing manifestation practices, while cultural and religious traditions shaped how these practices were interpreted. These findings align with Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), particularly the role of self-efficacy in sustaining goal-directed behavior. Research on mental simulation (Taylor et al., 1998; 2020) also supports the motivational benefits of visualization when paired with concrete action. However, some scholars argue that affirmations may backfire among individuals with low self-esteem (Wood et al., 2009). Unlike these findings, participants in this study reported adaptive reinterpretation rather than emotional deterioration when manifestations did not materialize, suggesting contextual and cultural moderation.

Self-esteem was described as dynamic, context-dependent, and influenced by both success and failure experiences. Participants reported that achieving manifested goals strengthened confidence and perceived self-worth, whereas setbacks temporarily

lowered self-belief but also encouraged reflection and resilience. This aligns with Rosenberg’s (1965) conceptualization of self-esteem as global self-evaluation and with contemporary research highlighting its developmental fluidity (Orth & Robins, 2014).

The findings also resonate with growth mindset theory (Dweck, 2006), where setbacks serve as learning opportunities rather than permanent threats to identity. However, literature on contingent self-esteem (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001) warns that achievement-dependent self-worth may increase vulnerability to psychological distress. While some participants showed goal-linked confidence, many demonstrated emotional regulation strategies that buffered such risks.

The data revealed a reciprocal relationship between manifestation and self-esteem. Participants with higher confidence engaged more consistently in manifestation practices, and successful outcomes reinforced self-efficacy and optimism. Affirmations and visualization were described as strengthening self-belief and reducing anxiety. These findings are consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), particularly the needs for competence and autonomy, as well as Gross’s (1998) emotional regulation framework emphasizing cognitive reappraisal. However, critiques of “toxic positivity” suggest that excessive positive thinking may suppress authentic emotional experiences (Held, 2002). Unlike such concerns, participants in this study acknowledged disappointment and adjusted strategies, indicating reflective engagement rather than denial.

Cultural and religious frameworks significantly influenced interpretation. Muslim participants often equated manifestation with prayer (dua), Hindu participants connected it to karma and positive thinking, and Catholic participants framed it within personal spirituality. This supports cross-cultural psychological perspectives (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) that emphasize socially constructed self-concepts. Religious coping research (Pargament, 1997) similarly supports integration of faith and psychological resilience. Gender and socioeconomic differences were less pronounced within this sample; however, limited diversity may have constrained deeper comparative analysis. Future research should employ larger, more heterogeneous samples to explore intersectional influences more rigorously.

Unexplored themes in the current study include long-term behavioral outcomes, personality moderators, clinical implications, and potential maladaptive effects of overreliance on manifestation. These areas will be elaborated further in Chapter V.

4.5 Interpretation of Findings

The findings were interpreted through established theoretical frameworks to understand the psychological mechanisms underlying manifestation practices. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), manifestation enhanced autonomy by encouraging self-directed goal-setting and intentional planning. Competence was reinforced through successful outcomes and perceived progress, thereby strengthening intrinsic motivation. Participants' narratives suggested that manifestation satisfied core psychological needs, contributing to sustained engagement.

Through Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), visualization and affirmations can be understood as tools that reinforce self-efficacy beliefs. Mental rehearsal strengthens perceived capability, which in turn enhances persistence and resilience. Participants' emphasis on "rewiring mindset" reflects cognitive restructuring processes central to this framework.

Free Will Theory (Lavazza & Inglese, 2015; Mitchell, 2024) further contextualizes manifestation as an expression of volitional agency. Participants framed manifestation as intentional choice rather than passive belief. This highlights personal responsibility and conscious effort, aligning with theoretical models of reflective self-control and agency.

Neuroscientific perspectives (Doty, 2024; NeuroLab, 2025) suggest that visualization and goal scripting activate prefrontal cortical networks associated with executive functioning and emotional regulation. Although neurobiological data were not collected, participants' descriptions of mental rehearsal and emotional alignment correspond with evidence linking imagery practices to goal-directed neural processes.

Integration with recent literature further supports these interpretations. Dixon et al. (2023) found that manifestation beliefs correlate with optimism and perceived success. Ramasamy and Devendran (2025) reported enhanced resilience among Indian youth engaging in manifestation-related practices. Sachdeva and Gautam (2024), along with Taylor et al. (2020), confirm the effectiveness of affirmations and visualization in strengthening self-concept when combined with intentional action. However, critical perspectives caution against unrealistic optimism and self-blame in cases of failure, indicating the importance of balanced cognitive engagement.

Overall, manifestation appears to function not as magical thinking but as a culturally embedded self-regulatory framework integrating motivation, cognition, and emotional resilience.

4.6 Conclusion

The results demonstrate that manifestation practices among urban young adults are multifaceted, culturally embedded, and psychologically significant. They serve dual functions: facilitating goal achievement and fostering emotional resilience. Manifestation operates as a structured cognitive-emotional strategy involving visualization, affirmations, reflection, and intentional behavior.

Self-esteem emerged as both a precursor and an outcome of manifestation. Higher confidence encouraged engagement in manifestation practices, while successful outcomes reinforced self-worth and competence. Even when manifestations failed, participants frequently demonstrated adaptive reinterpretation, suggesting resilience rather than fragility.

Cultural and religious framing significantly shaped interpretation, illustrating the interaction between individual agency and collective belief systems. This contributes to a nuanced understanding of manifestation as a developmental and socio-cultural

phenomenon rather than a purely individualistic self-help strategy.

While the findings highlight psychological benefits, unanswered questions remain regarding long-term effects, personality differences, potential maladaptive outcomes, and clinical applications. These limitations and future research directions will be discussed comprehensively in Chapter V.

V. SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

5.1. Overview

This chapter consolidates and synthesizes the findings of the study by integrating the thematic analysis presented in Chapter IV with broader theoretical interpretations. It provides a comprehensive summary of the principal findings, articulates the overarching conclusions derived from the research objectives, discusses theoretical and applied implications, acknowledges methodological limitations, and proposes directions for future scholarly inquiry. The purpose of this chapter is to situate the study's findings within existing psychological and cultural frameworks while demonstrating their academic and practical significance.

5.2. Summary of Findings

The findings indicate that manifestation practices are widely internalized among urban young adults and are significantly mediated by digital exposure and cultural contextualization. Social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Pinterest functioned as primary entry points through which participants encountered manifestation discourse, while pre-existing cultural and religious traditions shaped interpretive understanding and legitimized these practices within familiar belief systems.

Core manifestation techniques—including scripting, affirmations, visualization, and prayer—were consistently described as structured cognitive-behavioral strategies rather than purely mystical rituals. Scripting facilitated cognitive clarity and intentional goal articulation; affirmations reinforced positive self-perception and internal dialogue; visualization enhanced motivational persistence and emotional reassurance; and prayer reflected the integration of manifestation within spiritual worldviews. Collectively, these practices contributed

to enhanced emotional regulation, strengthened self-concept, and adaptive coping mechanisms.

Self-esteem emerged as a dynamic, context-sensitive construct rather than a fixed trait. Participants reported that perceived manifestation successes strengthened confidence, perceived competence, and agency. Conversely, unmet expectations occasionally generated self-doubt; however, these experiences often catalyzed reflection, recalibration of goals, and resilience. Importantly, participants largely rejected deterministic or magical interpretations of manifestation, instead conceptualizing it as an intentional psychological tool grounded in effort, belief, and disciplined focus.

5.3. Conclusion

This study concludes that manifestation practices function simultaneously as psychological mechanisms and culturally embedded self-regulatory tools for young adults navigating developmental transitions, identity formation, and achievement-related pressures. Manifestation extends beyond abstract belief into structured, intentional practice integrating cognitive reframing, emotional self-regulation, and culturally mediated meaning-making.

In addressing the research objectives, the findings demonstrate that manifestation practices influence self-esteem through the cultivation of agency, confidence, adaptive coping strategies, and purposeful goal pursuit. The cultural framing of manifestation significantly shapes interpretation and engagement, underscoring the reciprocal relationship between individual psychological processes and collective belief systems. Thus, manifestation may be understood not as a passive wish-fulfillment ideology, but as an active framework for intentional self-development.

5.4. Implications

The findings contribute meaningfully to theoretical discourse. They substantiate Self-Determination Theory by illustrating how manifestation practices enhance autonomy through deliberate choice and competence through perceived mastery. The results reinforce Social Cognitive Theory by demonstrating that visualization and affirmations strengthen self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations. The narratives also align with Free Will perspectives, as participants consistently framed manifestation as an exercise of volition and intentional agency.

Furthermore, the experiential accounts correspond with neuroscientific understandings of goal-directed cognition and volitional processes, suggesting plausible cognitive mechanisms underlying these practices.

From a practical standpoint, the findings offer valuable applications. Counseling interventions and youth empowerment programs may incorporate structured techniques such as affirmations and guided visualization to enhance resilience and confidence. Digital mental health initiatives can leverage the widespread engagement with manifestation content to promote adaptive cognitive strategies. Educational institutions may integrate intentional goal-setting and positive self-dialogue frameworks into student development programs to strengthen motivation and self-esteem among emerging adults.

5.5. Limitations

Despite its contributions, the study is not without limitations. The relatively small sample size of twelve participants constrains the generalizability of the findings. The exclusive focus on urban young adults in Bengaluru limits contextual transferability to rural or cross-national populations. Additionally, while the qualitative design enabled rich, in-depth exploration, it does not permit statistical examination of causal relationships between manifestation practices and self-esteem. The findings should therefore be interpreted as exploratory and interpretive rather than predictive.

5.6. Recommendations for Future Research

Future investigations may adopt mixed-methods approaches to triangulate qualitative insights with quantitative measures of self-esteem, motivation, and psychological well-being. Longitudinal designs would provide greater clarity regarding the sustainability and long-term psychological impact of manifestation practices.

Cross-cultural comparative studies could illuminate how manifestation is differentially conceptualized across diverse socio-religious contexts. Further research examining the role of digital influencers and online communities would deepen understanding of contemporary dissemination mechanisms. Finally, experimental and neuroimaging methodologies may empirically investigate the cognitive and neural correlates of manifestation practices, thereby

strengthening the scientific foundation of this emerging area of inquiry.

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