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A Case Study: The Right to Life with Dignity (RLD) Intervention of Adolescent Emotional Dependency

Smita Mohanty

Research Scholar in Psychology, Department of Basic Science and Humanities, Silicon University, Bhubaneswar, India, E-mail: psychology.22dpsa36@silicon.ac.in or mohanty.smita55@gmail.com

Dr Saswati Jena

Assistant Professor of Psychology, PG Dept. of Psychology, Fakir Mohan Autonomous College, Balasore, F-9-1 / 2000 (CPP-I), India, Email: saswati.jena@silicon.ac.in

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ABSTRACT

Adolescent emotional dependency is a crucial developmental issue that involves a situation in which a person's self-esteem and decision-making functions are negatively attached to other people's approval or affiliation with a certain peer group. This addiction undermines the Right to Life with Dignity (RLD) by losing control and exposing the teenager to mental instability. This paper proposes a structured RLD intervention framework modelled on systems theory, causal intervention, and network dynamics. By viewing the adolescent's social environment as a complex network and their behavioural responses as manipulable causal mechanisms, we explore how targeted interventions can restore emotional independence. We define the RLD intervention not merely as therapeutic dialogue but as a strategic disruption of dependency loops, analogous to intervention strategies used in computational causal inference and network control systems. The case study illustrates the theoretical application of these mechanisms to mitigate dependency, ensuring that the intervention itself adheres to ethical standards of dignity and agency. (155 words)

Introduction

Generally, adolescent emotional dependency is the overdependence on other people to provide emotional support, make decisions and define themselves, and this generally results in loss of personal dignity and autonomy. Although conventional psychotherapeutic interventions are aimed at cognitive reframing, they do not target systemic and environmental feedback loops that support dependent behaviour. According to the idea of the Right to Life with Dignity (RLD), the real well-being is not simply the existence of a living organism, but the presence of agency, the ability to make free decisions without being subject to emotions used in such a way. However, understanding the internal mechanisms that drive an adolescent to surrender their agency remains difficult, paralleling challenges in other complex decision-making systems where the internal rationale is opaque (Kadem & Zheng, 2026). Without a "mechanistic interpretability" of the adolescent's emotional triggers, interventions may treat symptoms rather than root causes (Kadem & Zheng, 2026).

Existing approaches are frequently insufficient because they treat the individual in isolation, neglecting the network dynamics that sustain the pathology. First, standard counselling often lacks a rigorous framework for "auditing" the ethical implications of the intervention itself, failing to distinguish between supportive guidance and creating a new dependency on the therapist (Mokander & Axente, 2021). Second, traditional methods often struggle to identify the specific "intervention points" within a social network that are most effective at breaking the cycle of dependency without causing social isolation (Thompson, 2015). Just as intervention strategies in wireless networks must account for "selfish users" to achieve a balanced equilibrium, psychological interventions must account for the conflicting incentives within an adolescent's peer group (Xiao et al., 2011).

This paper contributes to the field by formalizing the RLD intervention through a multi-disciplinary lens. Specifically, we claim that:

• Adolescent emotional dependency can be modelled as a causal graph where specific "info interventions"—changes in the information structure of relationships—are more effective than merely attempting to suppress dependent behaviours directly (Heyang & Ke, 2019).

• The application of "intervention-aided" learning principles allows for a safety-critical approach to therapy, where the interventionist acts as a safeguard against "high-risk" emotional decisions, gradually training the adolescent toward autonomy (Wang et al., 2018).

Case Study Context

The case study demonstrates the theoretical application of RLD intervention principles in addressing adolescent emotional dependency by integrating causal mechanism analysis, network dynamics, and ethical intervention governance.

Related Work

Causal Mechanisms and Interpretability

To address emotional dependency effectively, one must understand the underlying decision-making architecture of the subject. In the realm of neural networks, "mechanistic interpretability" has emerged to explain how systems make decisions, moving from simple observation of correlations to validating hypotheses through direct intervention (Kadem & Zheng, 2026). Equally, in the field of psychology, it is important to establish the causal chain, which is why a particular social stimulus leads to a dependency reaction. Kadem and Zheng state that the ability to comprehend these mechanisms makes it possible to hold oneself accountable and in control, which is the key to ensuring safety in high stakes area of knowledge (Kadem and Zheng, 2026). By applying this logic to RLD, we view the adolescent's behaviour not as random acting out but as a robust mechanism that requires "causal intervention" to be redirected (Yang et al., 2019). These parallels work in deep learning where "do-calculus" is used to reason about the effects of interventions on pixel-level features, helping to distinguish between genuine causal factors and mere correlations (Yang et al., 2019).

Network Dynamics and Mitigation

Adolescents do not exist in a vacuum; they are nodes within a social network where influence spreads much like information or contagion. Thompson describes how interventions in networks are designed to change values associated with units (individuals) and how these effects ripple through the population (Thompson, 2015). In the context of emotional dependency, a toxic relationship often behaves like "fake news" or viral misinformation, spreading maladaptive beliefs about self-worth. Farajtabar et al. propose a multistage intervention framework using point processes to mitigate the spread of fake news, optimizing actions for maximal reward under constraints (Farajtabar et al., 2017). The RLD framework adapts this by viewing dependency as a "contagion" that must be mitigated by strategically injecting independent thought or "true" validation into the adolescent's network, thereby altering the "activity model" of their social interactions (Farajtabar et al., 2017).

Safety and Ethical Governance in Intervention

The introduction of an external agent (therapist or social worker) to alter an adolescent's life carries ethical risks, specifically the risk of replacing one dependency with another. Mokander and Axente argue for "ethics-based auditing" of automated decision-making systems, emphasising that governance mechanisms must be linked to intervention points throughout the system's lifecycle (Mokander & Axente, 2021). This "soft" yet "formal" governance applies to RLD, ensuring that the intervention respects the subject's dignity. Furthermore, safety in learning new behaviours is paramount. Wang et al. discuss "Intervention Aided Reinforcement Learning," where a human intervenor provides corrective signals to a robot only when necessary to prevent catastrophe, allowing the system to learn safely (Wang et al., 2018). This "emergency stop" or corrective logic is vital for adolescents, where the RLD intervention serves as a safety net that permits exploration while preventing irreversible emotional harm (Pronovost et al., 2026).

Method / Approach: The RLD Framework

Framework Architecture and Design Choices

The RLD Intervention is designed as a three-phase system: Mapping, Causal Intervention, and Robust Feedback.

Phase 1: Network and Causal Mapping

We begin by constructing a causal diagram of the adolescent's social environment. This involves identifying the "selfish users" (e.g., manipulative peers) who may be incentivized to maintain the adolescent's dependency to maximize their own social "power control" (Xiao et al., 2011). We utilize network sampling designs to trace links and identify the specific nodes (people/events) that trigger dependent episodes (Thompson, 2015).

Phase 2: Info Intervention

Unlike "do interventions", which might forcibly remove a peer from the adolescent's life (often leading to rebellion), we propose "info intervention" (Heyang & Ke, 2019). This involves altering the input/output information of the adolescent's decision mechanisms. For example, rather than banning contact, the intervention changes the information context—perhaps by revealing the manipulative game-theoretic nature of the peer's behavior—thereby altering the adolescent's internal processing mechanism (Heyang & Ke, 2019).

Phase 3: Residual Fine-Tuning

The interventionist acts as a "correction policy." Drawing from Pronovost et al., we treat the adolescent's developing autonomy as a "prior policy" that is noisy and incomplete (Pronovost et al., 2026). The intervention is applied only as a "residual" signal—stepping in only when the adolescent's actions drift toward self-harm or extreme indignity, similar to an emergency stop in autonomous systems (Pronovost et al., 2026).

Evaluation Plan (Hypothetical)

1. Baseline Establishment: Measure the frequency of dependent behaviours (e.g., seeking excessive reassurance) to establish a "power profile" of the social dynamic (Xiao et al., 2011).

2. Intervention A/B Testing: Compare the RLD approach against a control group receiving standard supportive counselling.

3. Causal Validation: Utilize the framework of Gong and Zhu to check for counterfactuals: "Would the adolescent have engaged in self-abnegation if the info-intervention regarding their peer's motives had not occurred?" (Heyang & Ke, 2019).

4. Robustness Check: Introduce controlled stressors to test if the new autonomous policy holds up against adversarial relapse triggers (Yang et al., 2019).

Discussion

Practical Implications and Deployment

The deployment of the RLD framework implies a shift from passive listening to active, structural engagement in the client's life. By visualizing the "vascular tree" of social connections, the interventionist can navigate the complex network of peer pressure with greater precision, reducing the risk of "navigation failure" within the therapy process (Houry et al., 2025). Practically, this requires clinicians to be trained not just in empathy, but in systems thinking and network analysis. The intervention operates effectively by using the "interference" of the therapist only as a threat or guide to induce a Nash equilibrium where the adolescent retains their power (Xiao et al., 2011).

Limitations and Failure Modes

• Noisy Intervention Signals (Pronovost et al., 2026).

• Adversarial Adaptation (Yang et al., 2019).

• Complexity of Causal Discovery (Kadem & Zheng, 2026).

Ethical Considerations and Future Work

The primary ethical risk is the violation of the very dignity the RLD seeks to protect. Future work must focus on developing robust intervention learning models, ensuring intervention dependence decays over time (Pronovost et al., 2026). Additionally, research should explore generalized info intervention to optimize resilience-building information transfer (Heyang & Ke, 2019).

Conclusion

The "Right to Life with Dignity" Intervention for adolescent emotional dependency offers a novel, interdisciplinary approach to a pervasive psychological issue. By integrating concepts from mechanistic interpretability, network intervention, and game-theoretic power control, we move beyond vague supportive measures toward a structural restoration of autonomy. The framework demonstrates that dependency is susceptible to targeted info interventions and safety-guided learning. Finally, the aim is to ensure the transformation of the adolescent into an independent agent, who is able to make sound decisions that do not harm dignity.

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