**A Recognition-Based Study of Frustrations, Risks, and Navigation in Career Transition among Educationally Disadvantaged Young Women**

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**Ethics approval statement & consent form**

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the Research Ethics Committee of Hong Kong Baptist University. All participants were well informed about the objectives of the research and signed a consent form before joining the research.

**Abstract**

**Purpose:** This study examined the career transition journey of educationally disadvantaged young women from a recognition perspective in the context of risk society. **Method:** By means of purposive sampling, 12 young women aged between 18 and 24 who had dropped out from junior or senior secondary school were sampled basing on their social status and family's socioeconomic status. With the use of thematic analysis, the study thoroughly examined 12 transcripts collected from individual interviews. **Results:** The results showed the career transition journey of the participants in five distinctive aspects, namely, 1) striving for recognition, confronting and managing misrecognition, and sustaining life other than seeking recognition or managing misrecognition; (2) experiencing misrecognition encompassing deprivation of social support, victimization, agency undermining, esteem diminution, and distorted/manipulative recognition; (3) using recognition-based strategies to navigate career transition including social support based on satisfying affective and tangible needs, respect on the basis of equal rights and duties, and expanding sources of esteem by resuming schooling, attending interest-aligned training, caring for others, and/or excelling at work; (4) keeping a distance from manipulative or distorted recognition givers as being helpful to manage misrecognition; and (5) seeking survival, fun, exposure or sensation may help sustain life or attract more devastating risks. **Discussion:** The findings of this study provide empirical evidence to inform the delivery of well-targeted career support services for young women with educational disadvantage.

*Keywords:* career transition, educationally disadvantaged young women, frustrations, risks, navigation, recognition and misrecognition

**A Recognition-Based Study of Frustrations, Risks, and Navigation in Career Transition among Educationally Disadvantaged Young Women**

The career transition journey of educationally disadvantaged young women from school to work in the context of risk society is an important yet under-examined topic. Young people with low educational attainment are more likely to experience ups and downs in their job seeking (Danner et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2015), and encounter a wide spectrum of risks coming from multiple sources, including teenage pregnancy, school dropout, young motherhood, delinquent behaviors, substance use, etc., which may further threaten their sustainable career and life development (Su & Wong, 2022; Webster, 2018). Educationally disadvantaged young women are subject to higher risk in their career transition from school to work for the following reasons. First, their equal access to some jobs such as those physically demanding ones may be deprived because of their gender (Stier & Yaish, 2014). Second, their opportunities to strive for a vocational career may be compromised due to their family responsibilities in relation to unexpected pregnancy and caring for their children (Chan & Duan, 2015; Hung et al., 2021; Papa & Lamura, 2019). Third, young women who are free from taking household responsibilities do not necessarily enjoy freedom to develop a sustainable career, particularly when considering the inadequacy of social support offered by the family, and the keen competition in the labor market. (Beck, 1992; Hobson & Oláh, 2006). Behind the difficulties of making a smooth transition from school to work with a prospect would lead to considerable costs shouldered by these young women, their family and society at large, which is calling for more research studies.

The theory of risk society conceptualized by Beck (1992) and Giddens (1999) has been used as a critical lens to interpret the risks encountered by people and their reaction to risks in a

late modern society (Byneer & Parsons, 2002; Kivisto, 2001; Vornanen et al., 2009; Geldens & Bourke, 2008; Reith, 2004), which can also inform the explication of the career transition journey experienced by educationally disadvantaged young women. According to this theory, in a society characterized by unavoidable risks, individuals can choose their own career pathways yet they also face the potential negative consequences following their decisions making. Based on the concept of individualization, young people are seen by this theory as active actors to undertake agentic actions in various contexts. For the sake of promoting a sustainable career and life development, this theory suggests individuals to keep reflexive, exercise a continuous review of their experiences, and take proactive actions for risks management (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1999).

Placing an emphasis on individuals' agency to cope with the risks encountered, this theory also reveals that not everyone is in the same 'risk position' (Beck, 1992), and some people are more capable of addressing and handling risks confronted in their career and life development as a result of enjoying some advantages associated with their gender, educational attainment, socioeconomic status, social networks, etc. Therefore, some population groups such as educationally disadvantaged young women are less likely to achieve a successful career transition by solely counting on their own competencies and self-reflexivity (Farrugia, 2013). Beck suggested that in a context where traditional sources of social support from the family are fading out for women, they may face more unfairness in labor markets than men. Assuming that educational attainment as important human capital is critical to the development of self-reflexivity as a competence for people to keep reviewing and managing their career journey in a

risk society, those educationally disadvantaged young women may be more vulnerable to risks in their career transition journey.

Based on the sophisticated analysis of the risks encountered by these vulnerable young women, the theory of risk society however mainly focuses on their individuals' reflexive choices and education and training as a major lever for navigating one's career and life development. This theory emphasizes that the quality of life and the production of knowledge are interlocking and education is thus treasured as an important means to cultivate reflexive knowledge that empowers people to adapt themselves to late modern social changes in reflexive modernization (see Jayawarna et al., 2014). Although this theory admits that when people are navigating their career transition in an era of 'reflexive modernization', not everyone can enjoy the same level of capacity to cultivate reflexivity and deal with insecurity (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991), the insights offered by this theory for empowering these vulnerable young people in their career transition are yet to be further developed. Against this backdrop, rather than merely placing an emphasis on enhancing individuals' reflexivity or education, introducing an intersubjective or interpersonal perspective may provide an alternative perspective to examine the career transition journey of educationally disadvantaged young women and inform their exercise of personal agency in navigating their career transition. Recognition theory conceptualized by Honneth (1995) highlighting the influences of social recognition and social misrecognition on people's development of self-concept has shown its great potentials to inform a critical reading of the experiences of underprivileged young people and thus may inform the design and delivery of well-targeted career support services accordingly. This study aims to interpret the career

transition journey of educationally disadvantaged young women in Hong Kong as a risk society

from a recognition perspective.

**Career Transition Journey of Educationally Disadvantaged Young Women in Hong Kong**

Like many other developed economies, Hong Kong is characterized by 'fluidity' in terms

of both opportunities and challenges (Williams, 2008). The distribution and individualization of

risks and subsequent inequalities are significantly influenced by the social, economic, human,

and cultural capitals possessed by young people in such a society (Wong & Lin, 2016). The

economy of Hong Kong has experienced a prominent transformation in the past 25 years as

evidenced by a large reduction of manufacturing jobs and a great expansion of jobs in

import/export, wholesale and retail trades, accommodation and food services (Wong & Au-

Yueng, 2019). Such a turning point in the economies has resulted in the greatest growth of

service and sales workers, and associate professionals, which is brining both opportunities and

challenges for young workers in Hong Kong. On the one hand, services sectors are youth-

friendly in terms of recruitment practices, yet on the other hand, young workers are confronted

with more casual and precarious employment relations particularly in service and sales jobs in

retail trades, accommodation and food services (Wong & Au-Yueng, 2019). The expansion of

precarious work may bring more uncertainties to young people and jeopardize their capacity to

develop and achieve long-term career goals (Su & Wong, 2020). In a socio-cultural context

where the public in Hong Kong highly value education credentials and paid work experiences,

those with low educational attainment and lack of relevant paid work experiences are put in a

more vulnerable or risky position to find a decent job with prospect (Su et al., 2020). Moreover,

as one of the most competitive markets in the world, the discrepancy between the rich and the

poor in Hong Kong is wide at both individual and district levels (Wong & Wong, 2022). To strive for a smooth transition from school to work in such a socio-economic context is reasonably challenging for most educationally disadvantaged young women.

Given that the career transition journey of educationally disadvantaged young women in Hong Kong is diverse and individualized such a context characterized by growing risks and fluidity, the exercise of self-reflexivity in career transition is also subject to their access to resources, opportunities and networks and to the influence of preferences of their significant others (Albright et al., 2017; Alnıaçık et al., 2019; Bynner & Parsons, 2002; Su & Wong, 2022). Some studies have suggested that access to more enabling resources and networks may buffer the difficulties encountered by these young people in their career transition (Su & Wong, 2022; Su et al., 2021). However, in the existing literature around the career transition of educationally underprivileged young women in the context of risk society, an interpersonal or intersubjective perspective is still lacking, which is unfavorable to inform the exercise of personal agency to initiate changes to cope with risks (Rose et al., 2016; Bandura, 2006; Hart et al., 2014). In this connection, employing a recognition perspective to examine the career transition journey of educationally disadvantaged young women may fill in the research gap mentioned above and provide another way out.

**Recognition Theory: An Intersubjective Interpretation of Career Transition**

As a pronounced critical theory, recognition theory conceptualized by Axel Honneth (1995, 2001, 2012) based on an interpersonal perspective has been used in interpreting the marginalization of youth at risk and informing the delivery of social services targeted to this marginalized group (Kauhanen & Kaukko, 2020; Marshall et al., 2020; Mitchell, 2021). Honneth

proposed three forms of social recognition which are central to the development of individuals' intersubjective self-concepts, namely love, social respect and social esteem. Love refers to the social support from significant others for satisfying a person's affective and tangible needs, social respect refers to the recognition of equal rights to take part in civil society and societal decisions, and social esteem denotes the recognition of a person's contribution to the community based on their unique skills and qualities. Conceptually, the bases for various forms of recognition are different: love is need- based, respect is equality-based, whereas esteem is achievement-based (Renger et al., 2017; Renger, 2018). According to Honneth, being loved and cared will lead to self-confidence, being respected will foster self-respect, and being esteemed as a valued person will enhance self-esteem. Self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem will then develop into a person's overall self-recognition. Honneth also proposed three forms of misrecognition, namely i) victimization, ii) denigration and degradation of one's equal rights and responsibilities, and iii) denigration and degradation of one's achievement or contribution. Three forms of misrecognition can come from others (i.e., social misrecognition) and from individuals themselves (i.e., self-misrecognition). People who endure misrecognition may encounter challenges confronted in achieving well-being, belongingness and well-becoming.

Honneth's recognition theory may add values to a critical interpretation of the career transition journey of young people in the context of risk society based on the following grounds. First of all, the recognition theory suggests that it is part of human needs to seek recognition from ourselves and from significant others, including parents, peers, life partners, employers, etc. In the contexts of risk society, young people may be empowered by their acquired self- and social recognition. Second, according to the recognition theory (Honneth,1995), the journey of seeking

new sources of recognition continues in partnership with new sources of frustrations and struggles, the understanding of which is consistent with the argument of risk society theory regarding the association of personal choices and decision-making to cope with corresponding risks. Insights may be drawn from examining how young people make sense of and manage potential risks with regard to recognition seeking. Finally, the impact of misrecognition on people's career transition should not be underestimated. Theoretically, misrecognition may lead to psychological, social, and even physical death (Honneth, 2001). Young people may suffer from multiple sources of misrecognition across different life domains in their career transition journey. Those young people who are economically, socially or educationally underprivileged are more likely than their privileged counterparts to suffer from misrecognition. Some recent studies revealed that misrecognition may jeopardize underprivileged young people's self-concepts, demotivate them from developing aspirations, and compromise their capabilities to achieve their career and life goals (Su et al., 2021; Su & Wong, 2022).

Nevertheless, no empirical studies have been conducted to interpret the career transition journey of educationally disadvantaged young women from a recognition perspective. It remains unknown how these young women make sense of their experiences and navigate their career transition journey in risk society as viewed from the recognition perspective. None is known about how these young women may possibly ride on the recognition they have enjoyed or achieved to handle risks and navigate their career transition journey. Knowledge is also lacking regarding how three forms of misrecognition are associated with the encounters of risks and how these young women manage different forms of misrecognition.

**Research Questions**

To develop a recognition-based study of career transition of educationally disadvantaged young women, this study examines the following four research questions:

1) What are the sources of recognition- or misrecognition-related risks and frustrations that educationally disadvantaged young women encounter in their career transitions?

2) How do these young women make sense of their career transition journey in relation to risks and recognition and misrecognition?

3) What kinds of recognition-based strategies are used by these young women to navigate their career transition?

4) How do these young women navigate their career transition when they are not seeking recognition or handling misrecognition and what are the risks that they may encounter in the process?

**Method**

**Research Design Overview**

By means of purposive sampling, 12 young women aged between 18 and 24 who had dropped out from junior or senior secondary school were sampled basing on their social status and family's socioeconomic status. With the use of thematic analysis, the study thoroughly examined 12 transcripts collected from individual interviews based on both risk society perspective and the recognition theory. A rigorous audit trial was conducted throughout the process of analyzing the verbatim quotes in Chinese and counterchecking the translated verbatim quotes in English for ensuring the trustworthiness of the findings.

**Study Participants**

Table 1 presents the sociodemographic information and the frustrations and risk exposures of 12 participants in their career transition journey. All participants were female, aged 18-24, and dropped out from junior or senior secondary school. Four participants were married and had one or two child(ren). The participants were categorized into four types based on their family's economic status above or below median monthly household income and their current social status whether in education, employment or training (EET) or not in education, employment or training (NEET). Among all participants, seven reported that they were living with economic constraints. All 12 participants reported school dropout as one of their major sources of frustration in their career transition; whereas three of them reported other sources of frustration, including workplace bullying, repeated schooling, and job offer rejection. Their reported risk exposures were quite diverse, including overspending, fun seeking, alcohol drinking, shoplifting, unexpected break-up in intimate relationships, involuntary end of pregnancy, health concerns, unexpected pregnancy, substance use, loss of freedom, economic insecurity, sexual harassment, low quality of repeated schooling, workplace injustice and bullying, drug trafficking, etc.

**Participant Recruitment**

By means of purposive sampling, a sample was drawn with a purpose to provide rich information of central importance to the research objectives and questions (Carey, 2009). In this connection, three basic sampling criteria were established: 1) female youth; 2) age range between 18 and 24; 3) drop out from junior or senior secondary school. To reduce the potentials of confounding effects caused by the social status of the participants and their family socioeconomic status, another two sampling criteria were introduced respectively, namely, whether in or not in education, employment or training (i.e. EET or NEET), and whether above or below median

monthly household income. With this framework, the study recruited 12 participants from June 2015 to Dec 2015 by seeking referrals from helping professionals including social workers and youth workers from different social service NGOs in Hong Kong.

**Data Collection**

This study used semi-structured individual interviews with an average time of 90 to 110 minutes to collect data from participants in a face-to-face manner. Prior to the study, the corresponding author obtained ethical approval from the research ethics committee of Hong Kong Baptist University. Before conducting the semi-structured individual interviews, the research team held two meetings to discuss about the interview guideline and the procedures of the interviews. A trained research assistant conducted the research interviews with the participants on a one-on-one basis. After explaining the purpose and scope of the study, informed consent was collected from each of the participants prior to the start of the interview. An audio recorder was used to record the interviewing process. All data collected were treated confidential and only accessible to the research team. All recordings were later transcribed into Chinese by student helpers. The Chinese transcripts were also sent back to the participants to seek their comments and approval. To assure personal privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms are used in this study.

**Instrument**

During the semi-structured individual interviews, the youth participants were given space to share about their personal stories and experiences since their first school dropout and review their encounters of frustrations, risks, recognition and misrecognition, and how they managed to navigate their career transition journey from school to work. The interview guideline developed

by the research team asked the youth participants open-ended questions in the following areas: (1) experience and sense making of transitions, (2) critical experiences of choice and decision making, (3) sources of self- and social recognition and the effects of recognition in transition from school to work, (4) sources of self- and social misrecognition and the effects of misrecognition on transition from school to work, and (5) management of risks and uncertainties, (6) management of misrecognition, (7) non-recognition seeking experiences, and (8) career aspirations and plans.

**Data Analysis**

The transcripts were in the first place analyzed in Chinese in order to better identify nuances in the language and represent the participants' lived experiences and perspectives. A thematic analysis using both theory-driven and data-driven methods was used to explore the themes and subthemes and meanings embedded within the collected narratives, which are consistent with the theoretical framework informed by risk society and recognition theory discussed above. The Chinese transcripts were read and reviewed by the first and second authors separately who analyzed the content of transcripts and identified the meaning units and themes embedded within the narratives. Next, common or related meanings were categorized together to constitute an initial theme, and make up 'the level of story concerned with what the characters in the narrative want and how they pursue their objective over time' (McAdams, 1993, p. 67). Related themes were then connected and compared and the structure of narratives was also examined. In this study, plot development was identified by considering how the participants selected, connected and sequenced separate episodes of experience in their transition from school to work (see Papathomas et al., 2015). In addition, the family cultural resources and broader interpretive frameworks that the participants may have used to make sense of their transition journey were

also considered. Emergent themes and their potential connections were continuously reviewed in preparation for writing up the finalized themes to describe in the section of Results. Finally, representative verbatim quotes consistent with the theoretical framework, which could capture the main perceptions/experiences of each participant were labelled.

To assure the rigor of the study, the following actions were taken for data analysis. Before data analysis, the research team had a meeting to discuss and come up with a list of potential codes and themes based on theoretical framework. Second, informed by the list of potential codes and themes, the first and second authors analyzed the Chinese transcripts separately. Third, the first and the second authors finished their own analysis reports consisting of a summary of experiences shared by each participant, and representative verbatim quotes selected to represent the codes and themes derived from the risk society perspective and the recognition theory. Fourth, the research team had a meeting to review the main perceptions/experiences of each participant, and discuss the analysis reports for reaching a consensus. Fifth, all selected verbatim quotes were translated into English by two student helpers separately, and the translated verbatim quotes were further reviewed by the first and second authors separately, and the latter pointed out any discrepancies of the meaning between the Chinese and English versions, and suggested fine tuning the English verbatim quotes as necessary. Finally, based on the comments and suggestions from the first and the second authors, the research team held a meeting to discuss and confirm the verbatim quotes translated into English.

**Results**

Based on a thorough thematic analysis of the transcripts, the study identified themes and subthemes accordingly. Table 2 shows every participant's sources of misrecognition and

strategies they used to navigate career transitions. Table 3 displays four different themes and their respective subthemes as follows: i) expanded notion of misrecognition experiences of educationally underprivileged young women, ii) recognition-based strategies used for navigating career transition, iii) strategies used to manage sources of misrecognition, and iv) activities pursued to sustain life without seeking recognition or managing misrecognition. Cited verbatim quotes were given basic information about the participants, encompassing pseudonym, age, year of school dropout, and marital status.

**Theme 1. Expanded notion of misrecognition experiences**

An expanded notion of misrecognition experiences was identified in the transcripts encompassing deprivation of social support, suffering from victimization in the forms of neglect or abandonment, self- or social denigration or degradation of personal agency, self- or social denigration/degradation of achievement/contribution, and distorted or manipulative recognition.

*Subtheme 1. Deprivation of social support*

A lack of social support from significant others was identified by participants as a form of under-recognition. A lack of parental support was complained by the participants as an indicator of not being recognized as a daughter. Ada (25, dropped out in Secondary 1, married) was neglected by her parents since she was a little kid. Adele's father was perceived as entirely emotionally unavailable to her. She lived with her Mom, but she felt like they were only "co-living with each other" rather than "an intimate relationship between mother and daughter" due to their limited communication.

*My mum had to work, so she did not pay much attention to me or where I was during night time. We were more like "flat mates" than a family. My father and I were both quite*

*stubborn and we would not bother to care about each other, or ask something like "how are*

*you doing". Perhaps he did not even know which class I was going to. This is how we*

*interact - no interaction.* (Adele, 24, dropped out in Secondary 3, married)

### Subtheme 2. Victimization in forms of neglect or bullying

Victimization taking place at home or workplace was reported as traumatic experiences by

the participants. Olivia (21, dropped out in Secondary 5, single) was abandoned by her parents

since Secondary 2, and she lived with her grandma from then on. She could not believe that her

father stopped paying for her schooling and kicked her out of home. She was used to a life

without any love from her parents, although deep in her heart, she had a strong desire for

parental love and care. She wished that her parents would love her, trust her, and provide

financial support to her.

> *I wish I could at least finish my Secondary 6 study, but my father stopped paying tuition,*
>
> *and that's why I stopped studying. When I was in Secondary 2, I hanged out with those*
>
> *gangs and I was not always at home. My father kicked me out every time when he was*
>
> *home, despite he did not spend much time in Hong Kong, nor with me. I was left alone on*
>
> *my own since my Secondary 2 study. I did not expect any care from my parents as I was*
>
> *used to be alone. I complained to myself, why my friends' parents could treat them so*
>
> *well, cooking for them, travelling together and taking photos, but I have never had any of*
>
> *these moments.* (Olivia, 21, dropped out in Secondary 5, single)

Bella suffered from workplace bullying after dropping out from school and working in a

bakery store. She was the youngest employee at the store, and senior staff treated her with very

disrespectful attitudes and forced her to undertake all the job duties and the dirty tasks in particular by manipulating the trust gained from managers.

> *They would scold me if I was taking a short break or going to the restroom. They were so rude to me, asking me to finish all the tasks, just because I was a newcomer. When I asked them for advice politely, they would shout at me something like "Do you think that we do not have to work?", but in fact they were just chatting. One time during the night shift, I had to finish all the cleaning tasks in the shop, and they were just standing aside and chatting. I talked to the manager about the situation, but it made no use as they were the same party. One girl always bossed me around but she herself did not work at all. She would only be nice to the managers... I had to finish all the chores like sweeping, cleaning garbage. They were closer to the manager, as they knew how to flatter the boss.*
>
> (Bella, 18, dropped out in Secondary 4, single)

### Subtheme 3. Agency undermining in forms of denigration/degradation of equal rights and duties

Participants' personal agency on the basis of equal rights and duties was degraded or even denied in different contexts, including workplace, school, and family contexts. When participants were not treated equally as others, or they did not enjoy the equal rights to decide what they aspire for, or they were not allowed to take up equal responsibilities for the consequences resulting from their own decision-making, they felt that their equal dignity was deprived and their agentic actions were jeopardized. Candy complained that the head teacher forbade her from continuing her study in Secondary 3 and she was forced to drop out. *"If it were not this teacher, I*

*would have finished my secondary school study. He was just against me",* said Candy (18, dropped out in Secondary 3, single).

Olivia's parents did not treat her in an equal way like they treated her elder brother. "*He enjoys all the parental love and care, whatever he wants, my mum offers to him. Whatever he says, my father trusts him. Our parents support his business in a very generous way. They opened two stores for him! But they are so mean to me*", said Olivia. Adele feels that her personal agency was deprived in the workplace. As a female security guard and the youngest one in the work team, she was looked down upon by her senior male coworkers and she was not offered equal opportunities to perform in the workplace. *"They call me 'Leng Mui' (which means young inexperienced girl) in a sarcastic tone, they don't trust that I can fulfill the job requirement of a security guard in such a demanding condition"* (Adele, 24, dropped out in Secondary 3, married).

Some participants undermined their own agency, denied or degraded their own rights and duties. Bella (18, dropped out in Secondary 4, single) said she was still young and thus she was allowed to do whatever crazy and fun thing she wanted to do. It did not make sense to her about taking responsibilities to plan for her own career and life development. Ida (18, dropped out in Secondary 4, single) said that it was a shame to rely on her parents, yet "*the biggest challenges were to get up from bed, focus on studying, and keep a sustainable and adaptive habit".* Daisy had conducted shoplifting for many times with her friends. She felt unable to control her own behaviors whenever she saw beautiful things displayed at the shops. *"At the beginning, they stole and I looked out for them. Later on, I started to do it on my own. I just wanted those stuff. They*

*were nice but they did not deserve to be so expensive",* said Daisy (18, dropped out in Secondary 6, single).

### *Subtheme 4. Esteem diminution in the form of denigration or degradation of achievement or contribution*

All participants had experience of dropping out from secondary schools, and they reported frustrating experiences at school. Their academic performance was definitely unsatisfactory to themselves and their significant others. In their transition from school to work, they had all suffered from esteem diminution as their achievement or contribution were not esteemed by themselves or others. Tracy (18, dropped out in Secondary 4, single) had struggled a lot before she decided to dropout from school. All teachers were changed suddenly since Secondary 4 and some foreigners came to take up the core courses such as mathematics and English. *"A French teacher was assigned to teach us math. Sometimes he was speaking English, and sometimes French. We could not understand what he said. Many students couldn't bear it and left. The new English teacher was so demanding; she assigned us too much homework. Our English proficiency was indeed low but she gave us homework at university level. I felt so inferior and helpless in the classes",* said Tracy. Ida (18, dropped out in Secondary 4, single) was much more harmed by the gossip of her relatives since she dropped out from school. They showed a high level of concern about her failure at school.

> *"Why you are not studying? Why tattoo? Why you are always missing?" Some of my*
> *relatives were really annoying and rude. This happened every time when you were visiting*
> *them during Lunar New Year. Being surrounded by a bunch of relatives was so annoying!*
> *Who doesn't want to finish secondary school study and graduate with a certificate? At least*

*others would not think that I was uneducated or not able to graduate from the secondary*

*school. I was the worst one among all the children of my relatives: they were high school or*

*university graduates, or studying abroad.* (Ida, 18, dropped out in Secondary 4, single)

Some participants opted to undermine their own esteem and had a mindset of "I can't do

anything". Daisy (18, dropped out in Secondary 6, single) wanted to be a tattoo master, but she

did not believe that she can achieve this aspiration as she believed that "*the reality is always*

*more difficult than you can imagine"*. Gigi (21, dropped out in Secondary 3, married) was

seriously skeptical about her own competence to take care of her first daughter, who was always

crying out loud.

### *Subtheme 5. Distorted or manipulative recognition*

When the participants tried to make sense of their transition experience, some of them took

their suffering experience imposed by their significant others, who gave them distorted or

manipulative recognition. All this reinforced some maladaptive or high-risk behaviors (e.g.,

binge drinking, smoking, overspending, substance use, shoplifting, etc.) of the participants and

maintained them in a state characterized by low self-reflection, low motivation, low self-

discipline, and low capacity to make changes. Such recognition was deemed as being distorted

or manipulative for it was given with an implicit intention to serve the benefits of recognition

givers. For example, some significant others opted to use manipulative or distorted recognition to

keep the participant living with them, emotionally attached to them, or giving them money, etc.

Adele was quite confused about her mother's reactions in some critical occasions in her

transition journey. In Secondary 3, she became very unwilling to go to school and her mum set

an alarm to wake herself up in the morning and voluntarily asked for sick leaves on her behalf.

When she sounded out the intention to quit schooling due to a big fight with her best friend, her mum simply gave a green light without asking why she wanted to quit studying. She was addicted to using drugs later on. It was more unbelievable to her that her mum even helped to clean up her room after she made a mess for using substances. Olivia was struggling in a dilemma about to leave or to stay with those manipulative friends. She was well aware of the tactics they used to manipulate her. Some friends lived in her apartment, never paid for the rent, and cajoled her to keep hanging out in bars late at night after she finished a whole day's work. She felt very exhausting to live a life with no chance to take a rest. But she found it very hard to say no to these friends.

> *I have met this girl again when I was in Secondary 5. She sounded so firm when she asked me out. And I was convinced every single time. I could not keep up on my study and I decided dropping out. They would say like "Olivia, you are our mum!" It was very demanding, but at the same time I enjoyed spending time with them. Every time I was going out with them, I would care for them spontaneously. I felt confused as I felt so tired and happy at the same time. One time I was drunk, they coaxed me to withdraw money to them five times.* (Olivia, 21, dropped out in Secondary 5, single)

**Theme 2 Recognition-based strategies to navigate career transition**

Some recognition-based strategies were considered favorable to the participants to exercise agentic actions for making positive changes in their career transition, including social support from significant others for satisfying affective and tangible needs, respect on the basis of equal rights and duties, and expanding sources of esteem by caring for others, attending interest-aligned training, resuming formal schooling, and excelling at work.

***Subtheme 1. Social support based on accommodating affective and tangible needs***

Some participants may enjoy more social support with love and care from significant others, including parents, siblings, boyfriends, husband, mother-in-law, and social workers, which can address their tangible and intangible needs, and enable them to handle risks in their career transition. Ella (24, dropped out in Secondary 4, single) believed her erotic capital associated with her beautiful face was the reason why she enjoyed social support from many heterosexual friends. *"I would not be able to go through a smooth transition in working holiday without my boyfriend's support",* said Ella. Adele (24, dropped out in Secondary 3, married) stopped substance use because she loved her husband very much and she did not want to let him know what kind of a person she used to be. The major sources of social support for Candy was from her social worker.

> *I was accompanied by my social worker for a job interview.  She accompanied me for finding a job, giving me advice on what to do.  I would take in her advice.  I would ask her before making any decision.  I would not do the things that she was not supporting, as my friends would also consult her opinions.* (Candy, 18, dropped out in Secondary 3, single)

***Subtheme 2. Respect on the basis of equal rights and duties***

With strong beliefs about their entitlement to equal rights and duties like others, young people can make decisions about what to aspire for, and they have the potentials to achieve their aspirations. Some participants were able to develop agentic actions to make positive changes and manage risks in their career transition by leveraging on self- or social respect. The parents of Bella (18, dropped out in Secondary 4, single) respected her own choice to terminate her schooling and they did not push her to pursue academic achievement or force her to find a job

with prospect.  The mother of Ella (24, dropped out in Secondary 4, single) was supportive to her

working holiday plan and she granted Ella's freedom to decide how to spend and save money.

Compared with social respect, self-respect was considered as a more proximal lever for making

changes with their life, as these participants were vulnerable to agency undermining associated

with school failure. Gigi expressed her strong commitment to making decisions on her own.

> *You have to take care of your daughter once you gave birth to her. You can't just leave*
>
> *her alone after bringing her to this world. You are responsible for all your actions. The*
>
> *best path for yourself is always the one you plan for yourself, because you know yourself*
>
> *the best. Others won't know how to make decisions for you, and so you should make your*
>
> *own. You simply can't blame others if anything goes wrong. But you listen to others'*
>
> *opinions and follow along, you may blame them.* (Gigi, 21, dropped out in Secondary 3,
>
> married)

Similar to Gigi, Helen (21, dropped out in Secondary 3, married) also believed that it was

her own choice to give birth to a baby at such a young age. Her agency was further exercised in

making sense of her own choice. She thought it was very common for many females to get

married and give births and she was only doing this a bit earlier than other women. *"I simply*

*decided to do that earlier than the others. If you only get pregnant when you're older, you won't*

*have the energy to do a lot of things with them",* said Helen.

### *Subtheme 3. Expanding sources of esteem by resuming formal schooling, attending interest-aligned training, caring for others, or excelling at work*

Making efforts to expand sources of esteem was deemed as an important part of career

development in the eyes of the participants after dropping out from school. Some participants

tried to repeat schooling for a year, and some tried to explore other interest learning (e.g., beauty care, coffee brewing, tattooing, design, etc.) and attend interest-aligned training, those young mother participants mainly relied on their caring for children to build up their self-worth, and some participants tried to develop their self-worth by excelling at their preferred job. Ella was confident about her job performance at coffee shops. She had rich experiences of working in different scales of coffee shops and her job performance was highly recognized by her supervisors. She mastered some essential knowledge and skills about coffee brewing, which enabled her to get promoted within a short period.

> *I've been asked to take charge of the shop. I can get promoted quickly wherever I work, so all I need is to prove my working experiences, but not all these academic qualifications. For example, I got promoted just a few months after I started working as a salesperson in another company, thanks to my confidence, adaptability and composure.* (Ella, 24, dropped out in Secondary 4, single)

Helen (dropped out in Secondary 3, married) became more confident about her capacity to take care of her children. Her husband was the major bread earner and she had to take care of her first daughter at home. She was good at cooking food for her daughter, and developed a nice daily routine with her daughter. *"Seeing my girl growing up this quickly, I actually feel that this period of being unemployed and witnessing her growth is quite a good thing! Because if you give birth to a baby and get a job right afterwards, leaving her in the care of the grandparents, then you're only fulfilling the responsibility of supporting them financially"*, said Helen.

**Theme 3. Strategies used to manage sources of misrecognition**

Besides striving for recognition, participants also developed some strategies to manage their sources of misrecognition. Some participants resumed formal schooling or attended interest-aligned training for the sake of both enhancing their self- and social recognition, and reducing their self- and social misrecognition. Some participants reduced their risk exposures or committed no or less deviant behaviors to reduce their self- and social misrecognition. Some participants reviewed the negative influence of distorted/ manipulative recognition givers, and took actions to keep a distance from them.

***Subtheme 1. Resume schooling or attending interest-aligned training***

Maggie (21, dropped out in Secondary 5, single) repeated studying Secondary 4 for two years on her own will, because she wanted to achieve a higher score in public examination. Tracy (, 18, dropped out in Secondary 4, single) tasted the difficulties in finding a job with prospect after dropping out from school and thus she determined to resume schooling as a means to pursue studying a Bachelor's degree which is good for future job seeking.

> *There was a time when I was out of work, and I had to look for a job at the Labour Department, only to realize that all jobs required at least reaching the level of Secondary 5 or 6… It's not that great if you are only having a secondary school qualification when others are already doing a degree. You still get some chances to learn when you're 18. You can still get a degree eventually even if you don't really spend the time studying. Or I can learn some English or improve my Chinese if I get back to school. I may not get in a very good university, but at least I can get a degree, which makes job hunting easier.* (Tracy, 18, dropped out in Secondary 4, single)

Bella and Daisy preferred interest-aligned training. Bella pursued a course about beauty care; Daisy attended courses about design and tattooing. She suffered from her low confidence and tried to catch up with others by filling her schedule with many trainings.

***Subtheme 2. Reduce risk exposures or deviant behaviors***

All participants identified their experiences of risk exposures or their deviant behaviors conducive to putting them in high-risk conditions. Some participants exercised their agency to reduce their risk exposures by stopping alcohol drinking, quitting the job as a bar girl, and stopping hanging out at bars. Some participants tried to commit less or no more deviant behaviors, including reducing or stopping drug trafficking, overspending, and substance use. Ada stopped alcohol drinking and hanging out at bars after having her baby. Adele reduced substance use and committed no more drug trafficking. Candy and Ella stopped overspending. Gigi reduced substance use because of her husband.

>*I gradually stopped taking drugs after I got married, as my husband doesn't smoke or drink, just nothing. I was still doing drugs, cigarettes and alcohol when he first met me. He didn't say much at first, but then he started nagging me. All my past boyfriends did the same. They were okay with everything at first, but after a while they would start nagging and asking me to stop doing all this.* (Gigi, 21, dropped out in Secondary 3, married)

***Subtheme 3. Discern and/or keep a distance from distorted/ manipulative recognition givers***

Adele, Candy, Gigi, Ida, and Oliva discerned the distorted or manipulative recognition from significant others. Adele confronted with her mum *"Why did you sign it so easily? Teachers had asked you to think twice before you signed it [for quitting study]. However, you just said it was fine and then you signed it. Why didn't you resist at all? For other mothers, I*

*don't believe they would sign it as easily as you did."* She was impressed by her own capacity of doing harm reduction *"I think I am tough. I have never plunged into deep trouble. I dared to push my limits, yet I could manage to bounce back. So I felt successful. Many people risk testing for limits and yet they simply keep falling further down and fail to bounce back, and they end up realizing that their life is failing."* Adele also made it to distance herself from the manipulative peer group**.** She called them "Chu Peng Kau Yau" (i.e. nasty friends) who had totally lived on her.

> *Just mention about the practical thing of paying the rental, whenever household items were*
>
> *to be purchased such as drinks, handkerchief tissue paper, noodles or cigarettes, I had to*
>
> *pay all on my own. What's most unbearable is that I once went down to supermarket to buy*
>
> *lots of drinks that I could not carry, I cried out for help over the phone, but nobody went*
>
> *down to help me out. They just simply asked me for money whenever they're running out of*
>
> *cash. It's me who paid the rental. I couldn't bear any more and drove them away at last.*
>
> (Adele, 24, dropped out in Secondary 3, married)

**Theme 4. Sustaining life without seeking recognition or managing misrecognition**

Participants reflected that their career transition journey was not fully occupied by seeking recognition or managing misrecognition, and a major component of their career transition journey was simply to sustain life through either survival seeking or happiness pursuit.

***Subtheme 1. Multiple ways to sustain life without seeking recognition or managing misrecognition***

Participants used multiple ways to sustain life when they were not seeking recognition or managing misrecognition, including survival seeking, fun seeking, sensation seeking, exposure

seeking, rest taking, etc. Olivia worked as a bar girl only for survival seeking. Gigi, Helen, and Ada said they were used to hanging out late at night only for fun. Bella had a long time staying at home without doing anything just because she felt needing a good rest to regain momentum. Ida claimed to enjoy the sensory stimulation of nerves in the skin during the tattooing process. She felt addicted to getting more and more tattoos as she can "enjoy the pain". She also attached some meaning to her tattoos.

*When the pain was over I felt happy, as it seemed to much express my emotions. The painfulness had never stopped me from thinking about or attempting to get a tattoo. The tattoo itself is my name, which did not have any color in the first place. The name tattoo got a bird meaning that I enjoy the freedom to do travels on my own. Seeing that the tattoo had turned pale, I did it again by adding color into it.* (Ida, 18, dropped out in Secondary 4, single)

Helen's working holiday expanded her horizons and she learnt a lot in her job as a salesperson in a supermarket. Her English proficiency was significantly enhanced due to that job because she had to communicate with customers from different countries in English. She also enjoyed driving for school in Australia, which was a kind of new exposure to her.

### Subtheme 2. Fun, exposure, sensation, or survival seeking as ways to sustain life can attract more devastating risks

The ways used to sustain life can attract more devastating risks to the participants, including health damages, sleep deprivation, sleep-wake disorder, exposures to sexual harassment, financial loss, etc. Candy said she was very used to going to bed in the early morning as she hanged out with friends for fun at night. Before Gigi got married, she had suffered from serious

deprivation of sleep as she kept staying up late at night for fun. Gigi had to end her pregnancy involuntarily due to a tumor in uterus, which was likely caused by her long-term unhealthy lifestyle. Ida said she had lost the chance of being employed by the government for having tattoos, although which was her sources of sensory stimulation. Olivia had been troubled by the exposures to sexual harassment at bars where she worked as a bar girl, as many customers were keen on taking advantages of bar girls. *"I have never admitted defeat or being drunk at pub. But it's hard to say so when I was outside the pub. Whenever I was out of consciousness outside the pub, some customers seized the chance to molest me. It's hard to protect yourself when you get drunk"*, said Olivia (21, dropped out in Secondary 5, single).

Ella appreciated the exposures offered by working holiday and she was very sure that she will go for another working holiday in the near future. Nevertheless, working holiday is not free form risks. She also encountered some unpleasant experiences in working holiday. She was cheated by a Taiwan boy and she experienced a period without a cent in her pocket.

*I dared to head for an adventure to Australia by only bringing with me eighteen thousand [Hong Kong] dollars. I started working in a farm after spending a month in Australia. After working in the farm for more than two months, I knew a man from Taiwan, who played with my affections and made me feel so desperate. I did not do any job for three months long and ended up having no money in my account, oh no, actually in debt. But I could manage to survive by means of making new friends there, and asked them to treat me food and drinks and provide me accommodation.* (Ella, 24, dropped out in Secondary 4, single)

**Discussion**

This study critically reviewed the career transition journey of educationally underprivileged young women with a recognition perspective in the context of risk society. Apart from low level of education, young women with diverse background were included in this study, including young women from families with economic disadvantages, single women, young mothers, and those who were not in education, employment or training. We can draw theoretical as well as practical implications from the findings of the study as follows.

First of all, this is the first attempt to explore how recognition theory can be applied to study the career transition of disadvantaged young women with regard to their educational disadvantage in particular. Most of the existing studies on career transition of young people were focused on the risks they encountered, and how they make sense of their experience and manage predicted risks by leveraging on their personal reflexivity (Geldens & Bourke, 2008; Morrissey, 2008; Austen, 2009; Kritzinger, 2002). In recent years, some pioneering studies (Kauhanen & Kaukko, 2020; Marshall et al., 2020; Mitchell, 2021) have applied recognition theory to interpret the suffering of marginalized young people, although a career perspective was lacking or not explicit in these studies. For example, Su et al. (2021) applied the recognition theory to interpret the experiences of young people with prolonged self-seclusion behaviors and drew practical implications for reengaging them in community settings. The findings of this study answered research questions one and two with regard to identifying and making sense of the multiple sources of recognition- or misrecognition-related risks in the career transitions experienced by young women with educational disadvantage and advanced our understanding by examining the influence of various sources and forms of recognition and misrecognition on the career transition of this disadvantaged group. These findings may inform helping professionals such as career

practitioners and social workers to help these young women by using a recognition perspective. For example, social workers may help these young women to review their school-to-work transition and facilitate the latter to externalize their negative experiences with a recognition perspective. Such a perspective may reduce or avoid the self-blaming suffered by these young people in relation to their misrecognition experiences, and help them be aware of how these misrecognition experiences are harming their self-confidence and depriving their access to a smooth career transition.

Second, this study further expanded the notion of misrecognition experiences in accordance to the recognition perspective developed by Honneth. The findings of this study provided empirical data to the three forms of misrecognition conceptualized by Honneth with reference to the experience of educationally underprivileged young women, i.e., victimization in the form of neglect or bullying, agency undermining on the basis of unequal rights and duties, and esteem diminution in the form of denigration or degradation of achievement or contribution. This study showed two additional forms of misrecognition, namely, deprivation of social support and distorted/manipulative recognition. The conceptualization of five different forms of misrecognition can serve to facilitate helping professionals such as social workers to develop a comprehensive and critical review of their youth clients' negative experiences in their interpersonal relationships, which may further inform social workers to design their intervention plan to working with these young people by discerning and addressing these misrecognition experiences.

Third, in addressing research question three regarding the use of recognition-based strategies in navigating career transitions, this study also expanded alternative sources of self- and

social esteem for educationally disadvantaged young women to map out their alternative career pathways, which can help shed light on informing practitioners the future direction to deliver career support services. In this study, all participants had unsatisfactory academic performance and their dropping out from either junior or senior secondary schools were perceived as major sources of frustrations and risks. In addition to resuming schooling, the findings of this study suggested alternative pathways for them to develop self-and social esteem, including attending interest-aligned training, caring for others, or excelling at paid work. These findings are consistent with the expanded notion of work (Wong, 2015; Wong & Yip, 2019) of which different forms of paid and unpaid work can be conceptualized as alterative career pathways particularly for marginalized young people who are lack of educational credentials. The findings of this study can inform the development of career support services by leveraging on unpaid work endeavors including serious interest development, self- and home provisioning and volunteering, etc. Career practitioners, including social workers, youth workers, teachers, and counselors may encourage educationally disadvantaged young women to explore multiple career pathways, recognize their contribution and achievement in different life domains, and provide resources, opportunities, and networks to support them to excel in their preferred pathways. For example, social workers can engage these young women in some volunteer work to care for other people in need, and help these young women to review these service experiences and thicken their values, attitudes, skills, or knowledge developed in this process, which can give them a sense of contribution and further strengthen their self-confidence.

Fourth, this study revealed that manipulative/distorted recognition as a form of misrecognition, which was not addressed in Honneth's conceptualization. Yet it is understandable

that disadvantaged young people are vulnerable to this type of misrecognition. The findings about manipulative/distorted recognition will support the application of recognition theory to working with disadvantaged young people by means of promoting critical consciousness. To discern the manipulative/distorted recognition which may be given by significant others, such as parents and peers, young people can be empowered to review their experiences with critical consciousness, which emphasizes the importance to advance people's understanding regarding contextual factors leading to poverty, racism, unemployment, and other forms of social exclusion and marginalization (Diemer et al., 2016). A mindset of critical consciousness manifested in the forms of critical reflection, critical commitment, and critical actions enables people to counteract the hindering effects of various sources of barriers and enjoy the freedom from bias, discrimination and marginalization (Diemer et al., 2021). The empirical findings shown in addressing research questions three and four can support the argument that when navigating career transitions, strengthening the discernment of manipulative/distorted recognition as well as embedded risks in life-sustaining activities pursued in the form of fun, exposure or survival seeking is an important exercise for young people to enhance their critical consciousness.

Finally, this study can help inform the involvement and engagement of multiple stakeholders in the delivery of career support services to disadvantaged young women. There existed an increasing awareness regarding the importance of engaging multiple stakeholders, including parents, siblings, peers, mentors, teachers, social workers, employers, etc. for co-creating an enabling environment favorable to the career transition of marginalized youth (Su et al., 2021; Su & Wong, 2022). Informed by the findings of this study, social workers can work with the parents of these young women to reduce misrecognition experiences and work with

multiple stakeholders to expand their sources and spheres of recognition. For example, social workers may provide some educational workshops to parents and mentors, and let them know how to help these young people by satisfying their affective and tangible needs, showing respect to their equal rights and responsibilities in relation to making informed decisions about their career and life development, and acknowledging the importance of showing recognition to their various strengths, competence and achievement. It is also important to encourage or support the family to provide resources and opportunities to help these young women to expand their exposures and sources of esteem such as giving them financial support to attend training and workshops aligned with their interest.

## Limitations

The non-representative nature of the sample will limit the generalizability of the findings. We only interviewed 12 female participants. Other than taking into consideration family's economic status below or above median monthly household income and individual current social status in or not in education, employment or training, sampling criteria did not include other vulnerability factors such as ethnicity, new arrival status, disability, chronic illness, etc. Cautions should therefore be taken when one tries to extend the findings of this study to represent all educationally underprivileged young women.

## Conclusion

To conclude, the findings of this qualitative study make an important contribution with regard to applying the recognition perspective to examine the career transition journey of young women with educational disadvantage in Hong Kong as a risk society on the one hand, and on the other, further extending Honneth's conceptualization of misrecognition with the inclusion of

deprivation of social support and manipulated/distorted recognition. Moreover it is clear from our study that there is an urgent need to provide educationally disadvantaged young women an enabling environment within which they can access to resources, opportunities and networks to enhance both self- and social recognition in different settings and an empowering space where they can strengthen their critical consciousness to identify and address various forms of misrecognition and risks with new and expanded sources of support. There is also the need for helping professionals to work in partnership with community stakeholders to provide tailor-made support for a wide spectrum of young women with educational disadvantage, who are characterized by heterogeneity, different kinds of risks and diverse sources of recognition and misrecognition.

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CAREER TRANSITION OF EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED YOUNG WOMEN

**Table 1**

*Sociodemographic Information, Sources of Frustrations and Risks in Career Transition Journey of the Participants*

| Category[+] | Name | Age | Year of school dropout (Secondary 1 to 6)[#] | No. of children | Marital status* | Self-perceived economic constraints | Self-reported sources of frustrations | Self-reported sources of risks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AD | Candy | 18 | Secondary 3 | 0 | Single with a boyfriend | No | School dropout, job offer rejections | Overspending |
| AD | Daisy | 18 | Secondary 6 | 0 | Single | No | School dropout | Stay up all night for fun seeking and alcohol drinking, shoplifting |
| AD | Ella | 24 | Secondary 4 | 0 | Single with a boyfriend | No | School dropout | Overspending, unexpected break-up |
| BC | Gigi | 21 | Secondary 3 | 2 | Married | Yes | School dropout | Unintended pregnancy, ending of pregnancy involuntarily, health issue (tumor in uterus), postpartum depression, anxiety associated with incompetence of taking care of children, substance use, loss of freedom due to child care |
| BC | Helen | 21 | Secondary 3 | 2 | Married | Yes | School dropout | Unintended pregnancy, economic-insecurity, anxiety associated with incompetence of taking care of two children |
| BC | Ida | 18 | Secondary 4 | 0 | Single with a boyfriend | No | School dropout | Over smoking, safety concern and exposures to sexual harassment due to binge drinking |
| BD | Maggie | 21 | Secondary 5 | 0 | Single | Yes | School dropout, repeated schooling | Suffering from low quality of repeated formal schooling, mental disorders of her parents |
| BD | Olivia | 21 | Secondary 5 | 0 | Single | Yes | School dropout | Exposures to sexual harassment due to being a bar girl, binge drinking, overspending |
| BD | Tracy | 18 | Secondary 4 | 0 | Single | Yes | School dropout | Encounter of workplace injustice, workplace health concerns, and suffering of exhausting job |
| AC | Ada | 24 | Secondary 1 | 1 | Married | Yes | School dropout | Exposures to sexual harassment at bars, unintended pregnancy |
| AC | Adele | 24 | Secondary 3 | 1 | Married | Yes | School dropout | Substance use, unintended pregnancy, workplace bullying, drug trafficking |

| AC | Bella | 18 | Secondary 4 | 0 | Single | No | School dropout, workplace bullying | Business failure, workplace bullying |

*Note.* [+]A=above median monthly household income, B=below median monthly household income, C=engaged in education, employment or training, D=not in education, employment or training. [#]Secondary 1 is comparable to Year 7 in the UK and Grade 6 in the US. *Three participants were single with a boyfriend, and five participants were single without any intimate relationships.

**Table 2**

*Participants' Suffering of Misrecognition and Strategies Used to Navigate Career Transitions*

| Category[+] | Name | Suffering of expanded notion of misrecognition | Mechanisms used to strive for recognition | Mechanisms used to manage misrecognition | Mechanisms used to sustain life without seeking recognition or managing misrecognition |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AC | Ada** | Deprivation of social support, victimization of family neglect, agency undermining in family, and esteem diminution at school | Enhanced self-esteem by taking care of her baby | Stop alcohol drinking and hanging out at bars | Survival seeking, fun seeking, time killing |
| AC | Adele** | Deprivation of social support, agency undermining in workplace, esteem diminution at school, manipulative/distorted recognition | Enhanced self-esteem by doing a good job as a security guard and taking care of her three-year-old son | Discern manipulative/ distorted recognition, reduce substance use, stop drug trafficking | Fun seeking, exposure seeking by trying different jobs, sensation seeking |
| AC | Bella* | Victimization of workplace bullying, agency undermining in job seeking & course selection, and esteem diminution at school | Family support with love and care, enhanced self-respect in taking the consequences of investment, enhanced self-esteem by taking an interest-aligned training on beauty care | Reduce risk exposures, attend interest-aligned training on beauty care | Rest taking, exposure seeking by trying different jobs |
| AD | Candy** | Agency undermining & esteem diminution at school, and distorted recognition from boyfriends | Social support with love and care from a social worker | Stop overspending, attend interest-aligned training on makeup | Exposure seeking by means of trying different jobs and enrolling a vocational training course, fun seeking, rest taking |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AD | Daisy* | Esteem diminution in course selection, agency undermining in conducting shoplifting | Social support with love and care from family members, enhanced self-respect in career decision making, enhanced self- and social esteem by taking interest-aligned training on design and tattooing | Reduce risk exposures, reduce deviant behaviors, attend interest-aligned training | Fun seeking, exposure seeking |
| AD | Ella* | Esteem diminution at school | Social support with love and care form family and romantic relationship due to erotic capital, enhanced self- and social respect in decision making in relation to continuation of working holiday, enhanced self-esteem by taking interest-aligned jobs in coffee brewing | Stop overspending | Exposure seeking by means of trying different jobs and working holiday, rest taking |
| BC | Gigi* | Esteem diminution at school and workplace, distorted recognition from peers | Social support with love and care from her husband and her Mum, enhanced self-respect in decision making, enhanced self-and social esteem by taking care of her children | Reduce substance use, keep a distance from delinquent peers | Fun seeking, sensation seeking |
| BC | Helen** | Agency undermining and esteem diminution at school | Social support with love and care from husband, parents, and relatives | Reduce risk exposures associated with fun seeking | Exposure seeking by means of trying working holiday, fun seeking |
| BC | Ida* | Esteem diminution, distorted recognition from parents and boyfriend | Social support with love and care from father, enhanced self-respect in decision making | Reduce risk exposures associated with binge drinking and smoking | Exposure seeking by means of trying different jobs, fun seeking |
| BD | Maggie** | Agency undermining and esteem diminution at school | Social support with love and care from social workers, enhanced self-respect in saving money, enhanced self-esteem by resuming schooling and expanding job preferences | Resume schooling | Exposure seeking by means of trying different jobs |

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| BD | Olivia *** | Deprivation of social support, victimization due to parental neglect, agency undermining due to unequal treatment in family and peer groups, esteem diminution at school, and distorted recognition from peers | Enhanced self-esteem by showing her strong intention to take care of grandma | Quit the job as a bar girl | Exposure seeking by trying different jobs, survival seeking by working as a bar girl |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BD | Tracy** | Agency undermining and esteem diminution at school | Social support with love and care from her cousin and social worker | Resume schooling | Exposure seeking, survival seeking by doing as a salesperson |

*Note.* [+]A=above median monthly household income, B=below median monthly household income, C=engaged in education, employment or training, D=not in education, employment or training; *less suffering, more mechanisms to strive for recognition and manage misrecognition; **more suffering, more mechanisms to strive for recognition and manage misrecognition; ***more suffering, fewer mechanisms to strive for recognition or manage misrecognition.

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**Table 3**

*Themes and Subthemes Derived from the Interview Transcripts*

| Themes | Subtheme 1 | Subtheme 2 | Subtheme 3 | Subtheme 4 | Subtheme 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Expanded notion of misrecognition experiences | Deprivation of social support as a form of under-recognition | Victimization in the form of neglect or bullying | Agency undermining in the form of denigration/degradation of equal rights and duties | Esteem diminution in the form of denigration/ degradation of achievement/ contribution | Distorted or manipulative recognition |
| Recognition-based strategies used to navigate career transitions | Social support based on satisfying affective and tangible needs | Respect on the basis of equal rights and duties | Expanding sources of esteem by resuming schooling, attending interest-aligned training, caring for others, or excelling at work | NA | NA |
| Strategies used to manage sources of misrecognition | Resume schooling or attend interest-aligned training | Reduce risk exposures or deviant behaviors | Discern and/or keep a distance from distorted/ manipulative recognition givers | NA | NA |
| Sustain life without seeking recognition or managing misrecognition | Multiple ways to sustain life without seeking recognition or managing misrecognition | Fun, exposure, sensation, or survival seeking as ways to sustain life can attract more devastating risks | NA | NA | NA |